

GOSPEL VERSES

STEPHEN WENTWORTH ARNDT

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ABBREVIATIONS

Acts	<i>Acts of the Apostles</i>
1 Chr	<i>1 Chronicles</i>
Col	<i>Colossians</i>
1 Cor	<i>1 Corinthians</i>
2 Cor	<i>2 Corinthians</i>
Dn	<i>Daniel</i>
Dt	<i>Deuteronomy</i>
Eph	<i>Ephesians</i>
Ex	<i>Exodus</i>
Ez	<i>Ezechial</i>
Gal	<i>Galatians</i>
Gn	<i>Genesis</i>
Hb	<i>Habakkuk</i>
Heb	<i>Hebrews</i>
Hos	<i>Hosea</i>
Is	<i>Isaiah</i>
Jas	<i>St. James</i>
Jb	<i>Job</i>
Jer	<i>Jeremiah</i>
Jl	<i>Joel</i>
Jn	<i>John</i>
1 Jn	<i>1 St. John</i>
Jos	<i>Joshua</i>
1 Kgs	<i>1 Kings</i>
2 Kgs	<i>2 Kings</i>
Lk	<i>Luke</i>
Lv	<i>Leviticus</i>
Mal	<i>Malachi</i>
Mi	<i>Micah</i>
Mk	<i>Mark</i>
Mt	<i>Matthew</i>
Nm	<i>Numbers</i>
Phil	<i>Philippians</i>
Prv	<i>Proverbs</i>
Ps	<i>Psalms</i>
1 Pt	<i>1 St. Peter</i>
2 Pt	<i>2 St. Peter</i>
Rom	<i>Romans</i>
Rv	<i>Revelation</i>
Sg	<i>Song of Songs</i>
Sir	<i>Sirach</i>
2 Sm	<i>2 Samuel</i>

1 Thes	<i>1 Thessalonians</i>
2 Thes	<i>2 Thessalonians</i>
Ti	<i>Titus</i>
1 Tm	<i>1 Timothy</i>
2 Tm	<i>2 Timothy</i>
Wis	<i>Wisdom</i>
Zec	<i>Zechariah</i>

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Apart from the “Magnificat” of Mary, the “Benedictus” of Zachariah, and the “Nunc Dimittis” of Simeon, the Gospels contain no formal poetry. Yet they do exhibit many features of poetic language. The parables of Jesus, for example, appeal to the imagination through their concrete imagery, similes, and metaphors, whereas his proverbs and wisdom sayings strike both mind and heart with their incisive and often paradoxical insights. His expressive and forceful language makes its presence felt in larger contexts as well, such as the Sermon on the Mount, with its balanced structure of beatitudes; the discourse against the Pharisees, with its passionate rhetoric; or the Synoptic Apocalypse, with its eschatological imagery.

Whereas the evocative and pointed language of the Christ’s sayings resembles the diction of lyric poetry, the various shorter stories and longer narratives have much in common with dramatic poetry. The Gospels indulge very little in direct description or authorial comment, and even less in psychological report and analysis from an omniscient point of view. Rather, they present the dramatic situation of Jesus confronted with an inquirer searching for knowledge, a sufferer seeking relief, or an enemy hoping to ensnare him. Just as the clear delineation and realistic portrayal of these characters engage our interest, their crises and conflicts involve our emotions, and the ensuing resolutions satisfy our expectations, so also the revelation of the person of Christ through the dialogue and the interaction of the Lord with his interlocutors move us to a sense of religious awe. Consider the surprising wisdom of the pronouncement stories, the sublime pathos of the passion narratives, the wondrous mystery of the resurrection appearances.

If we move from individual sayings and narrative units to the Gospels as a whole, we find much akin to epic poetry: the lofty seriousness of their theme, expressed in the good news of the Kingdom of God; their organic unity in the Suffering Messiah, transcending the categories of hero and antihero; and their orderly progress, moving from birth and

infancy, through public teaching and ministry, to death and resurrection. Rather than the story of gods and men or of the origin of peoples and nations, the Gospels proclaim the story of the God-Man and of the foundation of the Kingdom. Thus, in the lyrical quality of their diction, the dramatic tension of their episodes, and the epic scope of their story, the Gospels provide individual stones, so to speak, for assembly into a poetic structure.

In attempting to construct such an edifice, the present collection of poetry places these individual stones in a variety of settings. In versifying some discourse of Jesus, several poems attempt to hew these stones through a process of selection, arrangement, and balance and to polish them by pleasing patterns of meter and rhyme. Other compositions lay some epigrammatic saying of Christ as a cornerstone and build other words of Scripture upon it or frame it as a window through which to view a series of incidents in the life of Jesus. Most selections, however, reconstruct some individual event in the life of Christ or some parable from his teaching. Whereas a few of these interpret the story in question through a dominant metaphor or a series of biblical allusions, which run through them like a vein through marble, most of them first recount a given occurrence and then offer some spiritual interpretation of it. Still others erect a theological meditation, like successive floors of a building, on the different levels of meaning involved in some typical activity of Christ.

Thematically, the order of the pieces roughly parallels the architecture of the Gospel of Matthew and inserts non-Matthean materials from the other Gospels where they seem most appropriate. Thus, a first, short series of pieces lays the foundation, basing itself on the infancy narratives. A second, longer series raises the walls from the teaching and ministry of Christ (though it generally dedicates one poem to each class of healings or miracles rather than dealing with each healing or miracle separately). A final, briefer series completes the structure from the passion, death, and resurrection narratives. Nevertheless, no attempt has been made to include everything the Gospels offer. Although genealogies and purely redactional transitions or summaries seemed obvious

candidates for exclusion, even certain sayings, parables, and stories did not appear to lend themselves as building blocks for poetry. This collection of verse, then, intends to give a representative, but not an exhaustive, poetical treatment of the life and teaching of Christ.

In terms of methodology, this work builds from the blueprints of monastic theology, which consists in the reading of a sacred text (*lectio divina*), discursive meditation on its content (*meditatio*), prayer arising from the application of the text to one's own life (*oratio*), and a final resting in the silent contemplation of God (*contemplatio*). Thus, each of these compositions takes some Gospel passage as its point of departure, then either presents it vividly to the imagination or develops its implications, and finally concludes with a prayer based on its theme, leaving the reader to contemplate the Lord from that particular perspective.

Not only do these poems mine their themes from Gospel lodes, they also extract their images and metaphors from the same veins. Yet, though in certain quarters metaphor is hallowed as *the* language of poetry, these compositions tend to speak a less canonical dialect, that of allusion and accommodation. They work less by the analogical transfer to Christ of terms properly describing other things than by the discovery of a fuller meaning (a kind of *sensus plenior*) in other scriptural texts applied to Christ. If the art of metaphor mixes its colors by the comparison of unlikes, the bold strokes of wit paint them side by side through the unexpected juxtaposition of ideas.

On a purely technical level, all these poems exhibit some form of rhyme—either simple end rhyme, leonine rhyme,¹ sectional rhyme,² double sectional rhyme,³

¹Leonine rhyme is of a line-internal word with the line end, e. g.:

*Should faith that **saves** fear not the wind and **waves*** (“Sight,” 13)

²Sectional rhyme is of two line-internal words, e.g.:

*For **nought** his parents had **sought** for Christ three days* (“Finding,” 1)

³Double sectional rhyme has two successive internal rhymes, e. g.:

interlocking sectional rhyme,⁴ cross-sectional rhyme,⁵ chain rhyme,⁶ or some other form⁷—and in some cases the rhyme scheme can become quite complex.⁸ Furthermore, several of these selections make abundant use of alliteration⁹ and consonance¹⁰ in addition to rhyme. Roughly three quarters of the pieces display a straight iambic metrical pattern and frequently mix, within a given stanza, lines ranging anywhere from one to six feet in length. The remaining quarter generally combine dactyls or anapests with iambs and often vary line length as well. Wherever the metrical pattern deviates from iambic, the notes diagram the intended metrical structure, with a breve (\sim) representing an

*How **fast** shall **last** and **first** then be reversed!* (“Master,” 17)

⁴Interlocking sectional rhyme alternates rhyming words within a single line, e. g.:

*“If **you** but **wish**, you **too** will **fish** for men,”* (“Calling,” 7)

⁵Cross-sectional rhyme has A, B in one line, then B, A in the next, e. g.:

*That **night** such **things** were concealed
From **kings** with their **might** to wield* (“Shepherds,” 17–18).

⁶A chain rhyme runs from the end of one line to the beginning of the next, e. g.:

*Let us who **work**
Not **shirk** the loads, nor the arms, nor roads,* (“Rest,” 19–20)

⁷Cf. the A, B, C, / B, C, A pattern of “Resurrection,” 19–20:

*Did **still** His **sign** not **pour**
New **wine** whose **store** would **spill***

⁸Cf. “Annunciation,” which rhymes the first, third, and fifth foot of each line according to the following pattern:

A	B	C
D	B	E
D	F	C
A	F	E

⁹Cf., for example, the interlocking alliteration of “Epiphany,” 9:

*In the **straw** **bed** was a **starred** **boy**,*

¹⁰Cf. the triple consonance of “Cana,” 9:

*Providing **more** **cheer** be **viewed** as **mere** **chore**?*

unstressed syllable and a forward slash (/) indicating a stressed syllable. These poems may appear very traditional in form, since each of them is metered and rhymed and none of them is written in free verse or even blank verse, yet each creation possesses its own unique form, and none falls under any traditional genre such as the sonnet or ballad.

If the Gospel quarries have furnished the individual stones of this work, a spirit of devotion has set them in place, while prayer has cemented them together. It is in this spirit that the reader is invited to enter into this poetical temple to read, to meditate, to pray.

Note: at this point you may wish to set your pdf viewer to display facing pages, so that you can see the notes on the left and the poem on the right. If you wish to continue viewing single pages, the notes will precede, and the poem will follow.

ANNUNCIATION

Cf. Lk 1, 26–38.

1. *Winged laud*: the angel Gabriel.
2. *One of David's house*: Joseph.
3. *That very favored daughter, full of grace*: cf. the angel's greeting to Mary in Lk 1, 28.
5. *Virgin wonder*: cf. Mary's reaction in Lk 1, 29: *She was deeply troubled by his words, and wondered what his greeting meant.*

Stored up what she heard: Luke makes a similar comment concerning Mary in connection with the visit of the Magi (2, 19) and the finding of the Christ-child in the Temple. Certainly the angel's message gave her food for thought as well!
6. *Her "Yes"*: Mary's words in Lk 1, 38: *I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say.*
8. Cf. Lk 2, 34–35: *Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted (and you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.*
10. *The Holy Spirit came on her in power*: a fulfillment of the angel's prophecy to Mary in Lk 1, 35.
- 13–16. Cf. the *Magnificat*, Mary's hymn of praise, in Lk 1, 46–55.
17. *Yet she would not know man*: cf. Mary's question to the angel in Lk 1, 34.
- 19–20. Cf. the angel's prophecy concerning Jesus in Lk 1, 32: *The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over the house of Jacob forever.*
- 21–22. Cf. Lk 11, 27–28: *While he was speaking, a woman from the crowd called out and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that carried you and the breasts at which you nursed." He replied, "Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."* Jesus' response applies to Mary in a preeminent degree. Cf. also Mk 3, 31–35; Mt 12, 46–50; Lk 8, 19–20.

ANNUNCIATION

Winged laud would rush to none of all our race,
Save Mary, bound to one of David's house,
That very favored daughter, full of grace,
For God Most High had sought her as his spouse.

Though virgin wonder stored what Mary heard, 5
As servant of the Lord, her "Yes" was quick.
And, fervent from the start, she held the Word,
Which burgeoned in a heart a sword would prick.

God's maiden thus proclaimed her marriage vow;
The Holy Spirit came on her in power. 10
Oh lowly girl the High One shadowed now,
Fruit-laden times drew nigh to fertile flower!

The newlywed rejoiced then in her Lord
And praised with blissful voice the Rescuer
Who'd raised his humble one to heights unsoared. 15
Oh truly God had done great things for her!

Yet she would not know man, but him alone
According to whose plan the Son of God,
Her Lord, was born to take up David's throne,
That he might shepherd Jacob with his rod. 20

Blest womb that bore and breasts that nursed that child,
Blest most the heart which best of all obeyed! . . .
As hosts may we as well keep undefiled,
In whom, Lord, you may dwell as in your Maid.

INCARNATION

The intended meter is as follows:

 ~ ~ / ~ ~ /
~ / ~ / ~ ~ / ~ /
 ~ ~ / ~ ~ /
~ ~ / ~ / ~ / ~ /
~ ~ / ~ ~ / ~ ~ /

- 1–15. The image of God as caretaker of the vineyard is common in the Old Testament. Cf. Ps 80, 9–17; Jer 2, 21; Ez 19, 10–14; Is 5, 1–7; in the New Testament, cf. Mk 12, 1–9; Mt 21, 33–41; Lk 20, 9–16; Jn 15, 1–8.
16. *The fruit of our womb*: since Mary is the perfect representative of redeemed humanity, it is perhaps not too bold a usage to speak of Jesus as the “fruit of *our* womb.”
17. *Blest grain bread and a vine grape wine*: the Incarnation of Christ is in a sense prolonged in the Eucharist even after the Ascension. Cf. Mk 14, 22–26; Mt 26, 26–30; Lk 22, 19–20; 1 Cor 11, 23–25.
18. *The Passover room*: where Jesus ate the Last Supper with his disciples. Cf. Mk 14, 12–16; Mt 26, 17–19; Lk 22, 7–13.

INCARNATION

In a thistle-thick field,
The sun-baked clay with its break-spade soil
Had a summer-seared yield,
And the drought-sky-flouted dry ground foiled
All of Israel's trouble and toil. 5

But the Caretaker saw
And tilled that wilderness field with priests
And their ground-breaking law,
As the prophets' cry thinned high sin-weeds,
And the kings did their battle with beasts. 10

Then the Husbandman sowed
Pure virgin earth, and the germ took root.
When the gracious rain flowed
On the love-lit plot, it shot out shoots,
And it budded forth, bearing its fruit. 15

Now the fruit of our womb
Is blest grain bread and a vine grape wine
From the Passover room;
O incarnate Lord, O Christ divine,
Make the fruits of your flesh and blood mine! 20

SHEPHERDS

Cf. Lk 2, 15–20.

The intended meter is as follows:

~ / ~ / ~ /
~ / ~ ~ / ~
~ / ~ / ~ /
~ / ~ / ~ /
~ / ~ / ~ ~ /
~ / ~ / ~ /
~ / ~ ~ / ~
~ / ~ / ~ /

But note that in the second stanza the first line begins with a dactyl instead of an iamb; the fifth line shifts the dactyl to the fourth foot; and the sixth line replaces the first iamb with a trochee.

9. *The town of David:* Bethlehem.
16. *One Worthy:* God. Cf. Rv 4, 11: *O Lord our God, you are worthy to receive glory and honor and power!*
- 17–20. The angels reveal the Good News, not to the powerful, wise, and wealthy, but to the lowly, ignorant, and poor.
22. *Our Shepherd Lord:* cf. Jn 10, 1–30, on Jesus as the Good Shepherd.

SHEPHERDS

One strange but wonderful night
Sky-sundering angel light
Outpoured such glory from the Lord
The shepherds shuddered with fright.
The wingèd bringer of news implored: 5
“Fear not! My tidings strike the chord
For voices to sing God’s birth
And bring rejoicing to earth:

In the town of David today,
A Savior is found, whom they 10
Have made the barest manger bed,
Your Christ and Lord to obey.”
Great troupes of angels grouped overhead;
“Glorify God on high!” they said,
“On earth let his peace now rest 15
On these One Worthy has blessed.”

