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Holy Sonnets

I

THOU hast made me, And shall thy worke decay?
 Repaire me now, for now mine end doth haste,
 I runne to death, and death meets me as fast,
 And all my pleasures are like yesterday;
 I dare not move my dimme eyes any way,
 Despaire behind, and death before doth cast
 Such terrour, and my feeble flesh doth waste
 By sinne in it, which it t'wards hell doth weigh;
 Onely thou art above, and when towards thee
 By thy leave I can looke, I rise againe;
 But our old subtle foe so tempteth me,
 That not one houre my selfe I can sustaine;
 Thy Grace may wing me to prevent his art,
 And thou like Adamant draw mine iron heart.

II

As due by many titles I resigne
 My selfe to thee, O God, first I was made
 By thee, and for thee, and when I was decay'd
 Thy blood bought that, the which before was thine;
 I am thy sonne, made with thy selfe to shine,
 Thy servant, whose paines thou hast still repaid,
 Thy sheepe, thine Image, and, till I betray'd
 My selfe, a temple of thy Spirit divine;
 Why doth the devill then usurpe on mee?
 Why doth he steale, nay ravish that's thy right?
 Except thou rise and for thine own worke fight,
 Oh I shall soone despaire, when I doe see
 That thou lov'st mankind well, yet wilt'not chuse me,
 And Satan hates mee, yet is loth to lose mee.

III

O might those sighes and teares returne againe

Into my breast and eyes, which I have spent,
 That I might in this holy discontent
 Mourn with some fruit, as I have mourn'd in vaine;
 In mine Idolatry what showres of raine
 Mine eyes did waste? what griefs my heart did rent?
 That sufferance was my sinne; now I repent;
 'Cause I did suffer I must suffer paine.
 Th'hydroptique drunkard, and night-scouting thiefe,
 The itchy Lecher, and selfe-tickling proud
 Have the remembrance of past joyes, for reliefe
 Of comming ills. To (poore) me is allow'd
 No ease; for, long, yet vehement grieffe hath beene
 Th'effect and cause, the punishment and sinne.

IV

Oh my blacke Soule! now thou art summoned
 By sicknesse, deaths herald, and champion;
 Thou art like a pilgrim, which abroad hath done
 Treason, and durst not turne to whence hee is fled,
 Or like a thiefe, which till deaths doome be read,
 Wisheth himselfe delivered from prison;
 But damn'd and hal'd to execution,
 Wisheth that still he might be imprisoned.
 Yet grace, if thou repent, thou canst not lacke;
 But who shall give thee that grace to beginne?
 Oh make thy selfe with holy mourning blacke,
 And red with blushing, as thou art with sinne;
 Or wash thee in Christs blood, which hath this might
 That being red, it dyes red soules to white.

V

I am a little world made cunningly
 Of Elements, and an Angelike spright,
 But black sinne hath betraid to endlesse night
 My worlds both parts, and (oh) both parts must die.
 You which beyond that heaven which was most high
 Have found new sphears, and of new lands can write,
 Powre new seas in mine eyes, that so I might
 Drowne my world with my weeping earnestly,
 Or wash it if it must be drown'd no more;
 But oh it must be burnt! alas the fire
 Of lust and envie have burnt it heretofore,
 And made it fouler; Let their flames retire,
 And burne me o Lord, with a fiery zeale
 Of thee and thy house, which doth in eating heale.

VI

This is my playes last scene, here heavens appoint
 My pilgrimages last mile; and my race
 Idly, yet quickly runne, hath this last pace,

My spans last inch, my minutes latest point,
 And gluttonous death, will instantly unjoynt
 My body, and soule, and I shall sleepe a space,
 But my'ever-waking part shall see that face,
 Whose feare already shakes my every joynt;
 Then, as my soule, to'heaven her first seate, takes flight,
 And earth-borne body, in the earth shall dwelll,
 So, fall my sinnes, that all may have their right,
 To where they're bred, and would presse me, to hell.
 Impute me righteous, thus purg'd of evill,
 For thus I leave the world, the flesh, the devill.

