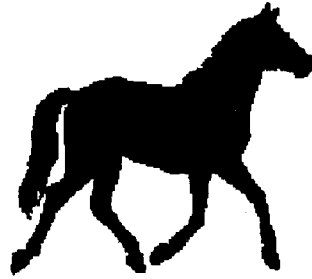


Lyrical Tales



by

W & G

Two Quantock Poets

not Wm. Wordsworth & S. T. Coleridge

(nor Wallace & Gromit!)

but Enid Williams & John A. Greed

published in 1998 by St. Trillo Publications
to coincide with the two hundredth anniversary
of the publication, in September 1798, of
"Lyrical Ballads" by Wordsworth & Coleridge.

Lyrical Tales

Lyrical
Tales

Enid Williams

&

John A. Greed

first published May 1998

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About the authors:

Enid Williams is a retired schoolteacher who has lived for the greater part of her life at Nether Stowey, Holford, West Quantoxhead and Watchet. In the 1950s when she lived at Holford and taught at Withycombe near Minehead, she owned a horse, Jakey, for whom she had a stable but no pasture in Holford. She therefore rode Jakey over the hilltop track known as the Great Road from Holford to West Quantoxhead, every schoolday, in all weathers. At West Quantoxhead she left Jakey in a friendly farmer's field and caught the Minehead bus - and repeated the journey, in the reverse direction, at the end of the day, often in the dark. She is probably the last person ever to have used the Great Road on a daily basis. (The Great Road was the ancient main road until the turnpike road - the present A39 - was built in 1765.) Her story was published in serial form in the West Somerset Free Press in 1985-6 and may one day appear in book form.

John Greed, who lectures on Law at the University of the West of England, was brought up in Williton where his father Clifford Greed was the police sergeant from 1946 to 1955. John's grandfather Joseph Greed (or Greedy) born at East Quantoxhead, was the police constable who arrested the Porlock murderer in 1914: the story is told in the poem on page 27. Books by John include "Glastonbury Tales" (1975) and "Land Law" (1996).

- - - - -

Note on the "Great Road": John has in his possession a photocopy (the original being in the Somerset Record Office) of an order, made in 1765, that the turnpike road shall be built along the route of the Great Road. He strongly suspects that the Holford beeches were planted at this time to form a windbreak, before the scheme was abandoned and the turnpike road was built around the edge of the hills. If this is correct, the beeches would have been about thirty years old when Wordsworth and Coleridge knew them in 1797. In the poets' "*annus mirabilis*", the Great Road (on which they began to compose "The Ancient Mariner") had been superseded by the turnpike road for about thirty years. So, in that respect, the track may have seemed to them much as a track along a disused railway line may appear to us today - a once-important road, recently left to return to Nature.

The Quantock Hills

The Quantock hills stretch across West Somerset from the Bristol Channel to near Taunton. The highest point, Wills Neck, is 1,261 feet (386 metres) high. Coleridge wrote most of his best-known works and Wordsworth was at his best, in 1797-1798 when Coleridge and his family were living at Nether Stowey under the north-east slopes of the Quantocks, and William and Dorothy Wordsworth were living in the nearby mansion of Alfoxton (or Alfoxden).

Preface

Much of what follows may be regarded by some as being old-fashioned - but much that is old is worth preserving. There is little room in this volume for poems that have neither rhyme nor easily-recognisable rhythm.

Wordsworth, in his Preface to the reprint in 1800 of "Lyrical Ballads", speaks of "the triviality and meanness both of thought and language, which some of my contemporaries have occasionally introduced into their metrical compositions", and in 1998 we sometimes come across poems which, in their form and (more particularly) their content, are not uplifting. It is hoped that there is nothing in this present volume that the reader will find to be the reverse of uplifting. Let this volume be a breath of fresh air - the west wind, the West Country, the Bristol Channel, the Christian faith and the Quantocks.

Lyrical Tales

a collection of twenty-seven poems

Solitude

*(written 10th. May, 1957, on Battery Point at Portishead,
about five miles from Coleridge's "Pretty Cot" at Clevedon)*

The water flows, and ebbs westward,
Softly, nay almost silently swirling
Southward and westward,
Down to the open sea.

- The sun shines glorious overhead,
Not a cloud in sight and the morning mists have lifted.
Nothing in sight on the sea but the gulls,
And one boat, just upon the horizon.

- But now there is a sound disturbs the silence:
I heard a train whistle just then.
'Twas on the far bank nearly five miles away
Yet I heard it quite clearly.

- And now, the silence again.
Not a sound but the bees, and the gulls
And two swallows - the first I have seen this year.
Otherwise ... silence.
No-one in sight.
No-one but Nature.

Harvest Moon

*(written in September, 1961, near the mouth of the
River Axe at Uphill, Weston-super-Mare)*

Harvest moon...

Bright silver lantern in the boundless sky,
Above the golden fields.
So peaceful. All is silent -
And yet not so silent
If only we listen.

At first we hear nothing: all is still.
But the night-air whispers softly o'er the fields of growing
corn,
And sighs through the branches of the elms.
I hear a lone owl, calling not far away,
And a rustling in the hedgerow - is it a mouse?

The cows beyond the hedgerow seem asleep
(They need no shelter on this balmy night)
Save one, who with a rhythmic gentle munch,
Scarce-audible, contented chews the cud.

