

Classic Poetry Series

Giles Fletcher The Younger

- poems -

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Giles Fletcher The Younger(1588 - 1623)

Giles Fletcher (also known as Giles Fletcher, The Younger) was an English poet chiefly known for his long allegorical poem *Christ's Victory and Triumph* (1610).

He was the younger son of [Giles Fletcher the Senior](http://www.poemhunter.com/giles-fletcher-senior/) (minister to Elizabeth I), and the brother of the poet [Phineas Fletcher](http://www.poemhunter.com/phineas-fletcher/), and cousin of the dramatist [John Fletcher](http://www.poemhunter.com/john-fletcher/).

Educated at Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge, he remained in Cambridge after his ordination, becoming Reader in Greek Grammar in 1615 and Reader in Greek Language in 1618. In 1619 left to become rector of Alderton in Suffolk.

His principal work has the full title *Christ's Victorie and Triumph, in Heaven, in Earth, over and after Death*, and consists of four cantos. The first canto, *Christ's Victory in Heaven*, represents a dispute in heaven between justice and mercy, using the facts of Christ's life on earth; the second, *Christ's Victory on Earth*, deals with an allegorical account of Christ's Temptation; the third, *Christ's Triumph over Death*, covers the Passion; and the fourth, *Christ's Triumph after Death*, covering the Resurrection and Ascension, ends with an affectionate eulogy of his brother Phineas as Thyrsilis. The meter is an eight-line stanza in the style of [Edmund Spenser](http://www.poemhunter.com/edmund-spenser/); the first five lines rhyme ababb, and the stanza concludes with a rhyming triplet. [John Milton](http://www.poemhunter.com/john-milton/) borrowed liberally from *Christ's Victory and Triumph* in *Paradise Regained*.

A Description Of Justice

But Justice had no sooner Mercy seen,
Smoothing the wrinkles of her Fathers brow,
But up she starts and throwes herself between :
As when a vapour from a moory slough,
Meeting with fresh Eoiis, that but now
Open'd the world, which all in darknesse lay,
Doth heaven's bright face of his rayes disarray,
And sads the smiling orient of the springing day.

She was a virgin of austere regard,
Not as the world esteemes her, deaf and blinde,
But as the eagle, that hath oft compar'd
Her eye with heavVs, so, and more brightly shin'd
Her lamping sight; for she the same could wind
Into the solid heart, and with her eares
The silence of the thought loud speaking heares,
And in one hand a pair of even scoals she weares.

No riot of affection revell kept
Within her breast, but a still apathy
Possessed all her soul, which softly slept
Securely without tempest—no sad crie
Awakes her pitie, but wrong'd Povertie,
Sending his eyes to heav'n swimming in teares,
With hideous clamours ever struck her eares,
Whetting the blazing sword that in her hand she beares.

The winged lightning is her Mercury,
And round about her mightie thunders sound :
Impatient of himself, lies pining by
Pale Sickness, with his kercher'd head upwound,
And thousand noisome plagues attend her round ;
But if her clowdie brow but once grow foul,
The flints do melt, and rocks to water rowl,
And airie mountains shake, and frighted shadows howl.

Famine, and bloodies Care, and bloodie war,
Want, and the want of knowledge how to use,
Abundance, Age, and Fear, that runnes afarre

Before his fellow Grief, that aye pursues
His winged steps ; for who would not refuse
Griefs companie, a dull and rawbon'd spright,
That lanks the cheeks, and pales the freshest sight,
Unbosoming the cheerefull breast of all delight.

Before this cursed throng goes Ignorance,
That needs will leade the way he cannot see:
And, after all, Death doth his flag advance,
And, in the midst, Strife still would roguing be,
Whose ragged flesh and cloaths did well agree
And round about amazed Horror flies,
And, over all, Shame veils his guiltie eyes,
And underneath Hell's hungrie throat still yawning lies.