That night such things were concealed
From kings with their might to wield,
From scholars searching scrolls unrolled,
From rich men reaping their yield, 20
But humble herdsman would yet behold
Our Shepherd Lord adored of old . . .
We, Jesus, would seek you too,
As meek and pleasing to you.

EPIPHANY

Cf. Mt 2, 1–12.

The intended meter is as follows:

```

~ ~ // ~ ~ //
  ~ ~ / ~ ~ //
~ ~ // ~ ~ //
  ~ ~ / ~ ~ / ~ ~ /

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It is especially important to observe this meter in line 13. The meter of the last two lines, however, changes and runs thus:

```

~ ~ / ~ ~ / ~ ~ /
  ~ ~ / ~ ~ / ~ ~ /

```

1. *Dawn blood of our day bled*: a symbol of Adam and Eve's original righteousness lost in original sin.
2. *Its flooded sunset death bed*: a symbol of the proliferation of sin after the Fall.
8. *Fabled child*: the birth of the Messiah had been foretold in such texts as Is 7, 14 and Mi 5, 1 4. Matthew quotes the first verse of the latter text in the present account.
9. *Starred boy*: although the star led the Magi to the Christ-child, Jesus is himself the *morning star* (cf. Rv 2, 28; 22, 16) who lights our way.
14. *Ever bringing things their true guise*: the light of Christ allows things to appear as they truly are.

EPIPHANY

When the dawn-blood of our day bled
On its flooded sunset death bed,
Then the stark burst of a star's birth
Lit the cursèd dark on straying earth.
Now a sky-light at the twilight 5
Guided aging sages all night
From the Far East till the star ceased
Near a fabled child mid stabled beasts.
In a straw bed was a starred boy,
And the light he shed instilled joy, 10
For our sin's gloom, in his sun-gleam,
Is illumined by a wond'rous beam
Healing blind eyes, making minds wise,
Ever bringing things their true guise.
In his soft glow, from aloft flow 15
Long remembered ardors embers know
To the dim hearth of the dark heart
To be kindled by divine art . . .
May our star-lit sparkles flare up awed
By your love light, Christ, our Infant God! 20

FLIGHT

Cf. Mt 2, 13–23.

Technical note: this poem has the most unconventional metric pattern and only “works” if read in strict meter. The intended structure is as follows:

/ ~ ~ / / ~ ~ / / / (3 x's)
/ ~ ~ / / ~ ~ / /

2. *Held earth*: that is, Jewish territory occupied by the Romans.
3. *Judah's foretold Infant of God*: Bethlehem lay in the land of Judah. Cf. the prophecy quoted in Mt 2, 6.
4. *Rod*: a symbol of kingly power and authority.
- 10–11. *They shook dust from their feet*: A biblical gesture used to separate oneself from unbelievers. Cf. Mk 6, 11; Mt 10, 14; Lk 9, 5; Acts 13, 51.
12. *Fleet sands*: i. e., shifting under one's feet at every step.
15. *Rachel*: in Jer 31, 15, Rachel, the wife of Jacob, weeps for her children taken into exile by the Assyrians in 722–721 B. C. Matthew imagines her as now mourning the death of the Holy Innocents, perhaps because the Old Testament places her burial site in Ephrath (cf. Gn 35, 19; 48, 7), which was identified with Bethlehem.
17. Cf. Rom 7, 23: *The wages of sin is death*.
20. *Nazareth's bold peak*: Nazareth was built on a hillside. Cf. Lk 4, 29.
22. Just as Moses led the Hebrews out of Egypt into the Promised Land, so Jesus now comes forth out of Egypt as the new Moses to lead his people into the Kingdom of God.

FLIGHT

Herod got news, something about Christ's birth—
 He was no doubt King of the Jews' held earth;
Judah's foretold Infant of God might be
 Shepherd and rod, setting his fold free.

Herod became frantic that day: such frail 5
 Power and sway, riches and fame might fail.
Panic went wild, envy and hate ran rife,
 Rushing to sate lust for the child's life.

Joseph received visions at night; he took 10
 Jesus held tight, Mary who grieved. They shook
Dust from their feet, leaving behind loved lands,
 Only to find Egypt and fleet sands.

Herod in rage butchered then each young male,
 All who had reached two years of age, strong, hale. 15
Rachel in woe wept for the ones she bore,
 Cheerless at sons comforted no more.

Herod, who reaped wages for sin, soon died.
 Joseph had been told in his sleep: "Rise! Guide
Mother held near, child in your arm. Go! Seek,
 Safe from all harm, Nazareth's bold peak." 20

Egypt was past, Israel drew Christ north;
 Jesus as new Moses at last came forth . . .
Lord! in your tracks, fleeing offense, we roam
 Deserts immense. Carry us back home!

PRESENTATION

Cf. Lk 2, 22–38.

The intended meter is as follows:

~ / ~ ~ / ~ ~ / ~ /
~ / ~ / ~ ~ / ~ / ~
~ / ~ ~ / ~ /

3. Cf. Ps 130, 6: *My soul looks for the Lord more than sentinels for daybreak.*
5. Cf. the parable of the widow's mite in Mt 12, 41–44 and Lk 21, 1–4.
8. *Presentation:* Jesus is presented to God in accord with Ex 13, 1–16. Cf. especially. v. 2: *Consecrate to me every first-born that opens the womb among the Israelites, both of man and beast, for it belongs to me.* Note that Jesus does not need to be redeemed as required by Nm 18, 15, since he already belongs fully to the Heavenly Father.
9. *The turtledove:* a pair of turtledoves, one for a holocaust and one for a sin offering, was the offering of the poor. Cf. Lv 12, 6–8, especially v. 8: *If, however, she cannot afford a lamb, she may take two turtledoves or two pigeons, the one for a holocaust and the other for a sin offering. The priest shall make atonement for her, and thus she will again be clean.* Mary's purification after childbirth was, of course, merely ritual, not moral.
- 13–18: These lines are a versification of the *Nunc dimittis*, the canticle of Simeon, which the Church prays in its liturgy at Compline.

PRESENTATION

Old Simeon, pious and just, was drawn
To wait for Israel's consolation
As watchmen await the dawn,

While Anna, who proffered her widow's mite,
Had prayed and fasted in adoration
For many a day and night.

5

When Mary brought Jesus (ten tithes of love!)
To give to God at his presentation
And offer the turtledove,

Good Simeon, Spirit-inspired, was led
To temple; raptured in contemplation,
He cradled the child and said:

10

"You, Master, may now let your servant go,
My eyes have gazed on the dear salvation
You promised me long ago,

15

And which you prepared in the peoples' view,
A light to pagans for revelation,
And Israel's glory too."

Then Anna gave praises to God with them
And spoke to all in anticipation
Of saving Jerusalem—

20

Lord, let us with Simeon watch in place
And pray with Anna in expectation
Of seeing at last your face!

FINDING

Cf. Lk 2, 41–50.

The intended meter is as follows:

```

~ / ~ / ~ / ~ / ~ /
  ~ / ~ / ~ / ~ /
    ~ / ~ / ~ / ~ /
      ~ / ~ / ~ / ~ /
        ~ / ~ / ~ / ~ /

```

But note the dactyl in the fourth foot of stanza three, line five.

5. Cf. Ps 8, 3: *Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have fashioned praise* (according to the Septuagint version). Jesus quotes this verse in Mt 21, 16. Cf. Wis 10, 21.
- 6–7. Cf. Mt 11, 25: *Jesus said in reply, “I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the children.”* Cf. Lk 10, 21–22. The mysteries of the Kingdom were, of course, revealed first and foremost to the Christ-child.
8. Cf. Mt 19, 14: *Jesus said, “Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”* Cf. Mk 10, 14; Lk 18, 16. The second clause applies preeminently to the boy Jesus.
- 9–10. Cf. Jn 3, 5: *Jesus answered, “Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.”* Cf. also Mk 10, 15: *Whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it.* Cf. also Mt 18, 3; Lk 18, 17.
- 13–14. Cf. Mt 10, 34: *Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth. I have come to bring not peace but the sword.* Cf. also Lk 12, 51. And cf. Lk 14, 26: *If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.* Cf. also Mt 10, 35–37; Lk 12, 52–53.

FINDING

For nought his parents had sought for Christ three days,
Then spied their Son inside of the Temple Hall.
He stayed with teachers dismayed by him, for all
Who questioned and answered him had blessed the ways
That out of the mouths of babes came words to praise. 5

But what was never revealed to clever men
Was shown a child instructing those grown so old:
God's Kingdom comes to the young and simple-souled,
And any may enter in, but only when,
As Spirit-reborn, they near it, young again. 10

"Oh why, my Son, have you done this?" Mary cried,
"We two have sought in sorrow for you." Our Lord
(Who came, not bringing us peace, but flaming sword,
Commanding us all, for him, to stand aside
From father and mother, sister and brother) sighed: 15

"But why go searching for me? You surely see
I care about my Father and his affairs."
Yet neither one understood this Son of theirs . . .
Lord, let us, your children, share your childlike eye
That we may behold what hearts too old can't spy! 20

JOHN

Cf. Mk 1, 1–8; Mt 3, 1–12; Lk 3, 1–18.

13–14. Cf. Mt 7, 16–20, especially v. 19: *Every tree that does not bear fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.* Cf. also Mt 12, 33; 15, 13; Lk 6, 43–45.

17–18. Cf. Mt 11, 11: *I solemnly assure you, history has not known a man born of woman greater than John the Baptizer.* Cf. also Lk 17, 28.

19–20. In speaking of John the Baptist, Christ says in Mt 11, 9: *Why then did you go out—to see a prophet? A prophet indeed, and something more!* Cf. also Lk 17, 26.

JOHN

Through Judah's desert roamed
One clad with camel hair,
And locusts were his fare,
With honey from the comb.
His message was: *Prepare* 5
The way for One God-sent,
Make straight his paths! Repent!
God's reign would soon be there.
He washed with water meant
As grace, and all could near it 10
Till Christ baptized in Spirit
And fire that he unpent,
Then took his axe to rear it
And chop and burn dead trees,
And winnowed in the breeze 15
To burn the chaff and clear it.
John, greatest of all these
That any woman bore,
Saw, more than prophet, more
Than any prophet sees. 20
Yet One was at the door
Still mightier than he,
Who but unworthily
Would loose the shoe Christ wore.
Lord, let me also be 25
As John was in your day
And thus prepare the way
That you may come to me.

BAPTISM

Cf. Mk 1, 9–10; Mt 3, 13–17; Lk 3, 21–22.

This poem is written in iambs except for the fourth line of each stanza, which has an extra unstressed syllable at the beginning and runs: ~ ~ / ~ ~ / .

1. Cf. 1 Pt 3, 20–21: *God patiently waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few persons, eight in all, were saved through water. This prefigured baptism, which saves you now.*
2. Cf. 1 Cor 10, 1–2: *Our ancestors were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea, and all of them were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.*
- 3–4. By submitting to the baptism of John, the sinless Jesus, who therefore did not need baptism for the remission of sins, identifies himself with the human condition.
- 13–14. When in the desert the Israelites grumbled against Moses, he struck a rock twice, and water flowed from it. Cf. Nm 20, 2–13. This event may be the same one reported in Ex 17, 1–7.
- 15–16. Jesus speaks of “living water” in reference to himself in Jn 4, 10 and 7, 38. In 1 Cor 10, 4, Paul sees the rock that Moses struck in the desert as a type of Christ.
- 17–18. For the story of the woman at the well, cf. Jn 4, 4–41.
- 19–20. In Jn 5, 1–9, Jesus heals a sick man by the pool of Bethesda.
- 21–22. In 2 Kgs 5, 1–14, Naaman, a Syrian general, was told by Elisha to bathe in the Jordan River and was healed of his leprosy.

BAPTISM

As floods round Noah surged
And seas for Moses spread,
So Jesus was submerged
(In the blood and tears we shed)
By John in Jordan's tide, 5
Who, for his Lord, complied.

Then sky was rent, whence sped
The dovelike Spirit's flight
To hover overhead;
And a cry came from the height: 10
"Upon this Son I love
Lies favor won above."

As twice the stone was caned,
Thus giving forth a spring,
Now living waters rained 15
Out of Christ, our Rock, to bring
The woman near the well
Good News to hear and tell.

They poured out to refresh,
Like pure Bethesda's pool, 20
And cure a Naaman's flesh,
Like the Jordan running cool . . .
You plunged, Lord, in our life,
Now cleanse our sin and strife!

DESERT

Cf. Mk 1, 12–13; Mt 4, 1–11; Lk 4, 1–13.

3. The beasts symbolize, first, the powers of evil that Jesus will face in the desert (cf. Ps 22, 13–14. 17. 21–22; Ez 34, 5. 8. 25) and, second, the beginning of the Messianic age that he now inaugurates (cf. Is 11, 6–9; 65, 25; Hos 2, 20).
7. Cf. Jn 6, 26–27: *Jesus answered them and said, “Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.”*
12. *The Holy Town: Jerusalem.*
14. Cf. Mt 12, 38–42, especially v. 39: *An evil and unfaithful generation seeks a sign.* Cf. also Mt 16, 1–4.
21. Cf. Jn 6, 15: *Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain alone.*
27. Cf. Heb 4, 15: *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin.*
- 28–29. Cf. the conclusion of the Lord’s prayer in Mt 6, 13 and Lk 11, 4.

DESERT

When Jesus left the Jordan Spirit-graced,
That very Spirit drove him to the waste
To dwell among the beasts, to fast in prayer,
And, lastly, to be tempted there.

He fasted forty days and forty nights 5
And came to learn how hunger bites.
Since carnal crowds would beg for bread yet flawed,
The Tempter, trying out his fraud,
Then said: "Make loaves from stone."
Thus Jesus spoke: "Live not by bread alone, 10
But by each Word of God!"

The Devil took him to the Holy Town
And stood him on the Temple's crown.
Since faithless ages seek for signs, he pressed:
"Leap down, God's angels wait there lest 15
You even strike your foot."
Thus Jesus spoke again: "You shall not put
The Lord God to the test!"

Atop a mountain Satan last unfurled
For him all kingdoms of the world. 20
Since zealous throngs would proffer him a throne,
He cried: "All this will be your own,
When I have been adored."
Thus Jesus one last time: "Adore the Lord,
And serve but him alone!" 25

At that, the Devil left and angels came . . .
Lord, tempted every way, you knew no blame;
Yet, lead us not into temptation's arms,
Deliver us from evil's charms!

REJECTION

Cf. Mk 6, 1–6; Mt 13, 54–58; Lk 4, 16–30.

2. Cf. Mt 21, 13: *My house shall be called a house of prayer*. Cf. also Mk 11, 17; Lk 19, 46.

16. Cf. Mk 6, 4: *No prophet is without honor except in his native place*. Cf. also Mt 13, 57; Lk 4, 24; Jn 4, 44.

20–21. Cf. Jn 3, 8: *The wind (to *pneûma* = Spirit) blows where it will. You hear the sound it makes but you do not know where it comes from, or where it goes. So it is with everyone begotten of the Spirit.*

REJECTION

Once Jesus on the Sabbath day
Went in the house of prayer and, rising there,
Began to say:

“A prophet’s Spirit has anointed me,
To preach glad tidings to the poor, 5
Proclaim to captives liberty,
Prepare blind eyes a cure,
Grant prisoners release, and thus accord
A year of favor from the Lord.”

Was this the Prophet, not a carpenter? 10
He squares our sin-felled timbers still
Then planes what knots of pride there were
And sands the rough-grained will
To nail together those who stood apart
And build God’s temple in the heart. 15

No prophet’s honored in his fatherland.
Was Jesus in his Father’s house?
They ran him up a cliff and planned
To cast him down! But rouse
The Spirit, and it blows where it may please, 20
And so he fled like wind through trees.

Hew, Christ, our Carpenter, each board
That makes the cross our lot, but let us not
Reject you, Lord!

CALLING

Cf. Mk 1, 16–20 and Mt 4, 18–22. Cf. also Lk 5, 1–10.

8. Zebedee was the father of James and John.

9–10. Cf. Mt 8, 19–20: *A scribe approached him and said, “Teacher, wherever you go I will come after you.” Jesus said to him, “The foxes have lairs, the birds in the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”* Cf. also Lk 9, 57–58.

11–12. Cf. Mt 8, 21–22: *Another, a disciple, said to him, “Lord, let me go and bury my father first.” But Jesus told him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead.”* Cf. also Lk 9, 59–60.

13–14. Cf. Lk 9, 61–62: *Yet another said to him, “I will be your follower, Lord, but first let me take leave of my people at home.” Jesus answered him, “Whoever puts his hand to the plow but keeps looking back is unfit for the reign of God.”*

15. Cf. Mk 8, 34: *He summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them: “If a man wishes to come after me he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and follow in my steps.* Cf. also Mt 10, 38; 16, 24; Lk 14, 27.

15–16. Cf. Mk 10, 29–30: *Jesus answered: “I give you my word, there is no one who has given up home, brothers or sisters, mother or father, children or property, for me and for the gospel who will not receive in this present age a hundred times as many homes, brothers and sisters, mothers, children and property—and persecution besides—and in the age to come everlasting life.* Cf. also Mt 19, 29; Lk 18, 29–30.

17. Cf. Mt, 20, 23: *From the cup I drink of, you shall drink.* Cf. also Mk 10, 39. Cf. Ps 80, 6: *You have fed them with the bread of tears and given them tears to drink in ample measure.*

18. Cf. Mk 8, 36: *What profit does a man show who gains the whole world and destroys himself in the process?* Cf. Mt 16, 26; Lk 9, 25.

19–20. Cf. Jn 12, 24: *I solemnly assure you, unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much fruit.*

21–24. Cf. Jn 6, 67–68: *Jesus then said to the Twelve, “Do you want to leave me too?” Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*

CALLING

As Jesus roved by seas and coves one day,
Where Andrew cast his nets with Peter,
His call would be, "Come follow me," and they
Would walk behind their Leader.

Then down the shore he found two more, and when 5
He called to James and John at sea:
"If you but wish, you too will fish for men,"
They soon left Zebedee.

Birds flock to nest, laired foxes rest, and yet,
Christ had no place to lay his head; 10
But they bestrode the way he showed and let
The dead inter the dead.

Each man who now put hand to plow believed
In him, not looking back to yearn;
They bore the cross and for their loss received 15
A hundredfold's return.

His cup they drained and supped on pain's bread-tears,
They lost the world to win their souls,
For seeds that die indeed supply ripe ears
Of grain for grinding whole. 20

What sweeter thing could Peter sing, Lord, who
Had died to self as such a kernel,
Than "Where should we still dare to flee, for you
Have words of life eternal"?

CANA

Cf. Jn 2, 1–11.

The first four lines of each stanza are in tetrameter, the fifth in trimeter. Iambs and dactyls are employed freely according to the requirements of meaning and syntax.

6. Literally in Greek: “What is this to me and to you?” A purely secular concern had no importance for Jesus’ mission.
10. Cf. Jn 2, 4: *My hour has not yet come*. In John, Jesus’ “hour” usually refers to his passion, death, and resurrection. Cf. Jn 7, 30; 8, 20; 12, 23; 13, 1; 17, 1. But it may also refer to the beginning of his public miracles.
13. *Steward*: the headwaiter (*ho architriklinos*) The same person is meant by *butler* in line 18.
16. *Mother-and-Daughter*: Mary was the mother of Christ insofar as he is man, but his creation insofar as he is God.
17. *Jars*: used for Jewish ceremonial washings. Cf. Jn 2, 6.
20. Cf. the headwaiter’s words to the bridegroom in Jn 2, 10: *Everyone serves good wine first, and then when the people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now*.
23. *Blood-red wine*: cf. 1 Co 10, 16: *The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?*

Bleach wrongs white: cf. Is 1, 18: *Though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow; though they be crimson red, they may become white as wool*.
24. *Bright’ning dull lives*: cf. Sir 31, 27–28: *Wine is very life to man if taken in moderation. Does he really live who lacks the wine which was created for his joy? Joy of heart, good cheer and merriment are wine drunk freely at the proper time*.
25. Marriage is a common scriptural metaphor for the relationship between God and man.

CANA

New-wedded love must have whetted lips moist
 With the grape's red juice, as the group rejoiced,
Till that one ill point left the wine all spent.
 Lest either know want, our Mother now went
 To plead with her Son for their need. 5

Our Leader said this when our Lady sued thus:
 “What worrying is it wearying us?”
Would a minute's sad fear bring the moment sighed for?
 Providing more cheer be viewed as mere chore?
 Had power come now to its hour? 10

Oh woman of fiber, winning love's favor!
 That graced conceiver of Christ, King-Savior,
Stayed stalwart and sent the steward's attendants
 To a sacred true Son of secret transcendence
 To stand and await his command. 15

Were matters in doubt for his Mother-and-Daughter?
 He adjured the waiters: “Fill jars with water!”
Soon the butler had drunk a better-made drink:
 “Oh, whom shall I thank?” (And what should he think?)
 How fine was this water made wine! 20

Oh, grace-working deed! Oh, great wedding day,
 When water for meals or washing-off may,
As a blood-red wine, yet bleach wrongs white! . . .
 Lord, bright'ning dull lives with such bridal delight,
 Espouse us with Eucharist-vows! 25

BEATITUDES I

Cf. Mt 5, 3–12; Lk 6, 20–23.

This poem is simply a versification of the Beatitudes. But it lays the foundation for the following poem.

BEATITUDES I

When Jesus saw the crowds, he climbed the mount
And then began to teach from Wisdom's fount:

“How blest are those who live in poverty
Of spirit, theirs is Heaven's reign;
And blest are those who sorrow tearfully, 5
For comfort shall be theirs in pain.

How blest are all the lowly and the meek,
For they shall have the earth God willed;
And blest are those who in their hunger seek 10
For justice, they shall be fulfilled.

How blest are any taking mercy's part,
For they shall share in mercy's grace;
And blest are those remaining pure at heart,
For they shall gaze upon God's face.

How blest are those who work for peace, for they 15
Shall be God's children and his heirs;
And blest are those who suffer for his way,
A great reward shall yet be theirs.”

O Christ, our Teacher, let us heed your voice,
And then we shall be glad, Lord, and rejoice. 20

BEATITUDES II

This poem attempts to picture Christ as the perfect fulfillment of the spirit of the Beatitudes.

- 2–3. Cf. Mt 6, 26–34, especially vv. 26 and 28: *Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. . . . Learn a lesson from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work; they do not spin. Yet I assure you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was arrayed like one of these.* Cf. also Lk 12, 22–31.
- 5–7. Cf. Mt 23, 37: *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, murderess of prophets and stoner of those who were sent to you! How often have I yearned to gather your children, as a mother bird gathers her young under her wings, but you refused me.* Cf. also Lk 13, 34; 19, 41–44.
- 10–11. Cf. Mt 12, 20.
- 14–15. Cf. Lk 12, 49–50: *I have come to light a fire on the earth. How I wish the blaze were ignited! I have a baptism to receive. What anguish I feel till it is over!* Cf. also Mk 10, 38: *Can you drink the cup I shall drink or be baptized in the same bath of pain as I?*