Above the fields, the deep dark dome of night,
Prick'd with a thousand stars - a lovely sight -
And that great harvest moon between the elms.

Beyond the fields the river softly flows,
Broad with a long meander.
The tide is rising fast: sweet musical sounds
Of rippling waters sing along each bank.
A half a dozen yachts lie in this reach,
Some moored in midstream, some upon the bank
Awaiting the high tide.

How soothing is the bubbling round their keels,
The gentle tugging of their anchor-chains.

One local yacht is coming upstream now,
'Mid a musical murmur of waters
And a regularly-swishing and pattering gentle splashing
As she glides ahead.
I hear her crew talking in gentle low voices,
Her rigging creaks momentarily, but she has no engine
To shatter the night.

The restless sea's surging
At the mouth of the river
Is faint, but just audible,
And soothing, and restful:
Night's calm lies unbroken.

- - -

I have to walk back to the town,
With its hustle and bustle and roar:
Roars of motor-bikes funfairs and transistor-radios -
Town's full of "trippers" this summer weekend.

They find no pleasure in quiet and peace;
They seek the tawdry and flash-gaudy thrills -
Pier, "pub" and funfair where hordes lounge and guffaw
Loud raucous cackles of ribald coarse laughter.

"Trippers" we welcome - their squander our livelihood -
But - *how* I envy my great-aunt her power
Of turning her hearing-aid off at her will!

----- 0 -----

JG

Weston in November

Weston in November:
Weston with the tide out:
Out till you can scarcely see
The sea,
The muddy sea.

The promenade deserted, wet with rain.
A bus goes lonely by: comes back again,
Windows a misty blear,
From the deserted pier
Where pleasure-steamers you will seek in vain.

Weston in November...
Yet I can remember
Happy crowds of summer, and one day they'll come again.

----- 0 -----

JG, Oct. 1962

A Trip to 'Combe

*(an unusually-choppy trip to Ilfracombe on the
paddle-steamer "Bristol Queen"
in the 1950s - written in November, 1960)*

We sailed to 'Combe the other day
To take a breath of air:
The sea was choppy all the way -
'Twas more than John could bear.

We left him in the fore-saloon
Sipping a cup of tea.
He first turned whiter than the moon,
Then greener than the sea.

We zig-zagged to the forrard-deck
To see the spray-clouds fly,
And soon the spray ran down my neck
And cold and wet was I.

Close by the ticket-office grille
Some shelter can be found,
Where fresh air stimulates you still
But you'll not be half-drowned.

A lady standing next to me,
And staring glassy-eyed,
Rushed gurgling off - and not to lee
But to the windward side.

"Remove your dentures, grasp the rail
- Pray for eternity,"
She mused, and gave up, with a wail,
Her breakfast to the sea.

A deckhand, who, with pail and brush,
Was swabbing down the ship,
Cleaned up the deck, all haste and rush
So that no-one should slip.

I saw a courting-couple who
Seemed in a sorry plight:
Her face had turned first green then blue,
While *his* was pure snow-white.

He held her as she first made moan
And gazed upon the swell,
But soon he left her all alone,
And gasped, "I feel unwell!"

Fresh victims staggered everywhere,
The more the old "Queen" rolled;
And half were green with *mal-de-mer*,
And half were blue with cold.

But still there was a little clan
Who revelled in the gale,
So Neptune had another plan
To make their spirits quail,

And two of them, young business-men
In tailored suits - well-dressed -
Were standing on the foredeck when
A wave broke. Guess the rest!

Great sheets of silver spray blew back,
The deck ran white with foam:
A voice was heard amid the wrack,
"We should have stayed at home!"

And sheltering behind the mast
As clouds of spray rained down,
Stood two cold business-men, aghast,
Each like a circus-clown.

And one wrung water from his coat
And said - and not in jest -
"It's wetter than the Bristol moat!¹
I'm soaked through to my vest."

His friend had lit a cigarette
Before the big wave broke:
He thought he would consolement get,
Took one puff - and did choke!

He ground it flat beneath his heel:
It only made him fret.
Its soggy saltness made him reel -
That cold wet cigarette!

Then Neptune, having, by his fun,
Plunged us to depths of gloom,
Made storm give way to calm and sun
As we arrived at 'Combe.

----- 0 -----

JG

¹ *The reference is to the ornamental lake in front of the Bristol City Council House on College Green.*

The next two poems, "Heddon's Mouth" and "The Foreland", feature the Exmoor coast. Wordsworth and Coleridge would have passed close by the Foreland on their long walk to Lynmouth and Lynton in 1797, and Heddon's Mouth is about four miles west of Lynmouth. Heddon's Mouth needs to be seen from the sea (and steamer trips from Minehead to Ilfracombe pass quite close to it) to get its full dramatic impact.

Heddon's Mouth¹

High on the hillside,
Open and lonely,
Purple the heather;
Deep azure-blue with white clouds the sky.

Limpid blue-green is the sea far beneath me
Soothing the sparkling
Swift-splashing waters
Of the valley stream below me
To a ripple ... ripple ... still.²
Bright rock-strewn trout stream,
Winding brown footpath,
Little green footbridge
Over the trout stream
- And there jumps a trout.
Will h-
Startled a rabbit -
Flash - grey - white - gone
Back to his burrow secure.
(Holed in one!)
Trout had success:
He's gone up.