Upon two stonie tables, spread before her,
She lean'd her bosome, more than stonie hard ;
There slept th' unpartiall judge, and strict restorer
Of wrong or right, with pain or with reward;
There hung the score of all our debts, the card
Where good and bad, and life and death, were painted :
Was never heart of mortall so untainted,
But when that scroul was read, with thousand terrors fainted

Witness the thunder that mount Sinai heard,
When all the hill with fierie clouds did flame,
And wand'ring Israel, with the sight afeard,
Blinded with seeing, durst not touch the same,
But like a wood of shaking leaves became.
On this dread Justice, she, the living law,
Bowing herself, with a majestique awe, [draw.
All heaven, to heare her speech, did into silence

Dread Lord of spirits, well thou didst devise
To fling the world's rude dunghill, and the drosse
Of the old Chaos, furthest from the skies,
And thine own seat, that heare the childe of losse,
Of all the lower heavn the curse and crosse;
That wretch, beast, caytive, monster—man, might spend,
(Proud of the mire, in which his soul is pend)
Clodded in lumps of clay, his wearie life to end.

His bodie dust—where grew such cause of pride ?
His soul thy image—what could he envie?
Himself most happie, if he so would bide :
Now grown most wretched, who can remedie ?
He slew himself, himself the enemye.
That his own soul would her own murder wreak,—
If I were silent, heaven and earth would speak :
And, if all fail'd, these stones would into clamours break.

How many darts made furrows in his side,
When she, that out of his own side was made,
Gave feathers to their flight ! where was the pride
Of their new knowledge ? whither did it fade,
When, running from thy voice into the shade,
He fled thy sight, himself of sight bereav'd ;
And for his shield a leavie armour weav'd,
With which, vain man, he thought, God's eies to have deceiv'd ?

And well he might delude those eies, that see
And judge by colours : for who ever saw
A man of leaves, a reasonable tree ?
But those that from this stock their life did draw,
Soon made their father godly, and by law
Proclaimed trees almighty: gods of wood,
Of stocks, and stones, with crowns of laurell stood
Templed, and fed by fathers with their children's blood.

The sparkling fanes, that burn in beaten gold,
And, like the starres of heaven in midst of night,
Black Egypt as her mirrours, doth behold,
Are but the dens where idol-snakes delight
Again to cover Satan from their sight:
Yet these are all their gods, to whom they vie
The crocodile, the cock, the rat, the flie—
Fit gods, indeed, for such men to be served by.

The fire, the winde, the sea, the sunne and moon,
The flitting aire, and the swift-winged houres,
And all the watchmen, that so nimbly runne
And sentinel about the walled towers
Of the world's citie in their heav'nly bowrs;
And, lest their pleasant gods should want delight,

Neptune spues out the lady Aphrodite,
And but in heav'n proud Juno's peacocks scorn to lite.

The senselesse earth, the serpent, dog, and cat,
And, worse than all these, man, and worst of men,
Usurping Jove, and swilling Bacchus fat,
And drunk with the vine's purple bloud, and then
The fiend himself they conjure from his den,
Because he onely yet remain'd to be
Worse than the worst of men—they flee from thee,
And vveare his altar-stones out with their pliant knee.

All that he speaks (and all he speaks are lies)
Are oracles ; 'tis he (that wounded all)
Cures all their wounds ; he (that puts out their eyes)
That gives them light; he (that death first did call
Into the world) that with his orizall
Inspirits earth : he Heav'n's alseeing eye,
In earth's great prophet, he, whom rest doth flie,
That on salt billows doth, as pillows, sleeping lie.

But let him in his cabin restlesse rest,
The dungeon of dark flames, and freezing fire,
Justice in heav'n against man makes request
To God, and of his angels doth require
Sinne's punishment : if what I did desire,
Or who, or against whom, or why or where,
Of, or before whom ignorant I were,
Then should my speech their sands of sins to mountains reare.

Were not the heav'ns pure, in whose courts I sue ;
The Judge to whom I sue, just to requite him;
The cause for sinne, the punishment most due;
Justice herself the plaintiffe to endite him;
The angels holy, before whom I cite him ;
He against whom, wicked, unjust, impure;—
Then might he sinfull live, and die secure,
Or triall might escape, or triall might endure.