18. Cf. Mt 9, 12: *People who are in good health do not need a doctor; sick people do.* Cf. also Mk 2, 17; Lk 5, 31.
19. Mt 15, 24: *My mission is only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* Cf. also Mt 10, 6.
- 22–23. Cf. Mt 7, 13–14: *Enter through the narrow gate. The gate that leads to damnation is wide, the road is clear, and many choose to travel it. But how narrow is the gate that leads to life, how rough the road, and how few there are who find it!* Cf. also Lk 13, 24.
- 26–27. Cf. Jn 14, 27: *'Peace' is my farewell to you, my peace is my gift to you; I do not give it to you as the world gives peace*

BEATITUDES II

Bless Christ! for he was poor,
Once fed like sparrows in the sky
And clothed like fields where lilies lie.
He holds God's reign secure.

Bless Christ! for he would mourn
Jerusalem and weep to bring
Its brood beneath his mother-wing.
Now is his joy reborn. 5

Bless Christ! so meek his hand
Would crush no thin bruised reed, nor dare
Snuff out a smoldering wick. His share
Is all the Promised Land. 10

Bless Christ! who hungered till
God's fire should fall on earth like rain,
Who thirsted for his bath of pain.
Now he may have his fill. 15

Bless Christ! his mercy's art
Would treat the ailing, not the well,
And seek lost sheep in Israel.
His mercy shows God's heart. 20

Bless Christ! in purity
He entered through the narrow gate
And trod a road both rough and straight.
Now God is his to see.

Bless Christ! the peaceful one
Who gave unworldly peace, and thus
His peace was his farewell to us.
He truly is God's Son. 25

Be blest, O Christ, our Lord!
Betrayed, denied, condemned, and jeered,
First flogged and crowned, then nailed and speared,
Now great is your reward! 30

TEMPTATION

The refrain of this poem is, of course, taken from the Lord's Prayer (cf. Mt 6, 13 and Lk 11, 4), but cited in its traditional English form. In accordance with a long-established poetic convention, the word *into* is here irregularly stressed on the second syllable.

The six stanzas of this poem follow the six examples in Jesus' discourse on the relation of the New Law to the Old in Mt 5, 21–48.

1–6. On anger, cf. Mt 5, 21–26.

6–12. On occasions of impurity, cf. Mt 5, 27–30. On lines 8–11, cf. also Mk 9, 43–48; Mt 18, 8–9.

13–18. On divorce, cf. Mt 5, 31–32; 19, 3–9; Mk 10, 2–12; Lk 16, 18. On lines 15–17, cf. Eph 5, 25–27: *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church. He gave himself up for her to make her holy, purifying her in the bath of water by the power of the word, to present to himself a glorious church, holy and immaculate, without stain or wrinkle or anything of that sort.*

19–24. On swearing oaths, cf. Mt 5, 33–37; 23, 16–22.

25–30. On retaliation, cf. Mt 5, 38–42; Lk 6, 29–30.

31–36. On love of one's enemies, cf. Mt 5, 43–48; Lk 6, 27–28. 31–36; Rom 12, 14; 1 Pt 3, 9.

TEMPTATION

Oh, may we not grow angry with a brother
And thereby shoulder judgment's yoke and halter,
Nor call him "fool," for never shall we smother
The fires of sure damnation,
But make our peace before we near the altar. 5
Lord, lead us not into temptation!

May we not be adulterous at heart,
But pluck such eyes, cut off such hands as well,
And rather enter life without the part
That brings our condemnation 10
Than have our body cast entire to Hell.
Lord, lead us not into temptation!

May we fulfill our sacred wedding vows,
Not loose the bond that God himself has tied,
Respect and love the one whom we espouse 15
In holy imitation
Of Christ, the Groom, who loves the Church, his Bride.
Lord, lead us not into temptation!

May we not swear an oath by heaven, where
God has his throne, nor by our heads much less 20
—We can't make black or white a single hair
By such an affirmation—
But let our "no" mean "no," our "yes" mean "yes."
Lord, lead us not into temptation!

May we, when smitten, turn the other cheek; 25
When pressed to service for a mile, go two;
When sued for coat, give cloak as well, nor seek
The old retaliation
Of eye for eye, and tooth for tooth, anew.
Lord, lead us not into temptation! 30

And may we bless the one who curses us,
And love whatever enemies we've had
To live as children of the Father thus,
The God of all creation,
Whose sun must rise on both the good and bad. 35
Lord, lead us not into temptation!

REWARD

1–5. Cf. Jesus' teaching on almsgiving in Mt 6, 1–4.

6–10. Cf. the teaching on fasting in Mt, 6, 16–18.

11–15. Cf. the teaching on prayer in Mt 6, 5–8.

REWARD

Let us give alms, but sound no trumpet blare
Like hypocrites in synagogues, nor dare
 Seek praise that others might accord us;
 But may our left not know our right hand, Lord,
 That you who see in secret might reward us. 5

And let us fast without a dismal air,
Nor with a changed appearance, but beware
 Lest eyes of others wander toward us,
 Thus groom our hair and wash our faces, Lord,
 That you who see in secret might reward us. 10

Let us not multiply our words at prayer
And think that we'll be heard for that, nor care
 For notice others might afford us,
 But go to pray behind closed doors, O Lord,
 For seeing you in secret will reward us. 15

MASTER

The intended meter is as follows:

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- 1–4. Cf. Mt 6, 20: *Make it your practice instead to store up heavenly treasure, which neither moths nor rust corrode nor thieves break in and steal*, and Lk 12, 33: *Get purses for yourselves that do not wear out, a never-failing treasure with the Lord which no thief comes near nor any moth destroys*. Cf. also Jas 5, 2–3.
- 5–8. Cf. the parable of the rich fool in Lk 12, 16–21.
- 9. Cf. the saying in Mt 6, 24; Lk 16, 13.
- 10–13. Cf. Jn 5, 44: *How can people like you believe, when you accept praise from one another yet do not seek the glory that comes from the one God?* and Jn 12, 43: *They preferred the praise of men to the glory of God*.
- 14. Cf. the parable of the guests at the banquet in Lk 14, 7–11.
- 17. Cf. the saying in Mk 10, 31; Mt 19, 30; 20, 16; Lk 13, 30.
- 19–22. Cf. Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet in Jn 13, 1–17.
- 23–25. Cf. Mk 10, 42–45: *You know how among the Gentiles those who seem to exercise authority lord it over them; their great ones make their importance felt. It cannot be like that with you. Anyone among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest; whoever wants to rank first among you must serve the needs of all. The Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve—to give his life in ransom for the many*. Cf. also Mt 20, 25–28; Lk 22, 24–27.
- 25–26. Cf. Jn 10, 11: *The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep*.
- 30–31. Cf. Jn 4, 37–38: *'One man sows; another reaps.'* *I sent you to reap what you had not worked for. Others have done the labor, and you have come into their gain*.
- 33–36. Cf. the parable of the useless servant in Lk 17, 7–10.

MASTER

Let those who would be rich
Get purses which fail not, and will never rot,
A griefless wealth which a thief by stealth
Can't loot, nor rust pollute.
May those whose harvest grows 5
Not reap to hoard or keep it stored
In grain bins ever vaster,
Nor think: "Eat, drink, be merry!" but be wary.
No man can serve two masters.

Let those who seek acclaim 10
And lasting name first look to the holy book
Of life to come, not the fife and drum
Now played in fame's parade.
Embrace the lowest place,
For humble men won't stumble when 15
The haughty meet disaster.
How fast shall last and first then be reversed!
No man can serve two masters.

Let him who hopes to lead
Seat those in need, then stand with a bowl in hand, 20
And as they eat, let him rinse their feet
As least one at the feast.
Don't lord it over ward
Or slave you hold, but save your fold,
Lay down your life, O pastor!, 25
To tend and fend for sheep within your keep.
No man can serve two masters.

Let us who wish to serve
You, Lord, not swerve or stray from the chosen way,
Nor sleep or stop till we reap the crop 30
You sow for us to mow;
And then come home again,
Prepare your meal with care and zeal,
With promptness ever faster; 35
And say each day: "We did but what was bid,"
To serve you, Christ, our Master.

PROVIDENCE

Cf. Mt 6, 25–34; Lk 12, 22–31.

PROVIDENCE

We eye the birds that streak the sky;
They neither sow nor reap,
Nor store away,
And yet they all are in the Father's keep.
Are we not still more valuable than they? 5

We've seen bright lilies dot the green;
Not one, though, works or weaves,
Yet how they dress!
No Solomon has garments like their leaves.
If they have such from God, shall we have less? 10

Oh, let us for today forget
Tomorrow's clothes or food
—Not what abides—
And seek your kingdom, Lord, your rectitude,
For you will give us all these things besides! 15

PEARLS

1. Cf. Lk 22, 31: *Simon, Simon! Remember that Satan has asked (exêêtê'sato) for you, to sift you all like wheat.* Some exegetes contend that the aorist of the compound verb implies that the petition was granted. Cf. Jb 1, 1–12; 2, 1–6.
2. *The Church's rock:* cf. Mt 16, 18: *You are 'Rock,' and on this rock I will build my church, and the jaws of death shall not prevail against it.*
3. *Denied his Cornerstone Divine:* on Peter's denial, cf. Mk 14, 53–72; Mt 26, 57–75; Lk 22, 54–71. On Christ as the cornerstone, cf. Mk 12, 10; Mt 21, 42; Lk 20,17; Acts 4, 11; Eph 2, 20; 1 Pt 2, 6–7.
4. *A stolen kiss:* on Judas' betrayal, cf. Mk 14, 43–46; Mt 26, 27–50; Lk 22, 47–48; Jn 18, 1–9.
5. *For thirty coins:* cf. Mt 24, 15. Cf. also Mk 14, 11; Lk 22, 5. *His Ransom-to-be-paid:* Christ. Cf. Mk 10, 45; Mt 20, 28; 1 Tm 2, 6.
6. Cf. Mt 7, 6: *Do not give what is holy to dogs or toss your pearls before swine. They will trample them under foot, at best, and perhaps even tear you to shreds.*
7. *Who on the Sabbath save an ox:* cf. Mt 12, 11; Lk 13, 15; 14, 5.
8. *Plucking stalks:* the incident alluded to is found in Mk 2, 23–28; Mt 12, 1–8; Lk 6, 1–5.
9. *Straightening out a crooked spine:* this healing story is found in Lk, 10, 13–17.
- 10–11. *Caiphas:* adopted here for metrical reasons, this form of the name is used in the Douay translation. On the events alluded to, cf. Mk 14, 61–63; Mt 22, 63–65. Cf. also Jl 2: 13: *Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the Lord, your God.*
13. On Herod's slaying of the Holy Innocents, cf. Mt, 2, 16–18.
- 14–15. On Herod's desire to see Jesus work a sign, Jesus' silence before him, and Herod's sending him back to Pilate, cf. Lk 23, 6–16.
16. On Pilate's washing his hands of Jesus' blood, cf. Mt, 27, 24.
17. Cf. Mt 26, 28: *This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.* Cf. Mk 14, 24; Lk 22, 20; Rom 3, 25; 5, 9; Eph 1, 7; Col 1, 14; Heb 9, 14; 13, 12; 1 Pt 1, 2; 1 Jn 1, 7; Rv 1, 5; 5, 9.
23. *Treasure's fill:* cf. Col 2, 2–3: *Christ—in whom every treasure of wisdom and knowledge is hidden.*

PEARLS

When Satan sifted Peter just like wheat,
And he, the Church's rock, in near defeat
 Denied his Cornerstone Divine;
 Or Judas by a stolen kiss betrayed
For thirty coins his Ransom-to-be-paid, 5
 Were pearls not cast to swine?

When Jews, who on the Sabbath save an ox,
Condemned the Sabbath's Lord for plucking stalks
 Or straightening out a crooked spine;
When Caiphas rent his garments, not his heart, 10
 To hear the Son take up the Father's part,
 Were pearls not cast to swine?

When Herod, who had slain the Innocents,
Sent back to die a man without offense
 Because he saw him work no sign; 15
When Pilate washed his hands of blood they spilt,
Though it alone could wash away his guilt,
 Were pearls not cast to swine?

Though I as Peter have denied you too,
As Judas have betrayed you, and as Jew 20
 Or Caiphas thwarted God's design;
And though as Herod or as Pilate still
I give you up—Lord, from your treasure's fill,
 Let pearls of grace be mine!

DOORS

- 1–4. Cf. Mt 6, 5–8, especially v. 6: *Whenever you pray, go to your room, close your door, and pray to your Father in private.*
- 6–8. Cf. Mt 7, 7–11 and Lk 11, 9–13 on God’s answering of prayer. On line 8, cf. the parable of the friend at midnight in Lk 11, 5–8.
- 9–12. Cf. the parable of the ten bridesmaids in Mt 25, 1–13. On line 12, cf. Rv 3, 20: *Here I stand, knocking at the door. If anyone hears me calling and opens the door, I will enter his house and have supper with him, and he with me.*

DOORS

I now shall go to pray
In secret and implore
My God this break of day
Behind my bolted door;

5

10

CENTURION

Cf. Mt 8, 5–13; Lk 7, 1–10; 13, 28–30.

3. *Outer court: cf. Rv 11, 2: Exclude the outer court of the temple, however; do not measure it, for it has been handed over to the Gentiles*
- 4–5. Cf. 1 Kgs 8, 27: *If the heavens and the highest heavens cannot contain you, how much less this temple which I have built!* Cf. also 1 Chr 6, 18.
6. Cf. Is 66, 1.
- 13–14. On the parable of the lost coin, cf. Lk 15, 8–10.
17. On the priesthood of Christ, cf. Heb 3–10.
18. Cf. Ps 118, 22, cited in Mt 21, 42: *The stone which the builders rejected has become the keystone of the structure.* Cf. also Mk 12, 10; Lk 20, 27; Acts 4, 11; 1 Pt 2, 4–7.
- 20–21. Cf. Ps 127, 1: *Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it.*
- 24–25. Cf. Prv 9, 1–2.

CENTURION

A Roman, a centurion, had built
The Jews a temple, but for his unworth
Kept to the outer court of pagan guilt;
And yet God's glory will not blaze
In buildings human hands can raise: 5
His throne is heaven and his footstool earth.

Although his slave at home was all but dead,
He dared not come in person, but appealed
To Christ through messengers he sent instead:
"I am not worthy, Lord, to pray 10
You come beneath my roof—just say
The word, and then my servant will be healed."

For he had swept his heart's abode, and there
Had found the Jews' lost coin of faith, and thrown
All money changers from his house of prayer— 15
No temple built by human hand,
But one, with Christ as priest, to stand
On his foundation and his cornerstone.

What faith was in the house of Israel
As in this mansion Christ prepared apart?
For if God builds no house in which to dwell, 20
They labor then in vain who build.
That slave was healed, for Christ so willed,
Who came, not to a house, but to a heart.

There Wisdom built her home and spread her table,
And there she mixed her wine and dressed her meat. 25
Lord, may we come, whom faith in you makes able,
From north and south, from east and west,
To share your banquet and be blest
Where Jacob, Isaac, Abraham, all eat.

EYES

On Christ's healing of the blind, cf. Mk 8, 22–26; 10, 46–52; Mt 9, 27–31; 20, 29–34; Lk 18, 35–43; Jn 9, 1–40.

This poem is written in iambs except for the first line of each stanza which contains a dactyl:

˘ / ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ / (˘)

2. *To see the face of things, though through a hood:* things do not always appear as they truly are.
3. *And should the eye not judge, but testify:* if sense merely reports what it perceives without attempting to pass judgment on the truth or falsity of the appearance, it will not fall into error.
4. *It will not bend an oar that way:* a classical example of a sense illusion. An oar placed halfway in the water appears to be bent.
5. *See—though not have understood:* sense perceives the particular thing, but does not understand its general nature.
8. *And should the mind unravel what is twined:* if the mind succeeds in discerning between truth and mere appearance in sense impressions.
13. Cf. Mk 4, 35–41; Mk 6, 45–52; Mt 8, 23–27; 14, 22–33; Lk 8, 22–25
- 14, 17. Cf. 1 Cor 12, 13: *Now we see indistinctly, as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face.*
15. Cf. Jn 20, 29: *Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed*; 1 Cor 5, 7: *We walk by faith, not by sight.*

EYES

Christ heals the blind by the light of day
To see the face of things, though through a hood;
And should the eye not judge, but testify,
It will not bend an oar that way,
But see—though not have understood. 5

Christ heals the blind by the light of reason
To strip such faces of their veil or screen;
And should the mind unravel what is twined,
It straightens oars in proper season
And understands what eye has seen. 10

Christ heals the blind by the light of grace
To see his visage shrouds divinity;
Should faith that saves fear not the wind and waves,
Its mirror darkly shows a trace
Of what, believed, it cannot see. 15

Christ heals the blind by the light of glory
When, face to face, God's splendor is received;
Let us no more, Lord, knock upon the door