VII

At the round earths imagin'd corners, blow
 Your trumpets, Angells, and arise, arise
 From death, you numberlesse infinities
 Of soules, and to your scattred bodies goe,
 All whom the flood did, and fire shall o'erthrow,
 All whom warre, dearth, sage, agues, tyrannies,
 Despaire, law chance, hath slaine, and you whose eyes,
 Shall behold God, and never tast deaths woe.
 But let them sleepe, Lord, and mee mourne a space,
 For, if above all these, my sinnes abound,
 'Tis late to aske abundance of thy grace,
 When wee are there; here on this lowly ground,
 Teach mee how to repent; for that's as good
 As if thou'hadst seal'd my pardon, with thy blood.

VIII

If faithfull soules be alike glorifi'd
 As Angels, then my fathers soul doth see,
 And adds this even to full felecitie,
 That valiantly I hels wide mouth o'stride:
 But if our mindes to these soules be descry'd
 By circumstances, and by signes that be
 Apparent in us, not immediately,
 How shall my mindes white truth by them be try'd?
 They see idolatrous lovers weepe and mourne,
 And vile blasphemous Conjurers to call
 On Jesus name, and Pharisaicall
 Dissemblers feigne devotion. Then turne
 O pensive soule, to God, for he knows best
 Thy true grieffe, for he put it in my breast.

IX

If poysonous mineralls, and if that tree,
 Whose fruit threw death on else immortall us,
 If lecherous goats, if serpents envious
 Cannot be damn'd; Alas; why should I bee?
 Why should intent or reason, borne in mee,

Make sinnes, else equall, in mee more heinous?
 And mercy being easie, and glorious
 To God; in his sterne wrath, why threatens hee?
 But who am I , that dare dispute with thee
 O God? Oh! of thine onely worthy blood,
 And my teares, make a heavenly Lethean flood,
 And drowne in it my sinnes black memorie;
 That thou remember them, some claime as debt,
 I thinke it mercy if thou wilt forget.

X

Death be not proud, though some have called thee
 Mighty and dreadfull, for, thou art not soe,
 For, those, whom thou think'st, thou dost overthrow,
 Die not, poore death, nor yet canst thou kill mee.
 From rest and sleepe, which but thy pictures bee,
 Much pleasure, then from thee, much more must flow,
 And soonest our best men with thee doe goe,
 Rest of their bones, and soules deliverie.
 Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men,
 And dost with poyson, warre, and sicknesse dwell,
 And poppie, or charmes can make us sleepe as well,
 And better than thy stroake; why swell'st thou then?
 One short sleepe past, wee wake eternally,
 And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die.

XI

Spit in my face you Jewes, and pierce my side,
 Buffet, and scoffe, scourge, and crucifie mee,
 For I have sinn'd, and sinn'd, and onely hee,
 Who could do no iniquitie, hath dyed:
 But by my death can not be satisfied
 My sinnes, which passe the Jewes impiety:
 They kill'd once an inglorious man, but I
 Crucifie him daily, being now glorified.
 Oh let mee then, his strange love still admire:
 Kings pardon, but he bore our punishment.
 And *Jacob* came cloth'd in vile harsh attire
 But to supplant, and with gainfull intent:
 God cloth'd himselfe in vile mans flesh, that so
 Hee might be weake enought to suffer woe.

XII

Why are wee by all creatures waited on?
 Why doe the prodigall elements supply
 Life and food to mee, being more pure than I,
 Simple, and further from corruption?
 Why brook'st thou, ignorant horse, subjection?
 Why dost thou bull, and bore so seelily
 Dissemble weaknesse, and by one mans stroke die,

Whose whole kinde, you might swallow and feed upon?
 Weaker I am, woe is mee, and worse than you,
 You have not sinn'd, nor need be timorous.
 But wonder at a greater wonder, for to us
 Created nature doth these things subdue,
 But their Creator, whom sin, nor nature tyed,
 For us, his Creatures, and his foes, hath dyed.

