

Classic Poetry Series

Giles Fletcher Junior

- poems -

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Christ's Triumph after Death (excerpts)

I

But now the second Morning, from her bow'r,
Began to glister in her beams, and now
The roses of the day began to flow'r
In th' eastern garden; for Heav'ns smiling brow
Half insolent for joy begun to show:
The early Sun came lively dancing out,
And the brag lambs ran wantoning about,
That heav'n, and earth might seem in triumph both to shout.

II

Th' engladdened Spring, forgetfull now to weep,
Began t' eblazon from her leafy bed,
The waking swallow broke her half-year's sleep,
And every bush lay deeply purpured
With violets, the wood's late-wint'ry head
Wide flaming primroses set all on fire,
And his bald trees put on their green attire,
Among whose infant leaves the joyous birds conspire.

III

And now the taller Sons (whom Titan warms)
Of unshorn mountains, blown with easy winds,
Dandled the morning's childhood in their arms,
And, if they chanc'd to slip the prouder pines,
The under Corylets did catch the shines,
To gild their leaves; saw never happy year
Such joyfull triumph, and triumphant cheer,
As though the aged world anew created were.

IV

Say Earth, why hast thou got thee new attire,
And stick'st thy habit full of daisies red?
Seems that thou dost to some high thought aspire,
And some new-found-out bridegroom mean'st to wed:
Tell me ye Trees, so fresh apparelled,
So never let the spitefull canker waste you,
So never let the heav'ns with lightening blast you,
Why go you now so trimly drest, or whither haste you?

V

Answer me Jordan, why thy crooked tide
So often wanders from his nearest way,
As though some other way thy stream would slide,
And fain salute the place where something lay?
And you sweet birds, that shaded from the ray,
Sit carolling, and piping grief away,
The while the lambs to hear you dance, and play,

Tell me sweet birds, what is it you so fain would say?

VI

And, thou fair Spouse of Earth, that every year,
Gett'st such a numerous issue of thy bride,
How chance thou hotter shin'st, and draw'st more near?
Sure thou somewhere some worthy sight hast spied,
That in one place for joy thou canst not bide:
 And you dead swallows, that so lively now
 Through the flit air your winged passage row,
How could new life into your frozen ashes flow?

VII

Ye primroses, and purple violets,
Tell me, why blaze ye from your leafy bed,
And woo men's hands to rent you from your sets,
As though you would somewhere be carried,
With fresh perfumes, and velvets garnished?
 But ah, I need not ask, 'tis surely so,
 You all would to your Saviour's triumphs go,
There would ye all await, and humble homage do.

VIII

There should the Earth herself with garlands new
And lovely flow'rs embellished adore,
Such roses never in her garland grew,
Such lilies never in her breast she wore,
Like beauty never yet did shine before:
 There should the Sun another Sun behold,
 From whence himself borrows his locks of gold,
That kindle heav'n, and earth with beauties manifold.

IX

There might the violet, and primrose sweet
Beams of more lively, and more lovely grace,
Arising from their beds of incense meet;
There should the swallow see new life embrace
Dead ashes, and the grave unheal his face,
 To let the living from his bowels creep,
 Unable longer his own dead to keep:
There heav'n and earth should see their Lord awake from sleep.

X

Their Lord, before by other judg'd to die,
Now Judge of all himself; before forsaken
Of all the world, that from his aid did fly,
Now by the Saints into their armies taken;

Before for an unworthy man mistaken,
Now worthy to be God confess'd; before
With blasphemies by all the basest tore,
Now worshipped by Angels, that him low adore.

XI

Whose garment was before indipt in blood,
But now, imbrighten'd into heav'nly flame,
The Sun itself outglitters, though he should
Climb to the top of the celestial frame,
And force the stars go hide themselves for shame:
Before that under earth was buried,
But now about the heavens is carried,
And there for ever by the Angels heried.

XII

So fairest Phosphor the bright morning star,
But newly wash'd in the green element,
Before the drowsy Night is half aware,
Shooting his flaming locks with dew besprent,
Springs lively up into the orient,
And the bright drove, fleec'd all in gold, he chases
To drink, that on the Olympic mountain grazes,
The while the minor Planets forfeit all their faces.