Warm, fragrant, restful.
Here, yellow gorse,
And around, purple heather.

And listen to the sea:

To the God-made sea which He has sailed:³
 Hear the distant beat of wave on rock,
 And the steady-throbbing engine of a distant ship...
 Far away...
 Rest all day...

----- 0 -----

JG, 1967

The Foreland

(a fragment of blank verse)

A noble headland rising from the sea,
 Which dwarfs our ship like some child's toy, with slopes
 So green, raised far above that rock-strewn foot
 At which the silver wavelets lap today
 And mighty breakers crash when winter storms
 Sweep raging in with terrifying strength
 Against this lonely shore. Give thanks to those
 Who tend the friendly ray which through each night
 Warns of the perils of the jagged rocks
 Which at this place can bring a sudden death
 To men and ships who fall into their snare...

----- 0 -----

JG, Jan. 1960

- ¹ *on the coast of North Devon, six miles west of The Foreland.*
- ² *At Heddon's Mouth the swift waters of the stream (the River Heddon) come to rest as they meet the sea at the river-mouth.*
- ³ *The reference is to the legend of Christ's visit to Glastonbury: to reach Glastonbury He would have sailed past the North Devon coast.*

The Glories of Nature

Try it to the tune "Battle Hymn of the Republic": John Brown's Body:

When the sun is sinking low
o'er the hills o' the West

When the sun is sinking low o'er the hills o' the West,
And the steamer is returning to her haven of rest,
And the scarlet sunray glitters on the azure wave's white
crest

- I thank God for the glories of Nature.

When I see the purple hills descending to the rocky shore,
And the storm-blown silver sea-spray thunders with its
crashing roar,
As the milky-foaming wavelets ripple up to near our door
- I thank God for the glories of Nature.

When the ebb-tide gurgles softly and I hear the
bell-buoy's sound
Sweetly calling o'er the water to the ships now outward
bound,
And when greedy sea-birds hoarsely cry, and wheel
expectant round
- I thank God for the glories of Nature.

With the green hills rising round me yellow-spatter'd
bright with gorse,
As I climb those combs that none can reach, save
walking, or on horse,
To the summit, panting, way above the babbling
streamlet's source
- I thank God for the glories of Nature.

Colour on the Quantocks

winter A cloudy day -
The hills are grey.
A fall of snow,
The hills are white.

Clouds ... pale new moon...
The hills are ghostly.

spring Now Spring has come:
The hills are green.

In splashing streams
From April rains
The hills are silver,
And gorse in bloom
Flecks hills with gold,
While sun on shining raindrops
Makes hills look sparkling-jewelled.

Then, in the rhododendron-grove,
For two weeks, hills are pink and mauve.

summer Midsummer sun
Makes all hills bright:
The sky above
The hills is blue,
The sea beyond
The hills, turquoise.

Where corn is ripening in the fields,
The hills are lush and flaxen;
Then - weather dry -
The hills turn yellow-parched.

A fire breaks out -
That hill is black.

autumn The autumn heather
Makes hills of purple,
A field is ploughed -
That hill is red.

And sunset gives a deeper hue:
Hills touched with crimson,
Then rosy, damson,
Plum and deep violet indigo...
Till in night's stillness (silence: hark!)
The hills are dark.

The fern dies back...
The hills are brown...
The mist comes down:
winter The hills are gone.

----- 0 -----

JG, 1998

Heavy Lorry

The mountain road is winding,
Pulling and straining she slows,
Pausing - a roar - and
Into bottom gear: a little grinding
And she pulls:

In the power of her voice there is music,
And a poetry of power in the might of the roar
Of this worker-horse, this grand daughter of Thor:

Slowly ... slowly,
But steadily and surely
Climbing;

Pulling, growling,
Gathering speed and
Gathering momentum -
Forging onward, louder snarling upward,
Sneering, defiant, skyward to the corner
- Slow -
And carefully around to go.

Steadily accelerating now,
Onward, upward till over the brow
And the strainings cease as she runs more smoothly
- Slip her into top and away -
And she gathers up her speed on the easier road
Forging onward - onward - onward
To the distant destination:
We shall be there by this evening -
'Tis a straight road...

----- 0 -----

JG, Sept. 1966

Walford's Gibbet

A blood red sun, reluctant, shamed,
Tips Quantock's craggy height,
Dawdling in the friendly dark,
Loath to lend its light
 To a gallows grim on a cool green hill,
 And a red deer slipping by,
 Nostrils raised to the soft sweet wind,
 And terror in its eye.

A hole fresh dug, rich red earth,
Spattered virgin grass,
A sturdy shaft of oakwood true,
Dwarfing those who pass.
 A matted sheep, a skulking fox,
 A badger lumbering by,
 Mares and foals in nearby combe,
 Look fearful to the sky.

Creaking tumbril, distant shouts,
All sentient Nature hides,
In ones and twos, on footpaths, roads,
And grassy flower decked rides;
 Man comes to watch, to sit and wait,
 This jewelled sun kissed day,
 A tortured soul, what jolly fun,
 A Roman holiday.

Night falls, a freshening breeze,
The body twists and swings,
The satiated happy throng
Goes back to mundane things.
 The beating heart of Quantock
 Enfolds a soul stripped bare,
 And the gentle kindly lovely things
 Comfort by being there.

The Monks' Garden at Dunster

Fanned by a myriad tiny wings,
Humming in the mid-day sun,
I wonder if the monks return
To dream when day is done.