Of parable and allegory,
But then see all that we believed! 20

EARS

On Christ's healing of the deaf, cf. Mk 7, 31–37.

8. *As Prophet to his land: "Repent":* cf. Jesus' message of repentance in Mk 1, 14–15; Mt 4, 17.
9. *As Priest to sinner: "Go and sin no more":* cf. Jesus' words to the woman caught in adultery, Jn 8, 1–11.
10. *As Master unto slave: "Obey":* Jesus compares his relationship to the disciples to the master-servant relationship in Lk 17, 7–10.
11. *As Lord to harvester: "Be sent":* cf. Mt 9, 37–38: *The harvest is good but laborers are scarce. Beg the harvest master to send out laborers to gather his harvest* (cf. also Lk 10, 2); Jn 4, 35–38: *The fields are shining for harvest! The reaper already collects his wages and gathers a yield for eternal life, that sower and reaper may rejoice together. Here we have the saying verified: 'One man sows; another reaps.' I sent you to reap what you had not worked for. Others have done the labor, and you have come into their gain..*
12. *And Spouse to waiting bride: "Come, Love, away: Cf. Sg 2, 10 and 13: Arise, my beloved, my beautiful one, and come!*
14. *As "Abba"-Witness in their heart:* cf. Rom 8, 15: *You did not receive a spirit of slavery leading you back into fear, but a spirit of adoption through which we cry out, "Abba!" (that is "Father").* Cf. also Gal 4, 6.
15. *As Memory of Christ, as Comforter:* cf. Jn 14, 26: *The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will instruct you in everything, and remind you of all that I told you.* Cf. also Jn 15, 26.
16. *And Guide to all the truth they seek:* cf. Jn 16, 13: *When he comes, however, being the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth.*

EARS

Christ heals the deaf, who hear their conscience speak
 As tablets of the law brought near,
As sage to check the bold and goad the weak,
 As lawyer to accuse or plead,
 As jury to condemn or clear, 5
And judge to punish or reward each deed.

Christ heals the deaf, who hear their Lord implore
 As Prophet to his land: *Repent*,
As Priest to sinner: *Go and sin no more*,
 As Master unto slave: *Obey*, 10
 As Lord to harvester: *Be sent*,
And Spouse to waiting bride: *Come, Love, away*.

Christ heals the deaf, who hear the Spirit stir
 As *Abba*-Witness in their heart,
As Memory of Christ, as Comforter, 15
And Guide to all the truth they seek . . .
Christ, heal our conscience by your art
That through the Spirit we may hear you speak!

TONGUES

On Christ's healing of the mute, cf. Mk 7, 31–37; Mt 9, 32–34; 12, 22–24; Lk 11, 14–15.

1–10. Cf. the call of Peter in Lk 5, 1–11.

11–20. Cf. the healing of the Syrophoenician woman's daughter in Mk 7, 24–30 and Mt 15, 21–28.

21–30. Cf. the healing of the lepers in Lk 17, 11–19.

TONGUES

Christ heals the mute,
Who then confess their guilt,
As when, in boat atilt
With deep-sea fruit,
Fished-fisher Peter met 5
His Christ-cast net.
Shame cried defeat:
“Lord, leave a sinful man!”
As love triumphant ran
To clasp his feet. 10

Christ heals the mute,
Who lift to him their prayer,
As, for her daughter’s care,
There knelt astute
Before the Bread of Life 15
A Gentile wife.
No cur, though, comes
To taste the children’s meat,
“Yet dogs,” she pled, “still eat
The table crumbs.” 20

Christ heals the mute,
Who raise to him their thanks,
As when, though from his ranks
None followed suit,
One leper out of ten 25
Came back again.
Though Christ made whole
Nine Jews with rotting skin,
He cleansed of leprous sin
A foreign soul. 30

⇒

31–40. Cf. the account of Christ's entry into Jerusalem in Lk 19, 37–40. Cf. also Mk 11, 9–10; Mt 21, 9.

41–50. Cf. the call of the prophet Isaiah in Is 6, 1–7.

44. *Their inmost root*: i. e., the inmost root of the lips in their uncleanness.

<p>Christ heals the mute, Who sing his praise in song, Like those who sang along His final route: “Hosanna, David’s Son! God’s Coming One!” But had that crowd Been silent where it stood, The very boulders would Have cried aloud.</p>	<p>35</p> <p>40</p>
<p>Christ, heal us mute, A race that bears the scourge Of unclean lips, and purge Their inmost root With tong-held burning embers. We, your members, Then will gaze On you, O Christ, the King, The Lord of hosts, and sing Your thanks and praise.</p>	<p>45</p> <p>50</p>

LIMBS

On Christ's healing of the lame, cf. Mt 8, 5–13; Lk, 7, 1–10; Mk 2, 1–12; Mt, 9, 1–8; Lk 5, 17–26; Lk 13, 10–17; Jn 5, 1–15.

- 4–6. Cf. Hb 2, 1: *I will stand at my guard post, and station myself upon the rampart, and keep watch to see what he will say to me.*
- 7–8. Cf. the various exhortations to stand fast in the faith: 1 Cor 16, 13; Gal 5, 1; Eph 6, 11; Phil 1, 27; 4, 1; 1 Thes 3, 8; 2 Thes 2, 15.
- 10. Cf. the various exhortations to walk before the Lord, such as Gn 17, 1 and Mi 2, 3.
- 11. Cf. the exhortation in Mi 4, 5, to walk in the name of the Lord.
- 13–14. Cf. Gal 5, 16: *My point is that you should live in accord with the spirit* (literally: “walk in the Spirit”) *and you will not yield to the cravings of the flesh.* Cf. also Rom 8, 1–12.
- 15. Cf. Rom 6, 4: *Through baptism into his death we were buried with him, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life* (literally: “so that we too might walk in newness of life”).
- 16. Cf. Eph 5, 2: *Follow the way of love* (literally: “walk in love”), *even as Christ loved you*
- 17–20. On running a race as a metaphor for the Christian life, cf. 1 Cor 9, 24–27; Phil 2, 16; Heb 12, 1–2.
- 21–24. Cf. Is 40, 31: *They that hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will soar as with eagles' wings; they will run and not grow weary, walk and not grow faint.*
- 31–32. On David's dancing before the ark, cf. 2 Sm 6, 14–23; 1 Chr 13, 8; 15, 29.

LIMBS

Christ heals the lame, Who leave their bed of sin And sheets of shame To stand as watchmen in His holy place And seek the Word the just By faith embrace In steadfast trust.	5
Christ heals the lame, Who walk before their God And in his Name Now tread the road he trod, Not in the flesh, But in the Spirit of New life, made fresh By works of love.	10 15
Christ heals the lame, Who run to meet their Lord And keep their aim Upon their last reward, Yet take the length Of life's ascending slope Renewed in strength By godly hope.	20
Christ, heal us lame, For standing, walking, loping; Call us maimed To trusting, loving, hoping. But, Lord, bid Us dance, as we embark, As David did Before the ark!	25 30

SATAN

On Christ's exorcisms, cf. Mk 1, 21–26; 5, 1–20; 7, 24–30; 9, 14–29; Mt 8, 28–34; 9, 32–34; 12, 22–24; 15, 21–28; 17, 14–21; Lk 4, 33–36; 8, 26–39; 11, 14; 9, 37–43; 13, 10–17.

Lines one and four of each stanza are iambs. The others run: ~ / ~ ~ / .

- 1–2. Cf. Gn 3, which describes man's temptation and fall. Cf. also 2 Cor 11, 3; Rv 12.
3. *That father of lies*: cf. Jn 8, 44.
4. *The tempter of all* : cf. Mk 1, 12–13; Mt 4, 1–11; Lk 4, 1–13; Acts 5, 3; 1 Cor 7, 5; 1 Thes 3, 5; Rv 12, 9; 20, 8.
5. *Christ has crushed his head*: cf. Gn 3, 15: *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel*. Rom 16, 20: *Then the God of peace will quickly crush Satan under your feet*.
7. *Our Heavenly Bread*: cf. Jn 6, 32: *It is my Father who gives you the real heavenly bread*; v. 51: *I myself am the living bread come down from heaven*.
8. *The Teacher of Truth*: cf. Jn 8, 40; 14, 6; 18, 37.
- 9–10. Cf. 1 Pt 5, 8: *Your opponent the devil is prowling like a roaring lion*.
- 11–12. Cf. Jn 8, 44: *He brought death to man from the beginning*. Cf. Heb 2, 14.
- 13–14. Cf. Mk 3, 27: *No one can enter a strong man's house and despoil his property unless he has first put him under restraint. Only then can he plunder his house*. Cf. also Mt 12, 29; Lk 11, 21–22.
16. Cf. Jn 8, 34–36: *Everyone who lives in sin is the slave of sin. (No slave has a permanent place in the family, but the son has a place there forever.) That is why, if the son frees you, you will really be free*.
17. On the dragon as an image of Satan, cf. Rv 12, 3–17.
18. *Lucifer*: the Vulgate translation of *hêlâl* ("morning star") in Is 14, 12–15, and a name applied by the Church Fathers to Satan.
19. In 2 Kgs 1, 2, Ahaziah consults Baalzebul ("lord of the divine habitation"), god of the Philistine city of Ekron. But the Hebrew text mockingly alters his name to Baalzebub ("lord of the flies" or "of the flying creatures"), which appears as Beelzebul in the New Testament. Cf. Mk 3, 22; Mt 12, 24; Lk 11, 15.
20. *Prince of the air*: cf. Eph 2, 2; 6, 12. Demons were thought to inhabit the air.
- 21–22. Cf. Rv 19, 20: *The devil who led them astray was hurled into the pool of burning sulphur*. Cf. also Jn 12, 31; Lk 10, 17–20.
24. *Redeemer from Wrath*: cf. 1 Thes 1, 10: *Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come*.
29. Cf. Jn 14, 6.

SATAN

The Serpent, seeming wise,
 Made fruit into Fall—
 That father of lies,
 The tempter of all!
 But Christ has crushed his head
 And shattered his tooth.
 Our Heavenly Bread,
 The Teacher of Truth!

The Lion's panting breath
 Keeps wetting its jaws— 10
 What cuspids of death,
 What murderous claws!
 But Christ still binds that beast
 And plunders his caves,
 Our Life-giving Priest, 15
 The Freer of Slaves!

The Dragon yet will rise
 With Lucifer's flare—
 That lord of the flies,
 The prince of the air!
 But Christ will cast him in
 The sulphurous bath,
 Our Savior from Sin,
 Redeemer from Wrath!

20

Lord, save us from the source
Of snakish deceit,
Of bestial force,
Of monstrous conceit.
Be Truth, and Life, and Way,
By light you impart,
By healing you ray,
As Lord of the heart!

RESURRECTIONS

On Jesus' raising of the dead, cf. Mk 5, 21–43; Mt 19, 18–26; Lk 8, 40–56; Lk 7, 11–17; Jn 11, 1–43.

This poem is written in iambic trimeter, except for every fourth line, which runs: ~ ~ / ~ / ~ / .

- 1–4. On resurrection as rebirth, cf. Is 26, 19: *But your dead shall live, their corpses shall rise; awake and sing, you who lie in the dust. For your dew is a dew of light, and the land of shades gives birth.*
- 5–8. On resurrection as clothing nakedness, cf. 1 Cor 15, 53: *This corruptible body must be clothed with incorruptibility, this mortal body with immortality.* 2 Cor 5, 4: *While we live in our present tent we groan; we are weighed down because we do not wish to be stripped naked but rather to have the heavenly dwelling envelop us, so that what is mortal may be absorbed by life.*
- 9–12. Cf. Jn 4, 14: *Whoever drinks the water I give him will never be thirsty; no, the water I give shall become a fountain within him, leaping up to provide eternal life.*
- 13–16. Jesus describes his own death and resurrection as the destruction and rebuilding of a temple in Jn 2, 19–22.
- 17–20. Cf. Mk 2, 22: *No man pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does so, the wine will burst the skins and both wine and skins will be lost.*
- 21–24. On resurrection as waking from sleep, cf. Eph 5, 14: *Awake, O sleeper, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.* Cf. also Is 51, 17; 60, 1.
- 25–28. On resurrection as rising from the dust, cf. Dn 12, 2: *Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some shall live forever, others shall be an everlasting horror and disgrace.*
- 29–32. Cf. Jn 11, 25–26: *I am the resurrection and the life: whoever believes in me, though he should die, will come to life; and whoever is alive and believes in me will never die.*

RESURRECTIONS

When Jesus raised the dead,
 Those framed in mother-wombs
 Whom other tombs now claimed
 Were reborn as Spirit-bred,
And though a fatal knife 5
 Stripped flesh it probed from bone,
 Christ robed his own afresh
 From the loom of Spirit-life.
If mortal drought could drain
 Their well of coursing blood, 10
 Life's Source let floods upswell
 In the spray of Spirit-rain;
Did dwellings now decline
 And fall to mounds of sticks,
 Life's Ground rebricked the walls 15
 Of a shining Spirit-shrine.

Though Christ raised up the cursed,
 Did still his signs not pour
 New wines whose store would spill 20
 When the aging skins had burst?
Would sleepers he aroused
 Not doze again and die,
 Like men who lie with those
 Whom the charnel chambers housed? 25
Those lifted fallen—must
 They not in time revert
 To slime or dirt and rot,
 When our dust returns to dust?
Christ, Resurrection! give 30
 To us who *do* believe
 A true-faith eve, and thus
 May we die in you to live!

WISDOM

1. Cf. the story in Lk 7, 36–50. Cf. also Mk 14, 3–9; Mt 26, 6–13; Jn 12, 1–8. These texts probably deal with two separate episodes, but several details may have been interchanged.
2. On Jesus' relationship to tax-collectors, cf. Mt 9, 9–12; Lk 5, 27–32; 15, 1–2; 19, 1–10.
- 3, 8. Cf. Lk 7, 34: *The Son of Man came and he both ate and drank, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'*
4. Cf. Mt 9, 12: *People who are in good health do not need a doctor; sick people do.* Cf. also Mk 2, 17; Lk 5, 31.
5. Cf. Lk 7, 35: *God's wisdom is vindicated by all who accept it* (literally: "And wisdom was [is] justified by all her children.")
6. Cf. the story of the wedding at Cana, Jn 2, 1–11, where Jesus changed water into wine.
7. Cf. the multiplication of the loaves and fish stories, Mk 6, 30–44; Mt 14, 13–21; Lk 9, 10–17; Mk 8, 1–10; Mt 15, 32–39.
9. Cf. Mk 2, 19: *How can the guests at a wedding fast as long as the groom is still among them?* Cf. also Mt 9, 15; Lk 34.
- 11–12. Cf. the healing of the man born blind, Jn 9, 1–41, especially Jesus' words to the Pharisees: *If you were blind there would be no sin in that. 'But we see,' you say, and your sin remains.*
13. Cf. Jn 9, 24, where the Pharisees say of Jesus: *We know this man is a sinner*, and Jn 10, 20: *Many were claiming: "He is possessed by a devil—out of his mind!"*
14. Cf. the saying quoted in Mk 6, 4; Mt 13, 57; Lk 4, 24; Jn 4, 44.
- 16–17. Cf. the accusation against Jesus, Lk 11, 15: *It is by Beelzebul, the prince of devils, that he casts out devils* (cf. also Mk 3, 22; Mt 9, 34; 12, 24), and Jesus' retort, Lk 11, 19: *If it is by the finger of God that I cast out devils, then the reign of God is upon you.* Cf. also Mt, 12, 28.
18. *Sought to test him:* cf. Lk 11, 16. *Judging him "Possessed!":* cf. Jn 7, 20; 8, 48. 52; 10, 20.
19. This saying is found in Mk 3, 25; Mt 12, 25; Lk 11, 17.

WISDOM

When prostitutes had kissed his feet, contrite,
And tax-collectors gathered all around,
Some just perceived “the friend of whores and thieves!”
Although the sick need doctors, not the sound.
But by her children Wisdom is proved right. 5

When water changed to wine for love’s delight
And loaves and fish were made a great repast,
They thought him sunk, “a glutton and a drunk!”
Though while the groom is there the guests don’t fast.
But by her children Wisdom is proved right. 10

When someone blind from birth was given sight
But Pharisees called sightless to their face,
They said they had “a sinner! He is mad!”
For not a prophet’s honored in his place.
But by her children Wisdom is proved right. 15

When demons by God’s finger took to flight,
They claimed he cast them out by Satan’s hand
And sought to test him, judging him “possessed!”
Although a house divided cannot stand.
But by her children Wisdom is proved right. 20

Lord, bathe your patients in your healing light,
Then may we celebrate with you, our spouse;
Let us be stirred by your prophetic word,
And stand united in your holy house.
Lord, let your children prove your Wisdom right! 25

REST

The intended meter is as follows:

~ / ~ /
~ / ~ / ~ / ~ /
~ / ~ / ~ / ~ /
~ / ~ / ~ /
~ / ~ / ~ /
~ / ~ / ~ / ~ /

Cf. Mt 12, 28–30: *Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. Your souls will find rest, for my yoke is easy and my burden light.*

1–4. For the image of one who hears God’s Word and acts on it as one who builds a house on rock, cf. Mt 7, 24–27; Lk 6, 47–49.

9–10. For these images of spiritual armor, cf. Eph 6, 13–17 and 1 Thes 5, 8.

13–14. Cf. Mt 7, 13: *The gate that leads to damnation is wide, the road is clear, and many choose to travel it.*

15–17. Cf. 1 Cor 9, 24–26: *You know that while all the runners in the stadium take part in the race, the award goes to one man. In that case, run so as to win! Athletes deny themselves all sorts of things. They do this to win a crown of leaves that withers, but we a crown that is imperishable.* Cf. also Gal 2, 3; Phil 2, 16; Heb 12, 1.

22. *Resting on your breast like John:* Cf. Jn 13, 25; 21, 20.

REST

Let no one build
On silt or sand, where a house won't stand,
But found on rock-hard ground each stone and board
To brave the rains, and waves, and cyclone's might
As the temple of the Lord. 5