The judge might partiall be, and over-prayed ;
The place appeal'd from, in whose courts he sues;
The fault excus'd, or punishment delay'd,

The parties self-accus'd, that did accuse;
Angels for pardon might their prayers use :
But now no starre can shine, no hope be got.
Most wretched creature, if he knew his lot,—
And yet more wretched farre because he knowes ' it not.

What should I tell how barren earth is grown
All for to starve her children ? didst not thou
Water with heav'nly showers her wombe unsown,
And drop down clouds of flow'rs—diddst not thou bowe
Thine easie ear unto the plowman's vow —
Long might he look, and look, and look in vain, !
Might load his harvest in an empty wain,
And beat the woods, to finde the poor oak's hungry grain.

The swelling sea seethes in his angry waves,
And smites the earth, that dares the traitors nourish;
Yet oft his thunder their light cork outbraves,
Mowing the mountains, on whose temples flourish
Whole woods of garlands; and their pride to cherish,
Plowe through the seas green fields, and nets display,
To catch the flying windes, and steal away,
Cooz'ning the greedie sea, pris'ning their nimble prey.

How often have I seen the waving pine,
Tost on a waterie mountain, knock his head
At heav'n's too patient gates, and with salt brine
Quench the moon's burning horns ; and safely fled
From heav'n's revenge, her passengers, all dead
With stiife astonishment, tumble to hell!
How oft the sea all earth would overswell,
Did not thy sandie girdle binde the mightie swell.

Would not the aire be filld with streams of death,
To poison the quick rivers of their blood,
Did not thy windes fan, with their panting breath,
The flitting region ? would not th' hastie flood
Emptie itself into the sea's wide wood,
Diddst not thou leade it wandring from his way,
To give men drink, and make his waters stray,
To fresh the flowrie medows, through whose fields they play ?

Who makes the sources of the silver fountains
From the flint's mouth and rockie valleys slide,
Thickning the airie bowels of the mountains ?
Who hath the wilde heard s of the forrest tide
In their cold dens, making them hungry bide
Till man to rest be laid ? can beastly he
That should have most sense, onely senseles be,
And all things else, beside himself, so awfull see?

Were he not wilder than the savage beast,
Prouder than haughty hills, harder than rocks,
Colder than fountains from their springs releast,
Lighter than aire, blinder than senseles stocks,
More changing then the river's curling locks,—
If reason would not, sense would soon reprove him,
And unto shame, if not to sorrow, move him,
To see cold flouds, wilde beasts, dull stocks, hard stones, outlove him.

Under the weight of sinne the earth did fall,
And swallowed Dathan ; and the raging winde,
And stormie sea, and gaping whale, did call
For Jonas ; and the aire did bullets finde,
And shot from heav'n a stony showre, to grinde
The five proud kings, that for their idols fought;
The sunne itself stood still to fight it out,
And fire from heav'n flew down, when sinne to heav'n did shout.

Should any to himself for safety flie ?
The way to save himself, if any were,
Were to fly from himself: should he relie
Upon the promise of his wife ? but there
What can he see, but that he most may fear,
A siren, sweet to death ? upon his friends ?
Who that he needs, or that he hath not, lends;
Or wanting aid himself, aid to another sends ?

His strength ? but dust : his pleasure ? cause of pain:
His hope ? false courtier : youth or beauty ? brittle:
Intreatie ? fond : repentance ? late and vain :
Just recompence ? the world were all too little :
Thy love ? he hath no title to a tittle:
Hell's force ? in vain her furies hell shall gather:

His servants, kinsmen, or his children rather?
His childe, if good, shall judge; if bad, shall curse his father.

His life ? that brings him to his end, and leaves him:
His end ? that leaves him to begin his wo :
His goods ? what good in that, that so deceives him?
His gods of wood ? their feet, alas ! are slow
That go to help, that must be helpt to go:
Honour ? great worth ? ah, little worth they be
Unto their owners : wit ? that makes him see
He wanted wit, that thought he had it, wanting thee.

The sea to drink him quick ? that casts his dead :
Angels to spare ? they punish : night to hide ?
The world shall burn in light : the heav'ns to spread
Their wings to save him ? heav'n itself shall slide,
And rowl away like melting starres, that glide
Along their oylie threeds : his minde pursues him :
His house to shrowd, or hills to fall, and bruise him ?
As seargeants both attache, and witnesses accuse him.

