

TC

PHILOSOPHICAL

(10)

METAPHYSICS

St. Paul and the Atom
And two milleniums of dust covered yesses
Are suddenly blown into a distinct negation.
Plato's chair begins to make unflattering remarks,
And St. Paul, Plato's prize pupil,
Comes in his creaking body with owl-like eyes
Out of the laboratory
Croaking, "Now you see it; now you don't.
Aha, Aha, I told you so."

ON THE MODERNS, WITH PREJUDICE

Back to my Browning, muddling through,
Away from these moderns merely muddling,
Out of this morass of fancy despair,
Clear of this intricate befuddling.

Give me my Tennyson in doubt
But peering through to a speck of star,
But save me, do, from this certain doom
Charting tomorrows by things that are.

Sing again, Shelley, of new springs coming,
And chant, John Keats, that beauty is true,
And preach, John Milton, of sight in darkness,
Lest we be overcome by this cry and hue.

Better the chirp of a frost-chilled cricket,
Energizing her night-long hope
Than the meaningless moanings of circling prophets
With mind-cast blindness and life-long grope.

Better than turning one's back to the sunrise,
Than confirmation from scum sunrise
Is the singing joy of a building sparrow
Or the foolish faith in a baby's eyes.

THE CONVERT TO REASON

Come, let's admit it, we are blind,
And faith is a farce, and humankind
Are doped with religion to believe
The impossible true. That we perceive

If we give but a moment to rational thought,
If we exercise logic - and surely we ought.
We must see, surely we must recognize
That hopes are dupes and trusts are lies.

The optimist is a purblind fool
Refusing to glance at the iron rule
That power reigns in our universe.
The times are ominous. The future is worse.

And what are morals but foolish fences,
Ascetic-constructed to maim the senses?
The world staggers on with a madman's lurch
While hollow shibboleths echo in church.

.. ..

Ah, thank thee, uninhibited saviors,
For clarifying the world's behaviors,
For making it plain where all may see
That decadence and death are man's destiny.

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THE CONVERT (cont'd)

It makes me laugh when I think what fools
We were to construct cathedrals and schools.
How clownish we were thus to pretend,
Like fanciful children, that a man's end
And purpose in living were something higher
Than the fulfilment of body desire.
How little we knew! How much we learn
From the great intellects of the day who discern
The signs of the times and know for certain
What lies beyond the future's curtain.
That stuff of a God was imagination.
Good riddance! He might have delayed degradation!

IN CHURCH

Well, now we have blown God all to pieces,
Shamefully discovering the naked Heuristic Fiction;
We have dissected and analyzed the cosmos
Down to cells, genes, molecules, atoms, electrical
charges and mathematical equations.

Friend, lead us in chanting the Creed of Indeterminacy,
Then let the congregation join in repeating the
multiplication tables;
I shall read the day's lesson from the text on
differential calculus
After which we will again unite in prayer to the
UNKNOWN QUANTITY.

THIS GREAT ADVENTURE: LIFE WITH GOD

Tonight I cannot work;
My thankfulness runs over into tears
That blot the page
Which made me thank, and think
How truly in the hand of God we are.

He pointed me as child to sunsets,
Lowing herds, the flight of birds.
And when I was a lad he made me
Wild as wind
And wild to be the wind.
He led me into happiness of play at boisterous games;
And still he bade me come apart to a quiet place
And taught me truth for lesson.

Then love became my passion and my play;
I sat at rime and poured my little syllables
Of adoration into any form I knew.

Then said the Master, "Preach!"
I heard but would not hear.
He gave me music, made me seer,
Made the pulse pound and the breath come close
At hearing lyric voices, feeling lyric strings;
How could he ask me this?

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THIS GREAT ADVENTURE (cont'd)

I balked, I doubted. God is good, I said,
He could not ask me lose t
The fancy and the flippancy of tongue
In trumpeted thunderings of right and wrong,
In parish paths and prosaic pulpitry.

And yet I went, then truly learned to see.
I felt the weight of others' hearts,
The sorrow of their tears;
I prayed the anguish of their prayers;
I shared their playtime, laughter, joys
For golden, golden years.