Do they linger still in fragrance sweet,
As evening shadows fall,
Savouring scents of mignonette
As ghostly vespers call?

Or rest awhile by lichened walls,
Spanning the gulf of time,
And listen to the turtle dove
And the deep bell's solemn chime?

Did they withdraw as I do now
From noise and fret and strife,
Into the peace of this fair plot
From weary cares of life,

And rest in sunny arbour cool,
Half-smiling as the throng
With endless shuffle passes through,
Oblivious to the blackbird's song?

Give me time to sit and rest,
Time I can't afford,
Time for fragrance, beauty, peace,
Time to hear You, Lord.

----- 0 -----

Enid Williams

An earlier version of this poem was published in "The Exmoor Chronicle", September, 1991.

Wordsworth Rebuked?

"Earth has not anything to show more fair:"
 How could you say it, standing on the bridge
 At Westminster, in London town's despair,
 When you had walked before upon this ridge
 Of Quantock, with its views on either hand -
 That side the Vale, to Blackdown's distant edge,
 This side the Channel's coastal rocks and sand,
 And here a thrush that's nesting in the hedge.

Here is found peace and calm: and faintly can
 The distant waves be heard upon the strand
 Of Kilve's delightful shore - how much more *England*
 than
 The roar of rushing traffic in The Strand.
 The heart is not the nature of the man
 And London's not the nature of our land.

----- 0 -----

JG, 1991

A Verse of six Lines with a Play on one Word

Each of the words in this brief small verse
 With its beat so quick and its tone so terse
 Is so short it is monosyllabic.
 And if one word seems long, out of place in this song,
 Still my claim stays the same, and my claim is not wrong,
 For that long word is monosyllabic.

----- 0 -----

JG, 1991

Coleridge Rebuked?

- *The ghosts of Coleridge and his friends William & Dorothy Wordsworth, walking invisible to mortal eye on the Esplanade at Watchet, are met there by the ghost of the Mariner:*

Once more the ancient Mariner
Is stopping one of three.
William and Dorothy walk on
- "*Again* thou stoppest me?"

Why haunt me still? I told your tale:
I think I told it true."
"I stop thee not for what thou didst,
But what thou didst not do.

- *The Mariner alleges that the poet omitted a material fact:*

Right well you tell of what befel
But with an evil line -
A line that turns your gold to dross:
You say, 'I shot the albatross' -
As if some *guilt* were mine.

*I swear, it was an accident!
While cleaning my crossbow:
The trigger slipped, the bolt flew high
And laid the dear bird low.*

Go to your poem of my tale:
Insert that verse for me."
The Ancient vanishes, and leaves
The poet on the quay.

- *The Mariner,
already invisible
to mortals, now
vanishes from the
poet's gaze, being
on a higher or a
lower wavelength of
existence than he.*

Purposefully stepping forward
Comes the pilot and another,
Walking through the pensive phantom
Unaware that it is there.

- *The Mariner has departed;
and the poet, invisible to
the two mortals, remains
deep in thought.*

----- 0 -----

JG, 1991

Lorelei of the Rhine

(translated by JG in Oct. 1967, from Heinrich Heine's "Die Lorelei")

I don't know the reason for it,
This ... sadness of a kind:
This legend - I cannot ignore it;
It won't go out of my mind.

The air is cool, the dusk falling,
And gently flows the Rhine:
The mountain's peak gleams enthralling
In eventide's sunshine.

The loveliest girl is sitting
There, high up, wondrous fair;
Her gold and jewels are glittering,
She combs her golden hair...

She combs with a comb of gold
And sings a song that hour
With a wondrous sound of old:
Deep melody of strange power.

The Skipper in little steamer
It seizes with wildest grief:
And gazing on high like a dreamer
His eyes do not see the reef.

I think that the waves must have swallowed
Both Skipper and boat by-and-by:
And that fate has always followed
The song of the Lorelei.

My Grandad

The coach pulled up outside "The Ship",
To hitch on extra horses
To haul it up steep Porlock Hill
- A thousand feet above the Pill -
Beyond the streamlet's sources.
And then the coach went on its way
And peace returned - as every day.

They say the *Doones* at dead of night
Once came to burn and pillage:
But that was *very long ago*
- In 1914 'twasn't so:
It was a peaceful village.

And days when *Danes* had landed there
(The Viking over-spillage)
Were lost beyond the mists of time
From this old sleepy village.

My grandad was the constable,
The Porlock village bobby:
The only one the village had,
And gardening was his hobby.

He hung his tunic on a peg,
And bent to till his garden:
The sun shone bright-
Up from the village came running a lad:
"Mr. Greedy! Come quickly! He've hurt 'un real bad!
Go round by the churchyard and then up the lane!
He've shot 'un and says as he'll do it again!"

My grandad was a heavy man,
But ran as fast as big men can
- He knew just *where* the boy meant -
And found a body lying dead,
In blood upon the pavement.

The murderer had gone to ground
Inside a nearby dwelling.
He crouched there in an upstairs room:
His thoughts, none could be telling.
"Look out, Mr. Greedy! He'll shoot you too!
Take care, Mr. Greedy! And mind what you do!"

My grandad rushed in, up the stairs,
And leapt upon the villain
Who raised his gun, but did not fire,
And said, "I *meant* to kill 'un".