What need I urge—what they must needs confesse—
Sentence on them, condemn'd by their own lust?
I crave no more, and thou canst give no lesse,
Than death to dead men, justice to unjust;
Shame to most shamefull, and most shameles dust:
But if thy Mercy needs will spare her friends,
Let Mercy there begin, where Justice ends.
Tis cruell Mercy that the wrong from right defends.

She ended, and the heavenly hierarchies,
Burning in zeal, thickly imbranded were;
Like to an armie that allarum cries,
And every one shakes his ydraded speare,
And the Almighty's self, as he would teare
The Earth, and her firm basis quite in sunder,
Flam'd all in just revenge, and mightie thunder;
Heav'n stole itself from Earth by clouds that moisten'd under.

Giles Fletcher The Younger

A Description Of Mercy

As when the cheerfull sunne, damping wide
Glads all the world with his uprising ray,
And wooes the widow'd earth afresh to pride,
And paints her bosome with the fiovvrie May,
Her silent sister steals him quite away,
Wrapt in a sable cloud, from mortall eyes:
The hastie starres at noon begin to rise,
And headlong to his early roost the sparrow flies:

But soon as he again disshadow'd is,
Restoring the blind world his blemisht sight,
As though another day were newly ris,
The coozned birds busily take their flight,
And wonder at the shortnesse of the night ;
So Mercie once againe herself displayes
Out from her sisters cloud, and open layes
Those sunshine looks, whose beams would dim a thousand dayes.

How may a worm, that crawls along the dust,
Clamber the azure mountains, thrown so high,
And fetch from thence thy fair idea just,
That in those sunny courts doth hidden lie,
Cloath'd with such light as blindes the angel's eye?
How may weak mortall ever hope to file
His unsmooth tongue, and his depostrate stile?
O raise thou from his corse thy now entomb'd exile !

One touch would rouze me from my sluggish hearse,
One word would call me to my wished home,
One look would polish my afflicted verse,
One thought would steal my soul from her thick lome,
And force it wandring up to heav'n to come,
There to importune, and to beg apace
One happy favour of thy sacred grace,
To see—what though it lose her eyes ?—to see thy face.

If any ask why roses please the sight ?
Because their leaves upon thy cheeks do bowre:
If any ask why lilies are so white ?

Because their blossomes in thy hand do flowre
Or why sweet plants so gratefull odours showre ?
It is because thy breath so like they be:
Or why the orient sunne so bright we see ?
What reason can we give but from thine eies and thee?

Ros'd in all lovely crimson are thy cheeks,
Where beauties ineflourishing abide,
And as to passe his fellow either seeks,
Seems both do blush at one another's pride;
And on thine eyelids, waiting thee beside,
Ten thousand graces sit, and when they move
To earth their amorous belgards from above,
They flie from heav'n, and on their wings convey thy love.

All of discolour'd plumes their wings are made,
And with so wondrous art the quills are wrought,
That whensoere they cut the ayrie glad,
The winde into their hollow pipes is caught,
As seems the spheres with them they down have brought:
Like to the sev'n-fold reed of Arcadie
Which Pan of Syrinx made, when she did flie
To Ladon sands, and at his sighs sung merrily.

As melting hony dropping from the combe,
So still the words that spring between thy lips;
Thy lips where smiling sweetnesse keeps her home,
And heav'nly eloquence pure manna sips :
He that his pen but in that fountain dips,
How nimble will the golden phrases flie,
And shed forth streams of choicest rhetorie,
Welling celestiall torrents out of poesie !

Like as the thirstie land, in summer's heat,
Calls to the clouds, and gapes at ev'ry showre
As though her hungry clefts all heav'n would eat,
Which if high God into her bosome poure,
Though much refresht, yet more she could devoure;
So hang the greedie eares of angels sweet,
And ev'ry breath a thousand Cupids meet,
Some flying in, some out, and all about her fleet.