So in that work I lost myself
And found myself anew.
And still I was uncertain
What God meant for me to do.

But ever more he added life to life
In child and wife.
I felt the little fingers round my finger,
Heart beside my heart.
I learned to love a place where God
Brought on together two to four.
Love was no longer fancy, but much more
Than the smoke of a boy's pipe-dream.
It was a vibrant, undergirding,
All-surrounding, earthy truth
That made the boy a man.

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THIS GREAT ADVENTURE (cont'd)

And now this almost thirtieth year has come.
The wonder and the mystery remain,
But faith and love and trust
Pass on from half-believed-perceived abstraction
Into fruited fact.
To live to me is Christ.

Today he feeds my soul on art's philosophies.
And what tomorrow? What care I?
By waters deep, perhaps,
Or up the craggy steep
To mountain summit's fuller view
Of life that stretches on the plain beneath,
Or in the shadow. ... Even then he bears me up
When I no longer bear myself.

It is enough.

The future

Is a book unopened, picture yet unseen,
Or rhapsody still a-borning in the brain
Of God, who dreameth all things well.

I follow on. Find thou my hand, O Lord, outstretched.

Lead me into a broad, good place;

It is enough.

On, on I'll go

From dawn to dusk

And hear thee, eyes closed,

Even in the dusk.

O gracious God, thou doest all things well.

THREE GATEWAYS TO GOD

I looked upon a smiling field,
On mountains summits capped with snow,
I watched a rolling river flow.
The mind within my being reeled
And echoed, "Mighty God."

The reluctant atom yielded his power,
A surgeon gave release from pain,
The sunny field waved gold with grain.
My heart laughed in this welcome hour
And shouted, "Gracious God."

Bereavement came and in its wake
Came anguished tears and gnawing grief.
But whispering peace and sweet relief,
A Voice called, "I will not forsake."
I cried through tears, "My God!"

DEEP UNTO DEEP

More than a forest fire reaches
Its yearning arms to the pines,
More than growing grass struggles
To cover the naked ground,
More than a songbird endeavors
To utter the rapture it feels,
Every nerve of my being
Inclines unto thee, O God.

ON THE NATURE OF GOD'S BEING

God is a mountain
Clad in the misty blue of midnight,
Barely perceptible,
Hardly believable,
Definitely solid,
Tangibly there.

THIS IS YOUR CHURCH HOME

You may have watched it rise from its foundations years ago.
On tiny children's feet you may have pattered up its steps
to enter Sunday School.

Here, at its altar, year by year you made your great decision
Here said your vows to God and Church, or bride.
As child or man you may have come, carrying or carried, for
the rite of dedication.

The sweet surrender of your heart to God,
The way the sun shone through its windows on a day,
The quietness of the Lord's Supper:
All these have made their markings in your heart.
The mellow carolling of the organ and the congregational
hymn, "Praise God", have helped you climb a stairway
up
up to God.

Over the sound of the singing choir in gentle "Amen"
after prayer

You may have heard Him speaking to your heart.

Here doors and hearts are always swinging wide.
Here never fail to come;
For this is the house of God for all people.
Surely it is the gate of heaven.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

I do not thank thee, Lord, for things
So much as for joy of a soul that sings
At hearing the artless song of a thrush
Improvising at noonday hush.

I thank thee, Lord, not so much for goods
As for trees that teach in autumn woods
And one matchless gift that thou dost send,
The understanding heart of a friend.

And with this petition I close my prayer:
Not more of thy wealth - but to be aware,
To be reminded, to understand
That everything good is already at hand.

PRAYER OF A RECEPTIVE HEART

Thou art the candle in my soul;
Thou art the star in my life's sky;
Thou art the urge which drives me on
To reach my life-star burning high.

Thou art the health within my veins;
Thou art the hope within my heart;
Thou art the way beneath my feet;
All-permeating good Thou art.

So hear me when I pause to pray,
And flood my life with infinite power
To bear me on from day to day,
To make me fit from hour to hour.

I SAW THE EASTER DAWN

I saw the Easter dawn
And now
I know thee better, Christ.
Not long ago the darkness
Put blind eyes upon the world.
Then from the tomb of night
Sun's rays began to shoot
Across the eastern sky,
And mists began to rise and disappear.