They grappled and the man fell down,
Handcuffs now his apparel;
And Grandad snatched the gun away
- Still loaded in one barrel.

The prisoner stood before the Judge:
And then he met the hangman,
Who asked him, "Any last requests?"
And put the noose upon 'un.

Then Grandad had a big surprise.
He's ordered up to Lunnon,
And there *he* met King George the Fifth,
Who pinned a medal on 'un. ¹

Then back to Porlock, to his home,
 His beat, his garden-tillage...
 The coach came through... The sun shone bright...
 It's such a quiet village.

----- 0 -----

JG, Oct. 1993

Quantock Pony



And so he came back to me
 Slowly under the bare beech tree
 The brown leaves landing on his back.
 His large brown eyes filled with love and trust
 As he peered at me through the swirling dust,
 And he recognised in me his dear old friend.

"I love you", he whispered on that bare Quantock moor.
 "Let the wind howl and the raindrops pour,
 Quantock's my home with the rest of the herd,
 And the lonely sheep and the questing bird."

- I love these hills and the silent moor
 Though the winds blow strong through that open door.
 Let us go back as we used to be,
 Friends and companions, with the smell of the sea.
 Keep your crowds and the traffic galore.
 What I love is this silent moor.

----- 0 -----

Enid Williams

¹ *The King's Police Medal awarded to my grandfather is now in my possession. JG.*

Coming Home

Little child:

When you are young in the country,
You run with your friends down leafy lanes.
And your elders will tell you:
"If you work hard, and pass your exams,
You can go to the great city, and be a **SUCCESS**".

And you work and you pass your exams, and you go
To the great city where you work harder than you ever
worked when you were taking exams.
All day you're in the city,
Amid its noise and its fumes and its demonstrations,
Its traffic-jams and its muggings and its bomb-scares,
And all its troubles -
You're a **SUCCESS**.

And after forty years of hard work,
In the great city, "pent 'mid cloisters dim",
You count your money and you say to yourself:
"**I COULD GO BACK**".

- Lament not as a poet would
"The lanes and fields I'll see no more":
You're one of the lucky few who can afford
To **GO BACK**.

You buy a little cottage-house
Beside the dear old village school.

(The school's been closed these twenty years:
The children go to town by bus
And come back little urbanites
- But in your mind it's as it was:
You see the playground and your friends,
The way it was when you were young.)

You wander down the leafy lane.

(It leads now to some blocks of flats
- But in your mind it has not changed:
Its memories are still the same.
The chapel seems the chapel still,
Although it's now an antiques-shop;
And at the station, in your ears,
You still can hear the long-gone trains.)

**BUT YOU YOURSELF HAVE CHANGED:
Because you have been a SUCCESS.**

The locals seem yokels: their life is not yours:
Where are those friends you knew?
That friend who ran down leafy lanes
With you, but didn't pass exams:
He's here:
He drives the combine harvester,
And he can milk the cows.
And you can't.

To him, you're a grockle - an *outsider*.
He knows nothing of word-processors and the
 routine of office-life,
 And *you* don't even know the right dates for dipping
 sheep.¹
 He's a real villager and you're a townie-villager.

He tells you in his country voice:
 "I could live off the land, *and you couldn't*".

- - -

You walk alone down leafy lane
 Past the children from the flats who have fitted radios to
 their bikes
 (And fifty years from now, they may be like you)

And you think:

I *could* have stayed here like my friend.
 But chances and choices of life passed him by.
 That's bad.

I *could* spend the rest of my days in the city.
 Pent in the great city? No: that's bad.

So I come back here as a townie-villager.
 That's bad: but, of the three,
 That one's by far the best for me.

----- 0 -----

JG, 1991

¹ was a six-week period commencing on 23rd. Sept. each year (until 1992, when the date-requirement was relaxed)

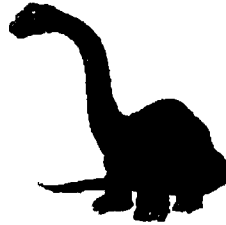
Redemption Plan

(in innumerable verses written mostly in 1962)

Prologue:

BANG! Was that the Creation?
The start of each atom and constellation?
Many a scientist says it was so,
A big bang occurring thirteen thousand million years ago.

We do not know of heretofore
- The epoch of the dinosaur.
- A planet like "Jurassic Park"¹
- Then Earth was void and dark.



Redemption Plan

Logos:

"Let there be light!" And there was light:
Creation thus began.
Eternal God brought forth the world,
And last of all made Man.

And Man was then in tune with God
In perfect harmony.
"O, may Man keep this happy state!"
Alas, 'twas not to be.

¹ *oscar-winning film of the 1990s*

For Man, and Woman too, his mate,
 Let Satan show them wrong,
 And chose to change God's holy Plan:
 So starts the tale of fallen man -
 A tale as sad as long.

No longer then in tune with God,
 Man's banner was unfurled -
 But ruined man, a ruined Plan,
 And hence, a ruined world:

Yet with a promise, even in this plight:
 "The woman's seed shall bruise the serpent's head,
 And shall be bruised by Satan on the heel".

Strange words - but God's Redemption Plan:
 And though men did not see
 Its meaning till long years had passed
 God had His remedy.

Children were born, both boys and girls:
 The human race soon grew:
 The generations followed on
 And as the father, so the son:
 Wrongdoers each and every one.
 Quickly the race grew far off from
 The God whom once it knew.