Upon her breast Delight doth softly sleep,
And of eternal joy is brought abed,
Those snowie mountelets, through which do creep
The milkie rivers, that are inly bred
In silver cisterns, and themselves do shed
To wearie travellers, in heat of day
To quench their fierie thirst, and to allay
With dropping nectar-flouds the furie of their way.

If any wander, thou dost call him back;
If any be not forward, thou incit'st him;
Thou dost expect, if any should grow slack;
If any seem but willing, thou invit'st him ;
Or if he do offend thee, thou acquit'st him :
Thou find'st the lost, and follow'st him that flies,
Healing the sick, and quickning him that dies,
Thou art the lame man's friendly staffe, the blinde man's eyes.

So fair thou art, that all would thee behold;
But none can thee behold, thou art so fair;
Pardon, O pardon then thy vassall bold,
That with poore shadows strives thee to compare,
And match the things, which he knows matchlesse are.
O thou vive mirrour of celestiall grace,
How can frail colours pourtraict out thy face,
Or paint in flesh thy beautie in such 'semblance base ?

Her upper garment was a silken lawn,
With needlework richly embroidered,
Which she herself with her own had drawn,
And all the world therein had pourtrayed,
With threeds so fresh and lively coloured,
That seem'd the world she new created there;
And the mistaken eye would rashly sweare
The silken trees did grow, and the beasts living were.

Low at her feet the Earth was cast alone,
(As though to kisse her foot it did aspire,
And gave itself for her to tread upon,)
With so unlike and different attire,
That ev'ry one that saw it did admire
What it might be, was of so various hew;

For to itself it oft so diverse grew,
That still it seem'd the same, and still it seem'd a new.

And here and there few men she scattered,
(That in their thought the world esteem but small.
And themselves great,) but she with one fine thread
So short, and small, and slender, wove them all,
That like a sort of busy ants, that crawl
About some molehill, so they wandered;
And round about the waving sea was shed:
But, for the silver sands, small pearls were sprinkled.

So curiously the underwork did creep,
And curling circlets so well shadowed lay,
That afar off the waters seem'd to sleep ;
But those that neare the margin pearl did play,
Hoarcely enwaved were with hastie sway,
As though they meant to rock the gentle eare,
And hush the former that enslumbred were
And here a dangerous rock the flying ships did fear.

High in the airie element there hung
Another cloudy sea, that did disdain
(As though his purer waves from heaven sprung)
To crawl on earth, as doth the sluggish main :
But it the earth would water with his rain,
That eb'd and flow'd, as winde and season would,
And oft the sunne would cleave the limber mould,
To alabaster rocks, that in the liquid rowl'd.

Beneath those sunny banks a darker cloud,
Dropping with thicker dew, did melt apace,
And bent itself into a hollow shroud,
On which, if Mercy did but cast her face,
A thousand colours did the bow enchace,
That wonder was to see the silk distain'd
With the resplendance from her beauty gain'd,
And Iris paints her locks with beams so lively feign'd.

About her head a Cyprus heav'n she wore,
Spread like a veil upheld with silver wire,
In which the starres so burnt in golden ore,

As seem'd the azure web was all on fire:
But hastily, to quench their sparkling ire,
A floud of milk came rowling up the shore,
That on his curded wave swift Argus bore,
And the immortall swan, that did her life deplore.

Yet strange it was so many starres to see,
Without a sunne to give their tapers light:
Yet strange it was not, that it so should be;
For, where the sunne centers himself by right,
Her face and locks did flame, that at the sight
The heav'nly veil, that else should nimbly move,
Forgot his flight, and all incensed with love,
With wonder and amazement, did her beauty prove.

Over her hung a canopie of state,
Not of rich tissew, nor of spangled gold,
But of a substance though not animate,
Yet of a heav'nly and spirituall mold,
That onely eyes of spirits might behold;
Such light as from main rocks of diamound,
Shooting their sparks at Phoebus, would rebound,
And little angels, holding hands, danct all around.

Seemed those little sprights, through nimblesse bold,
The stately canopy bore on their wings,
But them itself, as pendants, did uphold,
Besides the crowns of many famous kings :
Among the rest, there David ever sings,
And now, with yeares grown young, renews his laves
Unto his golden harp, and dities pi ayes,
Psalming aloud in well-tun'd songs his Maker's praise.