The happy little birds
Began to sing their joy;
The roosters on a nearby farm
Gave raucous notice that the sun
Was leaping into view;
A peacock shrilled its shattering welcome;
And the brilliance of the sun
Became too strong for human eyes.
The loveliest thing I ever saw,
The truest, Lord,
Was Easter dawn
This Easter dawn.

For an hour from the tower
Of the chapel on the hill
Had radiated gracious words

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I SAW THE EASTER (cont'd)

To heaven-born music:

"I know! I know! I know! it sang,

"I know that my Redeemer lives!"

Now I have seen the Easter dawn:

The sun has risen

And the darkness disappeared.

And now I know,

Yes, I too, know

That My Redeemer lives.

O, "Alleluia" sings the choir,

And cherub song, the birds,

And in my heart resounds an anthem

Singing far too deep for words.

Written after sunrise service, 6:00 A.M.,
April 21, 1946 at Frost Memorial Chapel,
The Berry Schools, Georgia

ICHABOD

Hoppy come hoppin with a high long howl,
 "They's comin agin cause I seen 'em in the holler,
 Fur as natchul eye could foller.
 And they raised a cloud of dust! --
 See that red cloud of dust,
 That red ... cloud ... of dust?"
 THE CLOUD SHALL GO BEFORE THEE
 The fire red cloud,
 That cloud of dust.

Ichabod, Ichabod, tise you's a-bawnin,
 Yo grampappy's blind and Iserul's low moanin.
 THE GLORY IS DEPARTED,
 THE GLORY IS DEPARTED.

Then that 'sivous Phinny and that horesongin Hoppy
 Went a-lookin for the ark,
 The ark of the Lawd - that's the thing to turn the trick!
 But Iserul was sick.
 That'll surely turn the trick
 For Iserul so sick.

THE GLORY IS DEPARTED

The Philistines are comin and they pass right by
 That little ol ark and it don't bat a eye,
 They finish ol Phinny and it don't bat a eye,

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ICHABOD (cont'd)

Kill the Hebrew chillun and it don't bat a eye,
Slay that sorry slandous Hoppy and
It don't bat a eye.

Ichabod, Ichabod,
Granpappy's sick to death,
And Isrul's low moanin.

Now let that be a lesson to you: don't go roun droolin
Bout de Lawd God Almighty when you's been foolin;
If it aint sho nuff dat yo heart is right,
You better stay out of Jehovah's sight.

THE GLORY IS DEPARTED
THE GLORY IS DEPARTED
Ichabod, Ichabod, time you's a bawnin,
Yo granpappy's dead,
And Isrul's low moanin.

THE CORDS OF MAN

I feel his reins along my heart,
Light as a shade, but firm.
I feel no force, I have my head
Until I wayward, turn
To a profitless path, and then I feel
One steadying hint.
No second comes, no sawing strain,
But I relent.

THERE IS NO DEATH

The old rock ages, whitens, crumbles.
Round its base bloom mountain laurel;
Rhododendron strong and graceful
Feed upon its life.

The old stump rots and mosses earthward.
Clumped around in stately circle
Lithe, tall saplings stand,
Becoming what and more than was
The parent poplar tree.

The old man dies and leaves a vacant
Lonesome place against the sky.
The youth he sired, now strong and supple,
Nourished by his life and spirit,
Stands and meets the eye.
The same old sturdy manhood strongly
Tosses tempests by.

So fear not in the yellow leaf,
Life generates and nourishes
In fruit and leaf, the food you shed.
Take courage, dying tree.

The little sapling whom you fed
And shaded from the too-strong sun
Is ready now to stand alone.
The sun may dance and flash upon his head
For he has strength enough.

Warrior, others grasp your spear,
Take up your chant and dream your dream,
And dare the heights you scaled.
Regret not that you leave because
The end does not arrive in you.

Ten thousand voices stay to trumpet
Sounding over hill and hollow
Clearly blowing "Follow, Follow!"

The spoken truth will never die.
Songs will sing on in other hearts.
And since you fought and stood and sang
You will not die.