"I wish I hadn't made mankind",
 The great Creator said.
 "I'll have to stop what's going on -
 'Twere better all were dead!

Yet there is one God-fearing man:
 On him I will depend -
 Use him and his small family
 To keep the race from end."

The Earth, you see, was different then
- A younger, hotter world -
And high above the sky a mass
Of water always swirled.

Not heavy cloud, but thicker far:
While on the Earth below
Rain was unknown. There came a mist
Which made the plants to grow.

No-one had ever built an Ark!
But God told Noah, "Haste:
Soon there will come a thing called Rain -
There is no time to waste!"

Noah, not knowing what he did,
Soon built a giant craft
As big as a Cunarder - while
No doubt the people laughed.

They'd never seen the like - and nor had Noah!
"And now where's he going to with that big boa?
And the rabbit and the pig and the chimpanzee?"
But he took aboard two each - and his family.

And then the water-mass crashed down
Upon the giant boat.
The Earth was drowned, but - miracle! -
That Noah's Ark would float!

The flood abated. There survived
Four women and four men
With beasts of every species, for
To start the world again.

(It seems that when it drained away
It even formed a new sea-shore
And made the Continental Shelf -
The sea was deeper than before.)

Now only clouds remained on high.
God set His rainbow there
And made a promise to mankind:-
"While the Earth remains,
Seedtime and harvest
And cold and heat
And summer and winter
And day and night
Shall not cease".

Children were born, both boys and girls,
The human race soon grew:
But natural innocence had gone,
So generations followed on
Wrongdoers each and every one.
Quickly the race grew far off from
The God whom once it knew.

So most forgot Him, and they made
Their own gods: wood, brass, stone;
And worshipped in strange wicked ways
Which God would never own.

I need a nation for My Plan:
A nation which will praise
Me as the God, the only God,
And seek to know My ways."

God chose Abram, a man of faith,
And told him, "Move away:
A Promised Land I'll give your sons
- Your many sons - some day".

So Abram (Abraham) obeyed.
As yet he had no son.
But when he was a hundred years
Of age, God gave him one.

Young Isaac meant so much to him
But God meant far more still -
He'd e'en have given Isaac back
If that had been God's will.

So Isaac grew, and married: soon
Two sons played round his feet.
But in due course the elder was
Supplanted, by deceit.

Young Jacob the deceiver took
His elder brother's right:
The birthright and the blessing - and
Then fled from out his sight!

Then Jacob was deceived. He served
For seven years to win
The hand of lovely Rachel - but
Alas! Oh, what a sin!

The wedding feast, the bride all veiled:
Festivities into the night prevailed:
But then in the morning, beside him in bed,
Not Rachel. Her big sister Leah instead!

But things could well have been much worse
Than how they were on that first morn:
For Jacob married Rachel too,
And in due time twelve sons were born.

Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah,
Issacher, Zebulun, Naphtali and Dan,
Joseph (father of Ephraim and Manasseh)
Asher, Gad and little Benjamin.

Now Joseph was Dad's favourite
(As Rachel's eldest son)
But all the others hated him
And said, "What can be done?"

And so they sold him as a slave,
 And suddenly - life's hard -
 He was in Egypt, working for
 The Captain of the Guard.



This Joseph had unusual gifts:
 He could interpret dreams:
 Pharaoh had dreamt, and sent for him
 And told to him the themes.

"These dreams mean famine," Joseph judged
 (And time did prove him right)
 "Put a wise man in charge of food:
 Prepare us for this plight".

"And *you* are wise: *you* are in charge!"
 Pharaoh at once replied;
 And Joseph set about the task
 Of putting food aside.

The famine came: it was severe.
 Egypt alone was fed.
 And Jacob's sons came to the land
 Seeking to buy some bread.

He recognised his brothers and
 - Forgiving soul! - said, "See;
 The land of Goshen, fertile ground,
 Is in my territory:
 Send fetch our Dad and all the clan
 And come and live near me!"

And that's why Jacob (Israel) came.
 They stayed four hundred years
 Until the Pharaoh of the land
 Showed publicly his fears:-

"These Israelites have grown too great
- All their male babes must die.
Reduce their clan to servile state
- To slavery, say I".

But God had chosen Moses (who
Just then was three months old)
To lead the nation from this state
To where the far hills rolled.

The mother of Moses in spite of the law
Hid him in the rushes and nobody caught her;
But then he was found and was taken home
By no less a person than - Pharaoh's daughter.

So Moses grew up in the Palace for
The space of forty years, then had to flee
From men who sought his life, and he became
A dweller in the wilderness, until
God saw him ready for his special task:-

"Tell Pharaoh: let God's people go
Into the wilderness
To sacrifice to Him." But then
Pharaoh applied duress:-

"Make harder all this people's work,
So they've no time to think!"
But then the river turned to blood
And fish died - and did stink.

And then a second plague - of frogs
- And then a third, of lice;
For Pharaoh would not let them go
To offer sacrifice.

Still he was hard of heart: so came
Flies, cattle-plague, and boils;
Hail, locusts, three days' darkness too:
Yet still the nation toils

For Pharaoh will not let them go:
 Until, worst plague of all,
The death of all the eldest sons
 Upon the land did fall.