Thou Self-idea of all joyes to come,
Whose love is such, would make the rudest speak.
Whose love is such, would make the wisest dumbe,
O, when wilt thou thy too long silence break,
And overcome the strong to save the weak ?
If thou no weapons hast, thine eyes will wound
Th' Almighty's self, that now stick on the ground,
As though some blessed object there did them empound.

Ah ! miserable abject of disgrace,
What happiness is in thy miserie !
I both must pitie and envie thy case;
For she, that is the glory of the skie,
Leaves heaven blinde, to fix on thee her eye.
Yet her (though Mercie's self esteems not small)
The world despis'd, they her Repentance call,
And she herself despises, and the world, and all.

Deeply, alas ! empassioned she stood,
To see a flaming brand tost up from hell,
Boyling her heart in her own lustfull blood,
That oft for torment she would loudly yell
Now she would sighing sit, and now she fell
Crouching upon the ground, in sackcloth trust;
Early and late she played, and fast she must,
And all her hair hung full of ashes and of dust.

Of all most hated, yet hated most of all
Of her own self she was ; disconsolat
(As though her flesh did but infunerall
Her buried ghost) she in an arbour sat
Of thornie briar, weeping her cursed state ;
And her before a hastie river fled,
Which her blintje eves with faithfull penance fed,
And, all about, the grasse with teares hung down his head.

Her eyes, though blinde abroad, at home kept fast,
Inwards they turn'd, and lookt into her head,
At which she often started as agast.
To see so fearfull spectacles of dread ;
And with one hand her breast she martyred,
Wounding her heart the same to mortifie;
The other a fair damsell held her by,
Which if but once let go, she sunk immediatly.

But Faith was quick, and nimble as the heav'n,
As if of love and light she all had been,
And though of present sight her sense were reav'n,
Yet she could see the things could not be seen :
Beyond the starres, as nothing were between,
She fixed her sight, disdainig things below :

Into the sea she could a mountain throw,
And make the sunne to stand, and waters backwards flow.

Such when as Mercy her beheld from high,
In a dark valley, drown'd with her own teares,
One of her graces she sent hastily,
Smiling Eirene, that a garland weares
Of guilded olive on her fairer haire,
To crown the fainting soul's true sacrifice,
Whom when as sad Repentance coming spies,
The holy desperado wipt her smiling eyes.

But Mercie felt a kind remorse to runne
Through her soft vains, and therefore, hying fast
To give an end to silence, thus begunne :—
' Aye-honour'd Father, if no joy thou hast
But to reward desert, reward at last.'
The devil's voice spoke with a serpent's tongue,
Fit to hisse out the words so deadly stung,
And let him die, death's bitter charms so sweetly sung.

He was the father of that hopeless season,
That, to serve other gods, forgot their own,
The reason was, thou wast above their reason :
They would have any gods rather than none,
A beastly serpent, or a senseless stone:
And these, as Justice hates, so I deplore;
But the upplowd heart, all rent and tore,
Thou wounded by itself, I gladly would restore.

He was but dust ; why fear'd he not to fall ?
And, being fall'n, how can he hope to live ?
Cannot the hand destroy him that made all ?
Could he not take away, as well as give ?
Should man deprave, and should not God deprive ?
Was it not all the world's deceiving spirit
(That, bladder'd up with pride of his own merit,
Fell in his rise,) that him of heav'n did disinherit ?

He was but dust ; how could he stand before him ?
And, being fall'n, why should he fear to die ?
Cannot the hand that made him first, restore him ?

Deprav'd of sinne, should he deprived lie
Of grace ? can he not hide infirmitie
That gave him strength ? unworthy the forsaking,
He is, whoever weighs, without mistaking,
Or Maker of the man, or manner of his making.

Who shall thy temple incense any more,
Or at thy altar crown the sacrifice,
Or strew with idle flow'rs the hallow'd flore ?
Or what should prayer deck with herbs and spice
Her vialls breathing orisons of price ?
If all must pay that which all cannot pay,
O first begin with me, and Mercie slay,
And thy thrice-honoured Sonne that now beneath doth stray.