XIII

What if this present were the worlds last night?
 Marke in my heart, O Soule, where thou dost dwell,
 The picture of Christ crucified, and tell
 Whether that countenance can thee affright,
 Teares in his eyes quench the amazing light,
 Blood fills his frownes, which from his pierc'd head fell.
 And can that tongue adjudge thee unto hell,
 Which pray'd forgiveness for his foes fierce spight?
 No, no; but as in my idolatrie
 I said to all my profane mistresses,
 Beauty, of pitty, foulnesse onely is
 A sign of rigour: so I say to thee,
 To wicked spirits are horrid shapes assign'd,
 This beauteous forme assures a pitious minde.

XIV

Batter my heart, three person'd God; for, you
 As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend,
 That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow mee, and bend
 Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new.
 I, like an usurpt towne, to another due,
 Labour to admit you, but Oh, to no end,
 Reason your viceroy in mee, mee should defend,
 But is captiv'd, and proves weake or untrue.
 Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved faine,
 But am betroth'd unto your enemy:
 Divorce mee, untie, or breake that knot againe,
 Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I
 Except you enthrall mee, never shall be free,
 Nor ever chaste, except you ravish mee.

XV

Wilt thou love God, as he thee? then digest,
 My Soule, this wholsome meditation,
 How God the Spirit, by Angels waited on
 In heaven, doth make his Temple in thy brest.
 The Father having begot a Sonne most blest,
 And still begetting, (for he ne'r begonne)
 Hath deign'd to chuse thee by adoption,
 Coheire to his glory, and Sabbaths endlesse rest;
 And as a robb'd man, which by search doth finde

His stolne stufte sold, must lose or buy it againe;
 The Sonne of glory came downe, and was slaine,
 Us whom he had made, and Satan stolne, to unbinde.
 'Twas much, that man was made like God before,
 But, that God should be made like man, much more.

XVI

Father, part of his double interest
 Unto thy kingdome, thy Sonne gives to mee,
 His joynture in the knottie Trinitie
 Hee keepes, and gives to me his deaths conquest.
 This Lambe, whose death, with life the world hath blest,
 Was from the worlds beginning slaine, and he
 Hath made two Wills, which with the Legacie
 Of his and thy kingdome, doe thy Sonnes invest.
 Yet such are thy laws, that men argue yet
 Whether a man those statutes can fulfill;
 None doth; but all-healing grace and spirit
 Revive againe what law and letter kill.
 Thy lawes abridgement, and thy last command
 Is all but love; Oh let this last Will stand!

XVII

Since she whom I lov'd hath payd her last debt
 To Nature, and to hers, and my good is dead,
 And her Scule early into heaven ravished,
 Wholly on heavenly things my mind is sett.
 Here the admyring her my mind did whett
 To seeke thee God; so streames do shew their head;
 But though I have found thee, and thou my thirst hast fed,
 A holy thirsty dropsy melts mee yet.
 But why should I begg more Love, when as thou
 Dost woove my soule for hers; offering all thine:
 And dost not only feare least I allow
 My Love to Saints and Angels things divine,
 But in thy tender jealousy dost doubt
 Least in the World. Fleshe, yea Devill put thee out.

XVIII

Show me deare Christ, thy Spouse, so bright and clear.
 What! is it She, which on the other shore
 Goes richly painted? or which rob'd and tore
 Laments and mournes in Germany and here?
 Sleeper she a thousand, then peepes up one yeare?
 Is she selfe truth and errs? now new, now outwore?
 Doth she, and did she, and shall she evermore
 On one, on seaven, or on no hill appeare?
 Dwells she with us, or like adventuring knights
 First travaile we to seek and then make Love?
 Betray kind husband thy spouse to our sights,

And let myne amorous soule court thy mild Dove,
Who is most trew, and pleasing to thee, then
When she is embrac'd and open to most men.

XIX

Oh, to vex me, contraries meet in one:
Inconstancy unnaturally hath begott
A constant habit; that when I would not
I change in vowes, and in devotione.
As humorous is my contritione
As my prophane Love, and as soone forgott:
As ridlingly distemper'd, cold and hott,
As praying, as mute; as infinite, as none.
I durst not view heaven yesterday; and to day
In prayers, and flattering speaches I court God:
To morrow I quake with true feare of his rod.
So my devout fitts come and go away
Like a fantastique Ague: save that here
Those are my best dayes, when I shake with feare.

John Donne



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