XIII

So long he wander'd in our lower sphere,
That heav'n began his cloudy stars despise,
Half envious, to see on earth appear
A greater light, than flam'd in his own skies:
At length it burst for spite, and out there flies
A globe of winged angels, swift as thought,
That on their spotted feathers lively caught
The sparkling earth, and to their azure fields it brought.

XIV

The rest, that yet amazed stood below,
With eyes cast up, as greedy to be fed,
And hands upheld, themselves to ground did throw,
So when the Trojan boy was ravished,
As through th' Idalian woods they say he fled,
His aged guardians stood all dismay'd,
Some lest he should have fallen back afraid,
And some their hasty vows, and timely prayers said.

XV

Toss up your heads ye everlasting gates,

And let the Prince of Glory enter in:
At whose brave volley of siderial states,
The sun to blush, and stars grow pale were seen,
When, leaping first from earth, he did begin
 To climb his angels' wings; then open hang
 Your chrystal doors, so all the chorus sang
Of heav'nly birds, as to the stars they nimbly sprang.

XVI

Hark how the floods clap their applauding hands,
The pleasant valleys singing for delight,
And wanton mountains dance about the lands,
The while the fields, struck with the heav'nly light,
Set all their flow'rs a smiling at the sight,
 The trees laugh with their blossoms, and the sound
 Of the triumphant shout of praise, that crown'd
The flaming Lamb, breaking through heav'n, hath passage found.

XVII

Out leap the antique Patriarchs, all in haste,
To see the pow'rs of Hell in triumph led,
And with small stars a garland interchas'd
Of olive leaves they bore, to crown his head,
That was before with thorns degloried,
 After them flew the Prophets, brightly stol'd
 In shining lawn, and wimples manifold,
Striking their ivory harps, strung all in chords of gold.

XVIII

To which the Saints victorious carols sung,
Ten thousand Saints at once, that with the sound,
The hollow vaults of heav'n for triumph rung:
The Cherubins their clamours did confound
With all the rest, and clapp'd their wings around:
 Down from their thrones the Dominations flow,
 And at his feet their crowns, and sceptres throw,
And all the princely Souls fell on their faces low.

XIX

Nor can the Martyrs wounds' them stay behind,
But out they rush among the heav'nly crowd,
Seeking their heav'n out of their heav'n to find,
Sounding their silver trumpets out so loud,
That the shrill noise broke through the starry cloud,
 And all the virgin Souls, in pure array,
 Came dancing forth, and making joyous play;
So him they lead along into the courts of day.

XX

So him they lead into the courts of day,
Where never war, nor wounds abide him more,
But in that house, eternal peace doth play,
Acquiating the souls, that new before
Their way to heav'n through their own blood did score,
But now, estranged from all misery,
As far as heav'n and earth discoasted lie,
Swelter in quiet waves of immortality.

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Giles Fletcher Junior

The Heavenly Jerusalem

Here may the band, that now in triumph shines,
And that (before they were invested thus)
In earthly bodies carried heavenly minds,
Pitched round about in order glorious,
Their sunny tents, and houses luminous,
All their eternal day in songs employing,
Joying their end, without end of their joying,
While their almighty prince destruction is destroying.

How can such joy as this want words to speak?
And yet what words can speak such joy as this?
Far from the world, that might their quiet break,
Here the glad souls the face of beauty kiss,
Pour'd out in pleasure, on their beds of bliss.
And drunk with nectar torrents, ever hold
Their eyes on him, whose graces manifold,
The more they do behold, the more they would behold.

No sorrow now hangs clouding on their brow,
No bloodless malady empales their face,
No age drops on their hairs his silver snow,
No nakedness their bodies doth embase,
No poverty themselves, and theirs, disgrace,
No fear of death the joy of life devours,
No unchaste sleep their precious time deflowers,
No loss, no grief, no change wait on their winged hours.

But now their naked bodies scorn the cold,
And from their eyes joy looks, and laughs at pain,
The infant wonders how he came so old,
And old man how he came so young again;
Still resting, though from sleep they still refrain,
Where all are rich, and yet no gold they owe,
And all are kings, and yet no subjects know,
All full, and yet no time on food they do bestow.