But if or he, or I, may live and speak,
And heaven can joy to see a sinner weep,
O let not Justice' iron sceptre break
A heart alreadie broke, that low doth creep,
And with prone humblesse her feet's dust doth sweep.
Must all go by desert ? is nothing free ?
Ah ! if but those that onely wTorthy be,
None shoidd thee ever see, none should thee ever see.

What hath man done, that man shall not undo,
Since God to him is grown so neare akin ?
Did his foe slay him ? he shall slay his foe:
Hath he lost all ? he all again shall vvinne:
Is sinne his master ? he shall master sinne.
Too hardy soul, with sinne the field to trie:
The onely way to conquer was to flie,
But thus long death hath liv'd, and now death's self shall die.

He is a path, if any be misled ;
He is a robe, if any naked be :
If any chance to hunger, he is bread ;
If any be a bondman, he is free ;
If any be but weak, how strong is he !
To dead men life he is, to sick men health ;
To blinde men sight, and to the needie wealth—
A pleasure without losse, a treasure without stealth.

Who can forget,—never to be forgot—
The time that ail the world in slumber lies,
When like the starres, the singing angels shot
To earth, and heaven awaked all his eyes,
To see another sunne at midnight rise
On earth ? was never sight of pareil fame ;
For God before man like himself did frame,
But God himself now like a mortal man became.

A childe he was, and had not learnt to speak,
That with his word the world before did make ;
His mother's arms him bore, he was so weak,
That with one hand the vaults of heaven couldshake.
See how small room my infant Lord doth take,
Whom all the world is not enough to hold!
Who of his yeares, or of his age, hath told ?
Never such age so young, never a childe so old.

And yet but newly he was infanted,
And yet alreadie he was sought to die ;
Yet scarcely born, alreadie banished ;
Nor able yet to go, and forc't to flie :
But scarcely fled away, when, by and by,
The tyrant's gword with bloud is all defil'd,
And Rachel, for her sonnes, with furie wild,
Cries, O thou cruell king, and, O my sweetest childe.

Egypt his nurse became, where Nilus springs,
Who straight to entertain the rising sunne
The hasty harvest in his bosome brings;
But now for drieth the fields were all undone,
And now with waters all is overrunne !
So fast the Cynthian mountains pour'd their snow,
'When once they felt the Sunne so neare them glow,
That Nilus Egypt lost, and to a sea did grow.

The Angels carol'd loud their song of peace ;
The cursed oracles were strucken dumbe,
To see their Shepherd the poore shepherds presse ;
To see their King the kingly sophies come ;
And them to guide unto his Master's home
A starre comes dauncing up the Orient,

That springs for joy over the strawy tent,
Where gold, to make their Prince a crown, they all present.

Young John, glad childe ! before he could be born,
Leapt in the wombe his joy to prophecie ;
Old Anna, though with age all spent and worn,
Proclaims her Saviour to posteritie,
And Simeon fast his dying notes doth plie.
Oh, how the blessed souls about him trace!
It is the Sire of heaven thou dost embrace :
Sing, Simeon, sing—sing, Simeon, sing apace!

With that the mighty thunder dropt away
From God's unwarie arm, now milder grown,
And melted into teares ; as if to pray
For pardon, and for pitie, it had known,
That should have been for sacred vengeance thrown:
There too the armies angelique devow'd
Their former rage, and all to Mercy bow'd:
Their broken weapons at her feet they gladly strow'd.

' Bring, bring, ye Graces, all your silver flaskets,
Painted with every choicest flowre that growes,
That I may soon unflow'r your fragrant baskets,
To strow the fields with odours where he goes ;
Let whatsoere he treads on be a rose.'
So down she let her eyelids fall, to shine
Upon the rivers of bright Palestine,
Whose woods drop honey, and her rivers skip with wine.

Giles Fletcher The Younger

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' engladded 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 worshipp'd 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.

...

Giles Fletcher The Younger

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 The Younger

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 med'cine 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!

Giles Fletcher The Younger