His yoke is easy, and his burden light.

Let those who war
No more seek throne or a boundary stone,
But take faith's shield and make God's Word their sword,
Then bear love's breastplate, wear hope's helmet, fight 10
For the God of hosts, the Lord.
His yoke is easy, and his burden light.

Let those who race
Not face defeat on an easy street,
But run through life as one who seeks reward 15
At death, not losing breath, but keeping sight
Of the crown from glory's Lord.
His yoke is easy, and his burden light.

Let us who work
Not shirk the loads, nor the arms, nor roads, 20
But build, and fight firm-willed, and run restored,
Yet, resting on your breast like John, delight
In our meek and humble Lord.
Your yoke is easy, Christ, your burden light!

FRUIT

- 1–3. On Christ as sower, cf. Mk 4, 1–9. 13–20; Mt 13, 1–9. 18–23; Lk 8, 4–8. 11–15.
- 4–6. Cf. Col 2, 7: *Be rooted in him (Christ) and built up in him, growing ever stronger in faith, as you were taught, and overflowing with gratitude.*
- 7–9. Cf. Lk 8, 11: *The seed is the word of God.* Jn 1, 14: *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we have seen his glory: the glory of an only Son coming from the Father, filled with enduring love.*
- 10–12. On Christ as vine, cf. Jn 15, 1–8.
- 13–15. Cf. Elizabeth's words to Mary concerning Christ in Lk 1, 42: *Blest is the fruit of your womb.*
- 16–18. On Christ as Lord of the harvest, cf. Mt 9, 37; Lk 10, 2; Jn 4, 35–38. Cf. also the parable of the seed growing secretly in Mk 4, 26–29 and that of the weeds in Mt 13, 24–30. 36–40. On the wine, cf. above all the words of institution of the Eucharist in Mk 14, 23–25; Mt 26, 27–29; Lk 22, 20; 1 Cor 11, 23–25.

FRUIT

Christ is the Sower
Who as skillful grower
Tills our ground.

He too is Ground,
Deep furrow and rich mound, 5
Which roots our seed.

And he is Seed,
As Word of God we heed,
Which sprouts our vine.

Christ is the Vine 10
From which we branches twine
And bear our fruit.

He is the Fruit
Good vines bring forth to suit
The harvest lord. 15

O, Harvest Lord,
What wine for us is poured
Who grew in you!

TREASURE

- 1–5. Cf. Mt 13, 44: *The reign of God is like a buried treasure which a man found in a field. He hid it again, and rejoicing at his find went and sold all he had and bought that field.* Cf. also Mk 10, 21; Mt 19, 21; Lk 18, 22; Prv 4, 7.
- 6, 12, 18. Cf. Mt 6, 21; Lk 12, 34.
- 7–11. Cf. Mt 13, 45–46: *The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant's search for fine pearls. When he found one really valuable pearl, he went back and put up for sale all that he had and bought it.*
- 12–17. On the anointing of Jesus' feet, cf. Lk 7, 36–50; Mk 14, 3–9; Mt 26, 6–13; Jn 12, 1–8.

TREASURE

What man could find a fortune in some lot
And yet not start
With pleasure
To trade all that he's made
To buy that plot? 5
For where our treasure is, there lies our heart.

What merchant finds a pearl of matchless price
But would not part
With leisure
And spare—for gems so rare— 10
No sacrifice?
For where our treasure is, there lies our heart.

What sinner, Lord, whose debt you now discard
Would not depart
From measure 15
To treat your sacred feet
With costly nard?
For where you are, dear Treasure, lies our heart!

BREAD

Cf. Mk 6, 30–44; Mt 14, 13–21; Lk 9, 10–17; Jn 6, 1–15. Cf. also Mk 8, 1–10; Mt 15, 32–39.

2. *Word of Life*: is contrasted with *Bread of Life* (v. 8). In Jesus' discourse on the bread of life in Jn 6, vv. 35–47 seem to refer to Christ's teaching, whereas vv. 48–58 seem to refer to the eucharist. On the juxtaposition of the two, cf. Dt 8, 3; Mt 4, 4; Lk 4,4.
4. *Daily bread*: an expression taken, of course, from the Lord's Prayer, where we ask God to *give us our daily bread*. The disciples want the crowds to go *buy* it. Cf. Mt 6, 11; Lk 11, 3.
7. *Our Elisha*: Christ, who will now repeat Elisha's miracle of multiplying loaves of bread. Cf. 2 Kgs 4, 42–44.
9. *Not by sweating brow*: cf. Gn 3, 19: *By the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat*.
10. Cf. Lk 6, 20–21: *Blest are you who hunger; you shall be filled*. Cf. also Ps 78, 25, 29; 105, 40.
13. Cf. Lk 12, 37: *It will go well with those servants whom the master finds wide-awake on his return. I tell you, he will put on an apron, seat them at table, and proceed to wait on them*. Cf. also Lk 22, 27: *Who, in fact, is the greater—he who reclines at table or he who serves the meal? Is it not the one who reclines at table? yet I am in your midst as the one who serves you*.
14. The multiplication of the loaves recalls the miracle of the manna in the desert. Cf. Ex 16.
- 15–16. Cf. 1 Cor 5, 7–8: *Get rid of the old yeast to make of yourselves fresh dough, unleavened loaves, as it were; Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. Let us celebrate the feast not with the old yeast, that of corruption and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*.
- 17–18. Although the two disciples at Emmaus recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread (cf. Lk 24, 13–35), after the multiplication of the loaves no one recognized who he was: the crowds wanted to make him king (cf. Jn 6, 14–15), the Pharisees demanded a sign (cf. Mt 16, 1–4), and the disciples did not understand (cf. Mt 16, 5–12).
- 19–20. Cf. the Syrophoenician woman's response to Jesus in Mt 15, 27: *Even the dogs eat the leavings that fall from their master's tables*. Cf. also Mk 7, 28.
21. Cf. 1 Cor 10, 16: *Is not the bread we break a sharing in the body of Christ?*
22. Cf. 1 Cor 11, 26: *Every time, then, you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes!*
- 23–24. Cf. Lk 22, 15–16: *He said to them: "I have greatly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. I tell you, I will not eat again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."* On the eschatological banquet, cf. Mt 22, 1–14; Lk 14, 15–24.

BREAD

Like sheep without a shepherd, flocks would feed
 Upon Christ's Word of Life, although
At twilight once the Twelve proposed they go
 Buy daily bread, since they would need
Two hundred days of pay for hungry droves, 5
 But only had five loaves.

Yet our Elisha blessed and broke and passed
 Them out as Bread of Life, had now
By sweetest bounty, not by sweating brow.
 How blest those hungry, filled at last! 10
Their leavings let the Twelve—oh miracle!—
 Each glean a basketful.

Our Master broke their fast and served a feast
 Of manna in that desert place
—Unleavened grain of Heaven's truth and grace 15
 Without the old corruption's yeast—
But went unrecognized by ranks he fed
 With breaking of his bread.

Though we would be content with any crumb
 O Lord, you throw to dogs like us, 20
You share your flesh in bread we break, who thus
 Proclaim your death until you come.
Then at your table we shall taste anew
 Life's bread of joy with you!

WAVES

Cf. Mk 6, 45–52; Mt 14, 22–33; Jn 6, 15–21. Cf. also Mk 4, 35–41; Mt 8, 18. 23–27; Lk 8, 22–25.

5. *Pass them by*: in the OT “to pass by” is sometimes used in connection with a revelation of God and his glory. Cf. Ex 33, 19. 22; 1 Kgs 19, 11. In the NT the expression sometimes occurs in similar epiphanic contexts. Cf. Mk 2, 14; Mt 9, 9. 27; 20, 30; Lk 18, 37.
6. Just as God revealed himself to Elijah, not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire, but in the tiny whispering sound (cf. 1 Kgs 19, 9–18), so Jesus will reveal himself in the stillness after the storm.
- 10, 12. The Greek *egô’ eimi* (literally “I am”) is attributed only to God in the LXX. Cf. Ex 3, 14; Dt 32, 39; Is 41, 4; 43, 10. The first of these texts contains God’s self-revelation to Moses at the burning bush.
11. *Fear not*: this exhortation often accompanies theophanies in the LXX. Cf. Gn 15, 1; Jos 8, 1; Dn 10, 12. 19; Tb 12, 17.
18. Cf. Ps 69, 2–3: *Save me, O God, for the waters threaten my life; I am sunk in the abysmal swamp where there is no foothold; I have reached the watery depths; the flood overwhelms me.* Although no precise historical situation is indicated as the occasion of this psalm, in v. 5 the psalmist refers to those who are wrongfully his enemies.
19. *With hand outstretched*: God’s outstretched arm is a common OT metaphor for his saving power.
24. Jesus, who walked on the water and passed from storm to calm, reminds one of Moses, who led the Israelites out of slavery through the Reed Sea to the promised land.

WAVES

Christ spotted tempest-spited boatmen rowing
 Against the galling windstorm's gale,
 Wave-racked in tossed, wind-wreaked travail,
Then walked the crests, with warring crosswinds blowing,
 To "pass them by" on peaceless waves, 5
 Like God before Elijah in his caves.

These spied this Lamb, who sped now like some ram
 Upon those crags along the coast,
 And cried aghast as at a ghost.
'Cross billows bellowed Christ: "I AM WHO AM, 10
 Fear not!"—despite the pull and push—
 Like God to Moses at the burning bush.

But Peter, bold, petitioned: "If it's *you*,
 Lord, bid me tread above the tide."
 No quicker pled than Christ replied: 15
"Now come!" A blast, though, came then blust'ring through,
 And Simon pleaded: "Save me, please!"
 Like David flooded by his enemies.

With hand outstretched he held him strong and said:
 "What little faith! What let you fall?" 20
 They climbed aboard to bear the squall,
But Christ now quelled the storm and called instead
 As calm a breeze as there could be.
 Thus Moses led the Hebrews through the sea.

What One was this whom wind and wave obey? 25
 Those sailors, resting, ceased to row
 And bid him homage, bowed down low.
As once they said to you, so may we say,
 O Lord, whom dread seas shored dry-shod:
 "Beyond all doubt, you are the Son of God!" 30

LIFE

3. Cf. Lk 2, 51: *He went down with them then, and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them.*
7. Cf. Lk 9, 48: *The least one among you is the greatest.*
8. Cf. Mt 16, 25: *Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.* Cf. Mk 8, 35; Mt 10, 39; Lk 9, 24; 17, 33; Jn 12, 25.
11. On Jesus' baptism by John, cf. Mk 1, 9–11; Mt 3, 13–17; Lk 3, 21–22.
- 12–13. *Can't be faulted:* cf. 2 Co 5, 21; Heb 4, 15; 1 Pt 2, 22; 1 Jn 3, 5.
15. Cf. Mt 23, 12: *Whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.* Cf. Jas 4, 10; 1 Pt 5, 6.
23. Cf. Mk 10, 31: *The last shall come first.* Cf. Mk 9, 35; Mt 19, 30; 20, 16; Lk 13, 30.
- 26–28. Cf. Mk 8, 36: *What profit does a man show who gains the whole world and destroys himself* (literally: "his soul") *in the process?* Cf. also Mt 16, 26; Lk 9, 25.
31. Cf. Mt 10, 25: *The pupil should be glad to become like his teacher, the slave like his master.* Lk 6, 40; Jn 15, 20.

LIFE

From birth
Our Heaven come-to-earth
Obeyed his parents' orders,
And in boyhood borders
Walked the straightest. 5
For God has so designed it
That least ones may be greatest,
And those who lose their life for him will find it.

In life
Our Grace for sin-grown-rife 10
Accepted John's ablution
(Though our Absolution
Can't be faulted).
For thus has God assigned it:
The humble are exalted, 15
And those who lose their life for him will find it.

In death
Our Lord from Nazareth
Gave in to Caesar's power,
Yet, in his final hour, 20
Was blest when cursed.
For God has so defined it
That last ones will be first,
And those who lose their life for him will find it.

From birth, 25
Through life, to death—what worth
Is it to gain the whole
Wide world, but lose your soul?
What worse disaster?
Oh, let us come behind you, 30
As slaves behind their master.
Thus may we lose our lives, O Christ, to find you!

TRANSFIGURATION

Cf. Mk 9, 2–8; Mt 17, 1–8; Lk 9, 28–36.

- 1–3. Cf. Ps 24, 3–4: *Who can ascend the mountain of the Lord? Or who may stand in his holy place? He whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean, who desires not what is vain, nor swears deceitfully to his neighbor.* Line 4 identifies Christ as the one who preeminently fulfills these conditions.
- 7–9. Cf. 2 Cor 4, 6: *For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shown in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ.*
12. *Seamless tunic:* cf. Jn 19, 23: *This tunic was woven in one piece from top to bottom and had no seam.* The fact that the soldiers did not divide the seamless tunic may suggest the priesthood of Christ. Cf. Lv 21, 10: *The most exalted of the priests, upon whose head the anointing oil has been poured and who has been ordained to wear the special vestments, shall not bare his head or rend his garments.* It may also serve to recall the tunic of Joseph (cf. Gn 37, 3), who, like Christ, was betrayed by his brothers only to become their savior. The Fathers of the Church interpreted the seamless tunic as a symbol of the unity of the Church.
- 14–15. Cf. the theophany to Moses in Ex 19, 16–19; 24, 15–18.
- 16–18. On the radiance of Moses’ face, as he bore the tablets of the law to the Israelites, cf. Ex 34, 29–35.
- 21–22. Cf. 1 Kgs 18, 21–40, on Elijah’s calling down fire from Heaven to consume his sacrifice and on his slaying of the prophets of Baal.
- 23–24. Cf. 1 Kgs 19, 1–18, on Elijah’s flight to Horeb and the theophany he experienced there.
- 25–26. Moses and Elijah represent the law and the prophets. Cf. Jesus’ words in Mt 5, 17: *Do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets. I have come, not to abolish them, but to fulfill them.*
27. Cf. Lk 12, 49: *I have come to light a fire on the earth. How I wish the blaze were ignited!*
29. *Exodus:* cf. Lk 9, 21: *They appeared in glory and spoke of his passage* (literally: “exodus”), *which he was about to fulfill in Jerusalem.*
30. Peter’s desire to erect for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah the kind of tents used at the Feast of Tabernacles is usually interpreted as an attempt to prolong the experience of glory. He does not yet understand that the Messiah must suffer and die.

TRANSFIGURATION

Oh, who could climb
The mountain of the Lord,
Or stand upon his holy place,
Save Christ sublime,
Whose mounting would accord 5
To Peter, James, and John such grace?

For now his face,
A blazing sun, bespoke
A glory past where words can soar—
White light to lace 10
Each fiber of the cloak
And seamless tunic that he wore.

And there before
Him Moses stood, to whom
God thundered once in fire and cloud, 15
Who later bore
The Law through flame and fume
To all, his face beneath a shroud.

They spoke aloud
With great Elijah there, 20
Who, calling down a blaze, once slew
An idol's crowd,
Then fled to caverns where
God whispered softly, hid from view.

With Jesus, who 25
Fulfilled the Law for us
And longed to see his fire unpent,
Those sainted two
Discussed his Exodus—
Though Peter wished for each a tent. 30

⇒

- 31–33. A cloud of glory filled the Jerusalem Temple at its dedication. Cf. 1 Kgs 8, 10–13. This cloud is, in turn, reminiscent of the glory that filled the Tabernacle of the wilderness. Cf. Ex 40, 34–38. Both texts suggest that Christ is the glory of God dwelling among us.
- 35–36. The words spoken at Christ's transfiguration allude to the Suffering-Servant oracles (cf. Is 42, 1–4; 49, 1–7; 50, 4–11; 52, 13–53) and thus to Christ's passion and death.
- 37–39. According to tradition, Peter was martyred upside down in Rome under Nero. Acts 12, 2, reports that James was decapitated by Herod Agrippa I. There is also a tradition that John was killed by the Jews in Palestine. In any event, Jesus seems to allude to the martyrdom of James and John in Mk 10, 39.

A cloud God-sent
Then shadowed everyone,
As once it filled the Temple hall;
Its message went:
“Behold my cherished Son,
My chosen Servant; heed his call.” 35

And that said all
To Peter, James, and John,
Who followed him to death in time.
Lord, though we fall, 40
Lead us as well upon
Your way—O Christ, our Paradigm!

SAMARITAN

Cf. Lk 10, 29–37.

18. *Robber passions*: in the sense that disordered passions steal (1) the calm and tranquility of the soul, (2) its naturally acquired virtue, and (3) its supernaturally infused grace.
19. *Stripped of grace*: cf. the symbolic language in Rv 3, 18 to the lukewarm church of Laodicea: *Buy white garments in which to be clothed, if the shame of your nakedness is to be covered.*
20. Cf. Rom 6–7 on the relation of sin to death.
22. Cf. the texts in which Christ had come to heal not the healthy but the sick: Mk 2, 17; Mt 9, 12–13; Lk 5, 31–32.
23. *Paid the price*: cf. 1 Cor 6, 20: *You have been purchased and at a price.* Cf. also 7, 23.
24. On our rest in Paradise, cf. Heb 4, 1–11.

SAMARITAN

A man was traveling to Jericho,
But fell in robbers' hands that day,
And, stripped and beaten, bled
There, left for dead.