The Israelites had heard God's Word:
 "Unleavened bread, lamb roast:
Eat it and put the blood upon
 The lintel and door post -

Angel of Death, pass over, where
 You see the blood displayed:
Harm not those folk: they substitute
 The lamb: their price is paid".

Pharaoh and Egypt cried aghast
 "Up, Israelites, be gone!"
For death had come to every door
 That had no blood upon.

So Israel fled towards the sea
 - The way they did not know -
And Egypt gave them gold and jewels
 As long as they would go!

But hark the sound of chariots
 Speed after them amain!
The Pharaoh's heart is hardened yet
 - "Go fetch them back again!"

The sea ahead - the foe behind
 Draws near - stretch out the Rod of God!
At this, God draws the waters back:
 The Israelites pass on, dryshod.

The enemy in hot pursuit
 In chariots try to ride
But in the mud they all stick fast
 And perish in the tide.

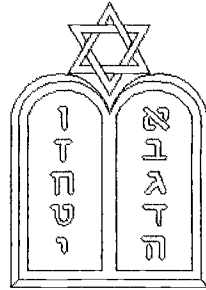
So Israel in the wilderness
Began a chapter new:
Sustained by God on "manna" they
In strength and wisdom grew,

And God began to teach His Law.
Moses, to whom He spoke,
Received two tablets made of stone
(Tablets he later broke).

Morality, hygiene and health,
And how to worship too
And how man could come back to God
- God was remaining true.

All this and more was in the Law
Which God provided then
The basic points were on the tablets.
Numbered 1 to 10:-

No other Gods, no images;
Take not God's name in vain;
Observe the Sabbath too: these four
To God all appertain.



Honour your parents; do not kill;
Nor make adultery;
Nor steal; nor lie; nor covet: six
To fellow-man apply.

Moses the great lawgiver wrote
God's precepts in a book -
A legislation codified
To which the race should look:

And Israel all should keep God's Law.
"To break" meant "punishment"
And "out of harmony with God"
- But come before God's tent:

God's Law told rules of sacrifice
Of bull or goat or lamb
Whose blood would count as substitute
For sons of Abraham.

Daily before the tent of God
The sacrifices burned -
But this was part of God's great Plan
And so they were not spurned.

Yet forty years they travelled on;
A homeless, wand'ring band:
Because they'd been afraid to try
To take their Promised Land.

Then at long last they entered in:
And as they conquered, sowed and tilled
This land where Abraham once had lodged
God's promise to him was fulfilled:-
"A Promised Land I'll give your sons
- Your many sons - some day".

They were established firm and sure
- To God let praises ring -
Then men began to say, "O'er all
The tribes we want a king".

First Saul, then David were God's choice
To make the royal line.
(This David, it was he who killed
A giant Philistine.)

And David's son, wise Solomon,
Brought glory still more bright:
These years for Israel's kingdom were
The summit of its might.

A Temple, glorious gold and bronze,
Cedar and precious things,
Was built, to glorify the God
Whose praise the great choir sings.

And generally, as years rolled by,
Though faith went up and down,
The nation kept its face to God -
Though sometimes He would frown.

The wise king died. A son of his,
King Rehoboam by name,
Ascended to the throne - will he
Increase the nation's fame?

He followed bad advice, and men
Raised cry, "We are not thine! -
'Tis war!" The tribe of Judah stayed
Faithful to David's line.

But most of Israel's other sons
Chose otherwise, of old:
Their new king led them far astray
To worship calves of gold.

This kingdom, now outside God's Plan,
For aye could not endure:
They lost the land - the Promised Land
But now no more secure:

They lost identity - God left
Them scattered through the world.
But round the Judah men God's hand
Protectingly was curled.

Their tiny kingdom kept alight
The flame to fire God's Plan
Unfolding down the centuries,
Redeeming man by Man.

Before this Plan bears fruit there's still
Ten centuries to go.
And man, not knowing God's design,
Oft let the flame burn low;

For gradually, as years rolled by,
Though faith went up and down,
The nation turned its back on God -
The flame of faith sank down...

God sent His warning messengers:
Men laughed and called them odd,
But wicked kings and careless men
Had lost the love of God.

The prophets warned: "Disaster comes
Unless Israel repent!"
But man was not concerned to know
Why these men had been sent.

(Now Romulus and Remus founded
Rome about this time:
Much later we shall see the power
Of Rome begin to climb.)

Disaster came. Invaders came
And forthwith they attacked.
The Temple - burnt. Jerusalem,
The holy city - sacked.

The nation driven off to be
- *Misericordia* -
Exiles in strange land far away
In Babylonia.

Full threescore years and ten the land
Lay desolate and bare:
The Promised Land, from God's own hand
- And now, they were not there.

But Ezra, Nehemiah and
A band of other men
Returned there after all that time
To build it up again.

The nation had been purified
- To an extent at least -
The land was rested too, before
They came back from the East.

Despite their many setbacks they
Rebuilt the city wall.
The Temple, too, they built again:
They built it strong and tall,

And offered sacrifices to
Great God as theretofore:
The daily lambs - and now the land
Began to live once more.

The prophets had foretold defeat,
And this had all come true:
But they had other prophecies
Of what's in God's purview:-

A message of Redemption Plan -
A special Lamb of God:
In Bethlehem - of David's line -
A man - yet he would be divine -
It all seemed very odd.

'Tis certain no-one understood,
And yet they wrote it down:
"Of David's line" - so all felt sure
That there would be a king once more
To wear the royal crown.