For things that pass are past, and in this field,
The indeficient spring no winter fears,
The trees together fruit, and blossom yield,
Th'unfading lily leaves of silver bears,
And crimson rose a scarlet garment wears:
And all of these on the saints' bodies grow,
Not, as they wont, on baser earth below;
Three rivers here of milk, and wine, and honey flows.

About the holy City rolls a flood
Of molten crystals, like a sea of glass,
On which weak stream a strong foundation stood,
Of living diamonds the building was,
That all things else, besides it self, did pass.
Her streets, instead of stones, the stars did pave,
And little pearls, for dust, it seem'd to have,

On which soft-streaming manna, like pure snow, did wave.

In mid'st of this City celestial,
Where the eternal temple should have rose,
Lighten'd th'idea beatifical:
End, and beginning of each thing that grows,
Whose self no end, nor yet beginning knows,
That hath no eyes to see, nor ears to hear,
Yet sees, and hears, and is all eye, all ear,
That no where is contain'd, and yet is everywhere.

Changer of all things, yet immutable,
Before, and after all, the first, and last,
That moving all, is yet immovable,
Great without quantity, in whose forecast,
Things past are present, things to come are past
Swift without motion, to whose open eye
The hearts of wicked men unbreasted lie,
At once absent, and present to them, far and nigh.

It is no flaming lustre, made of light,
No sweet consent, or well-tim'd harmony,
Ambrosia, for to feast the Appetite,
Or flowery odour, mixed with spicery.
No soft embrace, or pleasure bodily,
And yet it is a kind of inward feast,
A harmony, that sounds within the breast,
An odour, light, embrace, in which the soul doth rest.

A heavn'ly feast, no hunger can consume,
A light unseen, yet shines in every place,
A sound, no time can steal, a sweet perfume,
No winds can scatter, an entire embrace,
That no satiety can ere unlace,
Ingraced into so high a favour, there
The saints, with their beau-peers whole worlds outwear,
And things unseen do see, and things unheard do hear.

Ye blessed souls, grown richer by your spoil,
Whose loss, though great, is cause of greater gains,
Here may your weary spirits rest from toil,
Spending your endless ev'ning, that remains,
Among those white flocks, and celestial trains,
That feed upon their shepherds' eyes, and frame
That heavn'ly music of so wondrous fame,
Psalming aloud the holy honours of his name.

Had I a voice of steel to tune my song,
Were every verse as smoothly filed as glass,
And every member turnéd to a tongue,
And every tongue were made of sounding brass,
Yet all that skill, and all this strength, alas,

Should it presume to gild, were misadvis'd,
The place, where David hath new songs devis'd,
As in his burning throne he sits emparadis'd.

Giles Fletcher Junior

Wooing Song

LOVE is the blossom where there blows
Every thing that lives or grows:
Love doth make the Heav'ns to move,
And the Sun doth burn in love:
Love the strong and weak doth yoke,
And makes the ivy climb the oak,
Under whose shadows lions wild,
Softened by love, grow tame and mild:
Love no medicine can appease,
He burns the fishes in the seas:
Not all the skill his wounds can stench,
Not all the sea his fire can quench.
Love did make the bloody spear
Once a leavy coat to wear,
While in his leaves there shrouded lay
Sweet birds, for love that sing and play
And of all love's joyful flame
I the bud and blossom am.
 Only bend thy knee to me,
 Thy wooing shall thy winning be!

See, see the flowers that below
Now as fresh as morning blow;
And of all the virgin rose
That as bright Aurora shows;
How they all unleaved die,
Losing their virginity!
Like unto a summer shade,
But now born, and now they fade.
Every thing doth pass away;
There is danger in delay:
Come, come, gather then the rose,
Gather it, or it you lose!
All the sand of Tagus' shore
Into my bosom casts his ore:
All the valleys' swimming corn
To my house is yearly borne:
Every grape of every vine
Is gladly bruised to make me wine:
While ten thousand kings, as proud,
To carry up my train have bow'd,
And a world of ladies send me
In my chambers to attend me:
All the stars in Heav'n that shine,
And ten thousand more, are mine:
 Only bend thy knee to me,
 Thy wooing shall thy winning be!

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