A priest then chanced to pass, and though 5
He looked at him, he went his way;
A Levite came,
And looked as well, then did the same.

A kind Samaritan came after priest
And Levite, saw him, and in pity 10
Dressed his wounds with fine
Pressed oil and wine.
He carried him upon his beast,
Then lodged him in the city,
Let him sleep, 15
And paid them for his care and keep.

O Lord, we are that very man!—we too
Were thrashed by robber passions, have
Been stripped of grace within,
And die in sin. 20
And that Samaritan are you,
Who poured out mercy's salve
And paid the price
That we might rest in Paradise!

WORK

Cf. Lk 10, 38–42.

8. Cf. Mt 12, 28–30: *Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. Your souls will find rest, for my yoke is easy and my burden light.*
15. Cf. Gn 3, 19: *In the sweat of your face shall you eat your bread.*
16. *Workday hands, but sabbath hearts:* cf. Ex, 20, 9: *Six days you may labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord, your God. No work may be done then.* Cf. also Ex 23, 12; 35, 2; Dt 5, 13.
- 17–18. Cf. Jn 17, 11. 16: *I am in the world no more, but these are in the world. . . . They are not of the world, any more than I belong to the world.*
20. Cf. the words of Jesus in Jn 4, 34: *Doing the will of him who sent me and bringing his work to completion is my food.* Cf. also Jn 5, 17. 36; 9, 4; 10, 37–38; 17, 4.
21. On Jesus' listening to the Father's voice, cf. Jn 5, 30; 8, 28. 40; 10, 18; 12, 50; 15, 15.

WORK

When Jesus went to Martha's home to eat,
Her sister, Mary, sat upon the stone
 To listen at his feet.
But Martha, on her own,
And burdened with the meal, then came to ask:
"Do you not mind that I must work alone?
Tell her to share the task!"

5

But Christ, in whom the weary soul finds rest,
Said: “Martha, worried Martha, you are too
Distracted and distressed
By all the things you do,
When there is need of only one today.
Your sister chose the better part, and you
Should not take that away.”

May we, who earn our bread by sweat of brow, 15
Have workday hands but sabbath hearts, which, still
In Martha's world for now
(Although not *of* it), fill
Their only need by Mary's better choice.
For you, Lord, did the Father's work and will, 20
Yet listened to his voice!

JOY

- 1–6. Cf. the parable of the lost sheep in Mt 18, 10–14 and Lk 15, 3–7.
- 7–12. Cf. the parable of the lost coin in Lk 15, 8–10.
- 13–18. Cf. the parable of the prodigal son in Lk 15, 11–32.
- 19–24. Cf. Jn 17, 12–13: *As long as I was with them, I guarded them with your name which you gave me. I kept careful watch, and not one of them was lost, none but him who was destined to be lost—in fulfillment of Scripture. Now, however, I come to you; I say all this while I am still in the world that they may share my joy completely.*

JOY

What shepherd with a hundred sheep Will yet not leave them all To seek a stray And, finding it, not call His friends to reap A crop of joy that day?	5
What wife will lose one coin of ten And yet not fetch a light And sweep things up, Nor, spotting it, invite Her neighbors then To share a joy-filled cup?	10
What father with a wayward son He sees return won't choose The fatted calf, Place robes, and ring, and shoes On such a one, And feast and dance and laugh?	15
What joy, O Lord, to go through life Like sheep or coins you find Or sons thus met! But are your joys combined, As shepherd, wife, And father, greater yet?	20

HUMILITY

Cf. Lk 18, 9–14.

5. For Christ's censure of the Pharisees, cf. especially Mk 12, 37–40; Mt 23, 1–36; Lk 11, 37–12, 1. On the publicans, see the poem entitled "Zacchaeus," note on lines 1–4.

16–17. This verse also occurs in Mt 23, 12 and Lk 14, 11.

- 19–20. *May we do good*: like the Pharisee in his avoidance of sin (vv. 8–9). *With pious deeds*: such as the Pharisee's fasting twice a week (v. 9). *Alms for others' needs*: such as the Pharisee's paying tithes (v. 10).

21. *But do so as the tax-collector would*: i.e., in his spirit of humility rather than with the Pharisee's attitude of proud self-sufficiency.

HUMILITY

What parable could speak to those who trust
In their own might to scale a lofty height,
While looking down on those they deem unjust?

Two men went up to temple once to pray
—One Pharisee, one publican—and then 5
The first, with head unbowed, began this way:
“I thank you, God, I’m not like other men:
The thieves, the cheats, the rakes, or even, say,
This tax-collector—twice a week I fast,
While paying tithes on all that I’ve amassed.” 10

The tax-collector, standing far aside,
Dared not look up to heaven, but began
To beat his breast instead. “O God,” he cried,
“Be merciful to me, a sinful man!”
Whence he, though not the first, was justified. 15
For as the humble are exalted, so
Are any who exalt themselves brought low.

Lord, like the Pharisee, may we do good,
With pious deeds and alms for others’ needs,
But do so as the tax-collector would! 20

ZACCHAEUS

Cf. Lk 19, 1–10.

- 1–4. The “publicans” or petty tax-collectors bid for the right to collect taxes for Rome and then overcharged the people in order to make a profit for themselves (cf. Lk 3, 13). They were doubly hated as collaborators with a foreign power and as oppressors of their own people. They are mentioned in conjunction with law-breakers (Mt 9, 11), pagans (Mt 18, 17), and harlots (Mt 21, 31).
5. According to Lk 19, 3, Zacchaeus was *small of stature*.
8. Just as Zacchaeus climbed a tree to see Christ, so Christ would mount the cross for Zacchaeus.
10. *A Tree of Life*: a reference to the tree in the Garden of Eden. Cf. Gn 2, 9.
- 11–12. Cf. Lk 19, 7: *Everyone began to murmur, “He has gone to a sinner’s house as a guest.”*
- 14–16. Zacchaeus here exceeds the requirements for restitution laid down in Nm 5, 5–7, which demands restitution of the original value plus one fifth.
18. Cf. Lk 19, 10: *The Son of Man has come to search out and save what was lost*.
20. *Son of Abraham*: cf. Gal 3, 9: *Thus it is that all who believe are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith*. Gal 3, 29: *If you belong to Christ, you are the descendants of Abraham*. Cf. also Rom 4, 11–12.

ZACCHAEUS

Zacchaeus, publican of Jericho,
Milked herds of Jews, who bore the Romans' branding,
And skimmed the cream then from the heavy flow
Of taxes that he kept demanding.

How short he stood for one of such high standing! 5
He climbed a sycamore upon a whim
To look at One mid crowds he saw expanding—
One yet to mount a tree for him.

That sycamore became in trunk and limb
A Tree of Life when Jesus said, "Climb down! 10
I wish to be your guest," at which the prim
Among them turned to scoff and frown.

Zacchaeus, though, despite his ill renown,
Then pledged: "I give the poor one half my gold,
And if I've cheated any in this town, 15
Lord, I will pay him back fourfold."

For paying Christ this tribute he was told
By him who came to save and not to damn:
"Today salvation fills this house! Behold
A true-born son of Abraham!" 20

Oh, come to me, Lord, sinner that I am!
And let me give, not half, but *all* your due,
And pay a hundredfold for every dram
Of love that I've withheld from you!

FORGIVENESS

Cf. Jn 8, 1–11.

2. *Sin*: the woman had been caught in the act of adultery.
- 2–3. *Sought her death*: Cf. Jn 8, 4–6: “Teacher,” they said to him, “this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. In the law, Moses ordered such women to be stoned. What do you have to say about the case?” (They were posing this question to trap him, so that they could have something to accuse him of.) The attempt to trap Jesus by presenting him with a dilemma recalls the controversy stories of the Synoptics. Cf. the poem “Answers” below and the texts cited in the notes. The law of Moses referred to here may be Dt 22, 22–24, or Lv 20, 10.
4. According to the law, the witnesses of the crime were to cast the first stone. Cf. Dt 17, 6–7: *The testimony of two or three witnesses is required for putting a person to death; no one shall be put to death on the testimony of only one witness. At the execution, the witnesses are to be the first to raise their hands against him; afterward all the people are to join in. Thus shall you purge the evil from your midst.*
9. *We too are faithless*: marital infidelity is a frequent scriptural metaphor for sin.

FORGIVENESS

When scribes and Pharisees had shown
Our Lord one caught in sin, then sought
Her death for that alone,
He cried: "Let him without a sin come cast a stone!"

As one by one they sought the door, 5
He said of them: "Does none condemn
You?" "None, " she answered. "Nor
Do I," said Jesus. "Go in peace, but sin no more!"

We too are faithless. Lord, you know 10
How we have been entrapped in sin.
Do not condemn us, though,
But cleanse our vice and show us, Christ, the way to go!

CLEANSING

Cf. Mk 11, 15–19; Mt 21, 10–17; Lk 19, 45–46; Jn 2, 13–17.

1. *Christ entered in:* cf. Mal 3, 1–4, for an important OT background to this story.
The temple's outer court: the Court of the Gentiles, where sacrificial animals were sold.
2. *Zealous care:* cf. Jn 2, 17: *His disciples recalled the words of Scripture: "Zeal for your house consumes me."* The text referred to is Ps 69, 10.
5. *Changers:* since the Tyrian half-shekel was the only coin accepted at the Temple, money-changers converted other currencies.
- 6–7. Jesus' words here stem from Is 56, 7 and Jer 7, 11 in the LXX. Jesus' action seems to condemn the empty formalism of the temple sacrifices. Cf. Mt 9, 13: *Go and learn the meaning of the words, "It is mercy I desire and not sacrifice."* Cf. also Mt 12, 7.
9. *Hosanna:* originally meant "save, we pray," but came to be used as a general cry of acclamation. Cf. Ps 118, 25.
- 13–14. Jesus' response is based on Ps 8, 2. Cf. Wis 10, 21.
20. Children are often presented as models of simple faith in the NT.

CLEANSING

Christ entered in the Temple's outer court,
Consumed by zealous care,
Expelled the merchants selling any sort
Of sheep or oxen there,
Then spilled the brimming tills of changers when 5
He cried: "My house shall be a house of prayer,
And not a robbers' den!"

The lame and blind then came—he healed them all.
But when *Hosannas* (sung
By children's voices) filled the temple hall, 10
The priests denounced the young:
"Do you not hear?" "I do!" he cried ablaze
And said, "Have you not read that from the tongue
Of babes is fashioned praise?"

Lord, enter in the temple of our soul, 15
And drive out every thought
That weighs the cost of praise or counts the toll
Of sacrifices brought.
Then may we also pray with confidence,
Adoring you once more as children ought, 20
In simple innocence.

ANSWERS

The refrain is taken from Mt 10, 16, and is in dactyls. Otherwise the meter is iambic.

1–10. Cf. Mk 12, 13–17; Mt 22, 15–22; Lk 20, 20–26.

2. *Our Teacher*: cf. Jn 3, 2; 13, 13.

5. *Prince of Peace*: cf. Is 9, 6.

11–20. Cf. Mk 12, 18–27; Mt 20, 23–33; Lk 20, 27–40.

12. *Our Truth*: cf. Jn 14, 1.

16. *Wolves*: cf. Mt 7, 15: *Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but underneath are ravenous wolves*. These words are not inappropriately applied to the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection.

21–30. Cf. Mk 12, 28–34; Mt 20, 34–40; Lk 10, 25–28. Note that Mark makes a very different use of this story.

22. *Our Legislator*: Christ is present as the New Lawgiver in Mt 5–6.

26. *As our Rest from labor*: cf. Mt 11, 28: *Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest*.

ANSWERS

Herodians and Pharisees one day
Had sought to snare our Teacher in their plot
By asking if they lawfully could pay
The Emperor his tax or not.
The Prince of Peace, but no appeaser, 5
Showed them their coin and fraud,
And said: "Give what is Caesar's unto Caesar,
Give what is God's, though, unto God!"
How well he knew what hearts were fashioned of—
He was wise as a serpent and pure as a dove! 10

The Sadducees then tried, though much beguiled,
To trick our Truth and asked whose wife in Heaven
Would someone be who died without a child,
Although her husbands numbered seven.
But he who raised the dead was wary 15
Of wolves around the Lamb
And said: "The resurrected do not marry,
Where Jacob, Isaac, Abraham,
All see the God of life, not death, above."
He was wise as a serpent and pure as a dove! 20

At last a scholar of the law made brave
To put our Legislator to the test
And asked, of all commandments Moses gave,
Which is the greatest and the best.
But he who knew their crafty kind 25
Said, as our Rest from labor:
"Love God with all your heart and soul and mind,
And as yourself, then, love your neighbor!"
O Christ, both God and neighbor whom we love,
You are wise as a serpent and pure as a dove! 30

PHARISEES

7. Cf. Mk 8, 11–12: *The Pharisees came forward and began to argue with him. They were looking for some heavenly sign from him as a test. With a sigh from the depths of his spirit he said, “Why does this age seek a sign? I assure you, no such sign will be given it!”* Cf. also Mt, 16, 1–4; 12, 38–39.
- 8–10. Cf. Mt 11, 20–24, especially v. 24: *If the miracles worked in you had taken place in Tyre and Sidon, they would have reformed in sackcloth and ashes long ago.* Cf. also Lk 10, 13–15.
- 11–13. Cf. Lk 11, 31–32: *The queen of the South will rise at the judgment along with the men of this generation, and she will condemn them. She came from the farthest corner of the world to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, but you have a greater than Solomon here. At the judgment, the citizens of Nineveh will rise along with the present generation, and they will condemn it. For at the preaching of Jonah they reformed, but you have a greater than Jonah here.* Cf. also Mt 12, 41–42.
15. Cf. Mt 23, 24. The strictures against the Pharisees in lines 15–21 are all taken from this chapter in Mt. I shall give the reference but not cite the text.
- 16–17. Cf. Mt 23, 4; Lk 20, 46.
- 18–19. Cf. Mt 23, 27.
- 19–20. Cf. Mt 23, 29–35; Lk 11, 47–51.
- 22–25. Cf. Mk 4, 12; Mt 13, 13–15; Lk 8, 10. In these passages Christ is explaining why he speaks in parables. I have accommodated them here to the Pharisees.
- 25–27. The concluding prayer appropriates the words of Christ to the disciples in Mt 13, 17, and Lk 10, 24.

PHARISEES

With Christ dim eyes were lit, tongue-knots untied,
Stopped ears were cleared, lame limbs made whole,
And dead men raised in Palestine;
He swelled the nets, gave bread he multiplied,
Trode waters, calmed both sea and soul, 5
And drove out demons into swine.
And yet they sought a sign!

Would Tyre and Sidon not at one such deed
Repent in sack and ash, reverse
Their ways, and weep and pine? 10
Both Sheba's Queen and Nineveh, in heed
Of Solomon and Jonah, curse
Those Pharisees—here's One divine,
And yet they sought a sign!

They swallowed camels, straining out the gnats, 15
Weighed shoulders down, but would not lift
A finger to unload bent spines.
Those white-washed tombs were filled with filthy rats
And dead men's bones. They gave short shrift
To prophets, then adorned their shrines. 20
And yet they sought for signs!

The eyes they dimmed would look but never see,
The ears they stopped not catch a word,
Nor hearts they dulled pierce God's design . . .
Lord, kings and prophets longed to see what we 25
Have seen, to hear what we have heard,
Yet heard you not, nor saw you shine,
O Christ, our sought-for sign!

PAROUSIA

This poem is based on the so-called “Synoptic Apocalypse” in Mk 13, 5–37; Mt 24, 4–36; Lk 21, 8–36. The refrain is inspired by Mk 14, 38; Mt 26, 41; Lk 21, 36.

1–6. On the signs of the end of the age, cf. Mk 13, 5–8; Mt 24, 4–8; Lk 21, 8–11.

7–12. On the coming of persecution, cf. Mk 13, 9–13; Mt 24, 9–14; Lk 21, 12–19.

13–18. On the final trial, cf. Mk 13, 14–20; Mt, 24, 15–22; Lk 21, 20–24.

19–24. On false messiahs and the day of the Son of Man, cf. Mk 13, 21–23; Mt 24, 23–28; Lk 17, 20–24.

25–30. On the coming of the Son of Man, cf. Mk 13, 24–27; Mt 24, 29–31; Lk 21, 25–28.

PAROUSIA

We yet shall hear of wars and tales of war,
And nations will rise up throughout the earth,
One kingdom with another locked in fray,
While quakes and plagues and famines lie in store—
But these are just beginning pangs of birth. 5
Lord, help us watch and pray!

We'll stand before their courts and be reviled
By governors and rulers all too bold,
For brother will give brother yet away,
And son his father, just as he his child, 10
Because the love of many will grow cold.
Lord, help us watch and pray!

But woe to those with child and those who nurse!
For greater agonies shall yet be braved
Than from the world's beginning till today. 15
If for the chosen's sake the time of curse
Had not been shortened, no one would be saved.
Lord, help us watch and pray!

And if they say, "Look here!" "Look there!" don't go:
False prophets will work signs and, if they can, 20
Will even lead the chosen ones astray.
Like lightning flashing east to west, just so
Will be the coming of the Son of Man.
Lord, help us watch and pray!

And on the earth will seas and waves roar loud; 25
The sun and moon will fail; the stars will fall.
Then angels sounding trumpets will obey
The Son of Man in glory on a cloud
And take from all four winds the ones they call.
Lord, help us watch and pray! 30

⇒

- 31–36. On the lesson of the fig tree and the fact that the time of the coming is unknown, cf. Mk 13, 28–32; Mt 24, 32–36; Lk 21, 29–33. On the suddenness of the coming, cf. Mt 24, 37–41; Lk 17, 26–37. On the “thief in the night,” cf. also 1 Thes 5, 2. 4; 2 Pt 3, 10; Rv 3, 3; 16, 15.
- 37–42. On the watchful owner, cf. Mt 24, 42–44; Lk 12, 39–40. On the faithful servant, cf. 13, 33–37; Mt 24, 45–51; Lk 12, 42–46. On the parable of the ten virgins, cf. Mt 25, 1–13. On the parable of the talents, cf. Mt 25, 14–30; Lk 19, 12–27.

The fig-leaf sprouts, and summertime is near;
When these things happen, Christ is at the gate,
And yet, we will not know the time or day.
Although we eat, and drink, and marry here,
Like thieves at night, he may come soon or late. 35
Lord, help us watch and pray!

As watchful owners guard a vast estate,
As faithful servants persevere at toil,
As prudent virgins fill their lamps while they
Await the groom, so let us wake and wait, 40
And use, not bury, talents in the soil.
Lord, help us watch and pray!

SUPPER

On the institution of the Lord's supper, cf. Mk 14, 22–25; Mt 26, 26–29; Lk 22, 15–20; 1 Cor 11, 23–25.

2. *To bless and break and give:* Christ performs the same actions in the stories of the multiplication of the loaves. Cf. Mk 6, 30–44; Mt 14, 13–21; Lk 9, 10–17; Jn 6, 1–15. Cf. also Mk 8, 1–10; Mt 15, 32–39.
3. *Flesh:* whereas in the Synoptics Jesus speaks of his “body” (*sôma*), in the discourse on the bread of life in Jn 6 he speaks of his “flesh” (*sarx*). In both cases the terms refer to the totality of the person and do not mean the body as opposed to the blood or to the soul
11. *Our pascal feast is Christ:* cf. 1 Cor 5, 7: *Get rid of the old yeast to make of yourselves fresh dough, unleavened loaves, as it were; Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. Let us celebrate the feast not with the old yeast, that of corruption and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*
- 13–14. Cf. *The Didache*, 9: *As this broken bread was scattered over the hills and then, when gathered, became one mass, so may Thy Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into Thy Kingdom.* Ignatius of Antioch, *To the Romans*, 4: *God's wheat I am, and by the teeth of wild beasts I am to be ground that I may prove Christ's pure bread.*

SUPPER

At supper Christ took bread
 To bless and break and give;
“Take this, my flesh,” he said,
 “And eat to live.”

He then gave thanks for wine 5
 He’d taken and anew
Said: “Drink this blood of mine,
 Poured out for you.”

As Priest who sacrificed 10
 And Victim offered up,
Our paschal feast is Christ
 In loaf and cup.

Make us the grains you mill,
 O Lord, for bread you break,
And grapes pressed out to fill 15
 The cup you take!

GETHSEMANE

On the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, cf. Mk 14, 32–42; Mt 26, 36–46; Lk 22, 40–46.

2. *The sons of Zebedee:* Jesus' disciples James and John.

15–16. Cf. the exhortations to watch and pray in the parables of the watchful house owner (Mt 24, 42–44; Lk 12, 39–40), the faithful and wise slave (Mk 13, 33–37; Mt 24, 45–51; Lk 12, 35–38. 42–46), and the ten bridesmaids (Mt 25, 1–13)

GETHSEMANE

When Jesus entered in Gethsemane
With Peter and the sons of Zebedee,
He said with mortal dread:
“Remain and stay awake with me.”

Three times he prayed: “O Father, if it be 5
Your will, then take this cup away,” as he
Turned wet with blood-filled sweat,
“Though not my will, but your decree.”

As thrice he rose and went to find his three
Disciples fast asleep, he told them: “See 10
You stay awake to pray
That from the test you may be free.”

The spirit wills, the flesh is weak, and we,
O Christ, our Lord, have but a single plea
To make—to stay awake 15
With you and pray on bended knee!

BETRAYAL

The intended meter is as follows:

~ / ~ ~ / ~ /
~ / ~ ~ / ~ /
~ / ~ ~ /
~ / ~ ~ /

1. *When Satan possessed his heart:* cf. Lk 22, 3; Jn 6, 70–71; 13, 27.
- 2–3. On Judas’ betrayal of Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, cf. Mk 14, 10–11; Mt 26, 14–16; Lk 22, 3–6.
4. Thirty pieces of silver was the indemnity to be paid for a gored slave. Cf. Ex 21, 32. Cf. also Zec 11, 12.
5. On Jesus’ washing of the disciples’ feet, cf. Jn 13, 1–11.
6. On Jesus’ sharing bread with Judas, cf. Jn 13, 14. 26.
7. On Judas’ betrayal of Christ by a kiss, cf. Mk 14, 44–45; Mt 26, 48–49; Lk 22, 47–48.
- 10–11. On Judas’ death, cf. Mt 27, 3–10. Note that Acts 1, 18–19 seems to follow a different tradition.
- 12–13. Cf. Mk 14, 21: . . . *accursed be that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It were better for him had he never been born.* Cf. also Mt 26, 24; Lk 22, 22.

BETRAYAL

When Satan possessed his heart,
Then Judas sold Christ at mart
For silver they gave,
The price of a slave.

Though Jesus had washed his feet 5
And offered him bread to eat,
His false-hearted kiss
Betrayed him for this.

As innocent blood was shed,
He tied his own noose and, dead, 10
Was better unborn
Than hanging in scorn!

From Judas, O Lord, we see
Betrayal of you would be
A choking of breath 15
More deadly than death.

DENIAL

- 1–5. On Christ's prediction of Peter's denial, cf. Mk 14, 26–31; Mt 26, 30–35; Lk 22, 31–34; Jn 13, 36–38.
- 6–10. On Peter's threefold denial, cf. Mk 14, 66–72; Mt 26, 69–75; Lk 22, 54–62; Jn 18, 15–18. 25–27.
- 11–15. On Jesus' thrice repeated question to Peter and the latter's threefold protestation of love for Christ, cf. Jn 21 15–17.
18. *But may we rise like Peter when he fell: cf. Prv 24, 16: The just man falls seven times and rises again.*
- 19–20. *To find our love increased, / Which none can quell: cf. Sg 8, 6–7: For stern as death is love, relentless as the nether world is devotion; its flames are a blazing fire. Deep waters cannot quench love, nor floods sweep it away.*

DENIAL

Thus Jesus: "Strike the shepherd, by and by
The sheep will also scatter."
Yet Peter vowed: "Though all desert you, I
Will never flee, no matter
If I die." 5

Three times they later pricked him with the goad
"You too were of his clan!"
Three times the hidden face of weakness showed:
"I do not know the man!"—
A cock then crowed. 10

Three times the Risen asked his crumbled Rock:
"But do you love me too?"
Three times the one with keys to Heaven's lock
Said: "Lord, you *know* I do!"
"Then feed my flock!" 15

How often we've denied you, Lord, as well—
A thousand times at least!
But may we rise like Peter, when he fell,
To find a love increased
That none can quell! 20

IRONIES

- 1–2. On the false witness borne against Christ, cf. Mk 14, 55–59; Mt 26, 57–61.
- 3–4. On the binding of Christ, cf. Mk 15, 1; Mt 27, 1–2; Jn 18, 24.
- 5–6. On the scourging of Christ, cf. Mk 15, 15; Mt, 27, 26; Lk 23, 16; Jn 19, 1.
- 7–8. On the sentencing of Christ, cf. Mk 15, 6–15; Mt 27, 15–26; Lk 23, 17–25; Jn 19, 16.
- 9–10. On the mocking of Christ, cf. Mk 14, 65; 15, 16–20. 29–32; Mt 26, 67; 27, 27–31. 39–44; Lk 22, 63–65; 23, 35–39; Jn 19, 1–3.
- 11–12. On the crowning of Christ with thorns, cf. Mk 15, 17; Mt 27, 29; Jn 19, 2. On the crown of glory, cf. 1 Pt 5, 4: . . . *when the chief Shepherd appears you will win for yourselves the unfading crown of glory*. Cf. also 1 Cor 9, 25; 2 Tm 4, 8; Jas 1, 12; Rv 2, 10; 3, 11.
- 13–14. On the stripping of Christ, cf. Mk 15, 24; Mt 27, 35; Lk 23, 34; Jn 19, 23–24. On the white robes of the elect, cf. Rv 3, 4–5. 18; 4, 4; 6, 11; 7, 9. 13–14; 19, 8. 14.
- 15–16. On the death of Christ, cf. Mk 15, 33–41; Mt 27, 45–56; Lk 23, 44–49; Jn 19, 28–30.

IRONIES

Christ, perjury-convicted,
Clears us all,
As, bound, he breaks the thrall
Our guilt inflicted.
He with lash-torn skin
Heals all who ail,
And, damned to cross and nail,
He saves from sin.
Christ, taunted here beneath,
Has called us blest,
Thorn-crowned to have us dressed
In glory's wreath,
Stripped bare to robe us new
In white array . . .
You died for us, Lord—may
We live for you!

WOUNDS

- 1–8. On the Crucifixion, cf. Jn 19, 18.
9. On the crowning of Christ with thorns, cf. Mk 15, 17; Mt 27, 29; Jn 19, 2.
- 10–11. Cf. Mk 10, 42–45: *You know how among the Gentiles those who seem to exercise authority lord it over them; their great ones make their importance felt. It cannot be like that with you. Anyone among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest; whoever wants to rank first among you must serve the needs of all. The Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve—to give his life in ransom for the many.* Cf. also Mt 20, 25–28; Lk 22, 24–27
12. *Little fold* or “flock” was one of Jesus’ designations for his disciples. Cf. Lk 12, 32.
- 13–15. On the blood and water that flowed from the side of Christ, cf. Jn 19, 31–37.
- 17–20. Cf. Is 53, 4–5: *Yet it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured, while we thought of him as stricken, as one smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins; upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole, by his stripes we were healed.*

WOUNDS

Christ held his nail-torn hands unclosed
To give us grace;
In wide embrace
His open arms were posed.

His feet, which nails held fast to stay 5
The vengeful path
Of righteous wrath,
Awaited us who stray.

He wore a crown of thorns, not gold,
To lord it thus 10
Not over us,
But serve his little fold.

The side a lance had split apart,
As water streamed
And blood redeemed, 15
Formed windows to his heart.

Oh, would that all the wounds that scored
Hands, feet, and head,
And side that bled
Might heal our wounds, O Lord! 20

SURRENDER

The intended meter is as follows:

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/ ~ ~ /
/ ~ ~ /
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~ / ~ ~ /
~ / ~ ~ / ~
~ / ~ ~ / ~

- 1–8. On the various phenomena accompanying the death of Christ, cf. Mk 15, 33. 38; Mt 27, 45. 51–52; Lk 23, 44–45.
- 9–16. On the death of Jesus, cf. Mk 15, 34–37; Mt 27, 46–50; Lk 23, 46; Jn 19, 28–30. I have chosen to report Jesus’ last words according to Lk, and these serve as the theme of the poem.

SURRENDER

Darkness struck all
Near and afar.
Earthquakes to jar
Temple and hall
Tore curtains asunder; 5
Great boulders now broke;
Graves opened as, under,
The bodies of saints awoke.

On-looking bands
Heard a loud cry: 10
“Father on high,
Into your hands
I offer my spirit.”
And gazing aghast
Stood all who could hear it, 15
As Jesus then breathed his last.

Crucified God,
Nailed to a tree!
Jesus, may we
Tread where you trod, 20
Take part in your passion,
And, nailed to your board,
In similar fashion
Surrender to you, O Lord!

TOMB

On the empty tomb, cf. Mk 16, 1–8; Mt 28, 1–10; Lk 24, 1–12. Of the various resurrection appearances of Christ, I have chosen to focus on this one. Here one may also compare the account in Jn 20, 1–18.

The intended meter is as follows:

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~ / ~ ~ /
~ / ~ ~ /
~ / ~ ~ ~ /

- 21–25. Cf. Rom 6, 3–5: *Are you not aware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Through baptism into his death we were buried with him, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life. If we have been united with him through likeness to his death, so shall we be through a like resurrection.*

TOMB

As dawn lit the tomb
 Upon the first day
—That stone-covered room
 Where Jesus now lay—
 Some women brought him perfume. 5

Earth quaked under sky,
 As angels came flown
To ground from on high,
 Then rolled back the stone,
 And now sat waiting nearby. 10

Their semblance shed light;
 Their raiment, like snow,
Shone lambently white.
 The women bowed low,
 And there they trembled with fright. 15

The angels then said:
 “Why look for the living
As though he were dead?
 Rejoice with thanksgiving,
 For Christ is risen instead!” 20

Lord, we whom you drew
 To baptism’s fount
Lie buried with you.
 Let night and death mount
 To life and fresh morning dew! 25

DOUBT

For the story of Thomas' doubt, cf. Jn 20, 24–29.

The intended meter is as follows.

˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ /
˘ / ˘ / ˘ ˘ /
˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ /
˘ / ˘ / ˘ /
˘ / ˘ /

11–15. The account in Lk 24, 36–49 is somewhat parallel to the Johannine text underlying this stanza.

18. Cf. Lk 10, 23–24: *Blest are the eyes that see what you see. I tell you, many prophets and kings wished to see what you see but did not see it.*

DOUBT

When Thomas had heard them say:
“The Lord is risen today!”
 “I’ll never believe,” he cried,
 “Unless my fingers press
 His hands and side.” 5

A week had gone by, and then
The Doubter joined them again,
 All hiding from Jews they feared.
 Despite the doors locked tight,
 The Lord appeared. 10

“My peace unto all,” he said.
“O Thomas, touch where I bled
 —My hands and my side—don’t cleave
 To grief and unbelief,
 But come believe!” 15

He answered, “My Lord and God!”
Who saw, believed, and was awed.
 Such wonders have few perceived,
 But bless us, Lord, no less
 Who *have* believed! 20

ASCENSION

For the various accounts of the Ascension, cf. Mk 16, 19; Lk 24, 50–53; Acts 1, 6–11. Cf. also Jn 6, 62; 20, 17; Eph 4, 8–10; 1 Tm 3, 16. Cf. also the exaltation statements in Acts 2, 33–35; 5, 31; Rom 8, 34; Phil 2, 8–9;

1. *From Jerusalem to Olivet*: as in Acts. Luke specifies the town of Bethany, which lies on the Mount of Olives, about 1 ³/₄ miles southeast of Jerusalem. In Mk the site is not identified.
- 3–11. This stanza draws from the commissioning of the disciples in Mt 28, 16–20.
6. *Waters of rebirth*: this phrase derives from Ti 3, 5.
22. Cf. Jesus' words to the disciples at the Last Supper in Jn 14, 18: *I will not leave you orphaned; I will come back to you.*

ASCENSION

Christ led his chosen from Jerusalem
To Olivet, and there he said to them:

“All sovereignty in heaven and on earth
Is given unto me in exaltation.
Thus go and make disciples of each nation, 5
Baptizing them, through waters of rebirth,
In Father, Son, and Spirit, every one.
Admonish all and teach them to attend
To everything that you have been commanded.
Remember: I will never leave you stranded, 10
For I am always with you to the end.”

He lifted up his hands in benediction,
And there before their eyes was raised in flight
Upon a cloud that stole him from their sight.
As they were gazing up in sad affliction, 15
Two angels dressed in white beside them pressed:
“O men of Galilee, forlorn eleven,
Why do you stand here, looking up, and yearn?
This Jesus who has left you will return
Just as you saw him going up to heaven.” 20

O Christ, have mercy on us standing here,
For we are orphans, Lord, till you appear!

CHRIST

Note: the appellations of Christ cited in this poem (*Way, Truth, Life, Prophet, Priest, King, Son of Man, Son of God, Word of God, Lamb of God, Light of the World, Prince of Peace, Healer, Savior, Lord*) have too rich a scriptural background to quote in detail here. I shall thus cite only texts to which the poem explicitly alludes.

1–4. Cf. Jn 14, 6: *I am the way, and the truth, and the life.*

10–11. Cf. Jn 3, 10–11: *God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.*

14. Cf. Jn 15, 11: *All this I tell you that my joy may be yours and your joy may be complete.*

CHRIST

Christ is our Way, our Truth, our Life: The Way through strife and sin to bliss, Dear Truth we kiss as faithful wife, Our new-born Life in death's abyss.	
Christ is our Prophet, Priest, and King: A Prophet's spring of cleansing grace, High Priest to place our offering, The righteous King of all our race.	5
Christ is the Son, the Word, the Lamb: Both Son of Man and God, who gave His Word to save and not to damn, A slaughtered Lamb to end the grave.	10
Christ is our Joy, our Light, our Peace: Our Joy's increase until complete, A Light most sweet that will not cease, The Prince of Peace we hail and greet.	15
O Christ, our Healer, Savior, Lord: Christ, Healer for deaf, blind, and dumb, Christ, Savior from the demon horde, Be praised, O Lord-of-lords to come!	20