The prophets said not Crown but Lamb:
A sacrifice. How can this be?
God has begun to... there is still
Five centuries before we see.

All we like sheep have gone astray,
Turned every one to his own way;
And the Lord has laid on Him
The iniquity of us all.

God had begun to show His Plan
As men grew ready to receive
The Plan to bring men back to God
For every one who will believe.

The nation of the Judah men,
Or Jews, as they became,
Faced tyrants cruel and battles long:
Apocryphal their fame

But many years one family
- The Maccabees - led out
This remnant of the chosen race
With courage and redoubt

To fight for God a holy war
Against the tyrants' powers -
Because the tyrants gave command:
"Serve not your God, but ours".

By them the flame was kept alive
Till they were told they could,
Since so resolved to fight for Him,
Serve any God they would.

The Roman power was growing strong.
It seemed good to the Jews
To make alliance then with Rome -
There seemed not much to lose.

The Roman power was growing strong,
And stronger every year.
- What is this tramp of marching men
And horsemen that I hear?

The Roman power has overrun
An Empire vast and wide
From Spain and Britain in the West
Right to the Red Sea's side.

So once again beneath the thumb
Of an external power
The Jewish nation asks aloud
"How long before God's hour?"

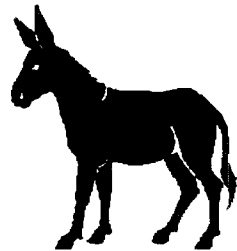
We have religious freedom, yes -
But there's a puppet king
Not of the line of David: where
Is God's own man with talents rare
As men of old did sing?"

Meanwhile in a stable a baby was born
And laid in a manger there. Jesus His name.
An angel foretold Him. Now humbly He came:
A Bethlehem stable - the first Christmas morn!

In Bethlehem - of David's line -
And angels treat Him as divine -
Poor shepherds gazed, and wise men three
Came worshipping on bended knee.

The puppet king did not approve
One born of David's line:
"This new contender I'll remove,
And keep the throne as mine".

But, warned of God, the parents took
The baby far away;
So saved Him from the slaughter
Which took place on that day.



The child became a carpenter
- According to God's Plan -
Till, round the age of thirty years,
His real life's work began.



He taught, discussed, and healed the sick
- He went round doing good -
He castigated hypocrites:
Uncompromised He stood

For no-one could find fault in Him
Because in Him was none:
In Him they met a sinless man -
The first and only one.

But not without a struggle was
He God's one perfect man:
For Satan tried to neutralise
God's great Redemption Plan.

Throughout the ages Satan had
Been watching all along
To see that men in every age
Consistently did wrong.

But now for Satan crisis comes:
He's never seen the like
Of this man Jesus on the Earth:
"What's my best way to strike?"

Jesus was in the wilderness.
"Hullo," says friendly voice.
It's Satan, come to tempt Him to
An outside-God's-Plan choice.

Doubt, lack of faith, the devil tries:
Jesus rejects this bait.
"You're tough," Satan acknowledges:
"Look, let's co-operate!"

Jesus will stand for no such wiles
And tells him, "Get thee hence!"
So He remained the perfect man
Who gives God no offence.

And so the people followed Him,
And gathered where He spoke.
He taught them all, "Repent; believe,"
Not "Cast off Roman yoke".

(*Onlooker:* "Repent? That means be sorry for
The wrongs which I have done:
I can't see this chap leading us
Against Rome's garrison.")

Some folk believe in politics
And some believe in gold;
But Jesus taught, "Believe in me"
- Look, see God's Plan unfold:-

"God loved the world so much that He gave
His only begotten Son:
That everyone who believes in Him
Should not perish
But have everlasting life."

He had large crowds of followers
But chose twelve men as special friends
To be with Him and maybe see
More clearly just what God intends.

That's Peter, Andrew, Matthew, John
Philip, Bartholemew,
Two Jameses, Thomas, Thaddeus,
Simon - and Judas too.

From Bethlehem - of David's line -
Divine, although true man:
At last there is unfolding here
God's whole Redemption Plan.

But many men would not accept:
 "We want a warrior-king
 To free us from the Romans - not
 What this strange man would bring".

And many leaders in the Church
 Objected too - for He
 In no uncertain terms condemned
 Their great hypocrisy.

He called them sons of snakes and said
 That they too should repent:
 Self-righteous anger filled their hearts -
 They knew just what He meant!

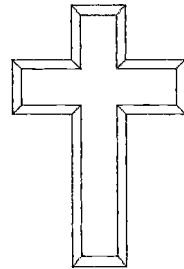
"This man is inconvenient:
 We will dispose of him!"
 - And Judas helped them capture Him
 In old Jerusalem.

A trial was held. He was arraigned
 For what He claimed to be.
 "Are you the Son of God?" "I am."
 They called this Blasphemy

And so He was condemned to die:
 The Roman style of death,
 Hung on a cross and left there till
 He drew His final breath.

But this was Friday: urgency
 Prevailed, because next day
 Was Sabbath of the Passover
 - That time when God did slay

All the Egyptians' firstborn sons
 - They kept the feast each year
 And ate a lamb, and wondered much
 When God would interfere



To free them from the Roman yoke.
Oh, they were quite sincere:
They sought a king; but "Jesus? He's
A babbler - oh, dear, dear".

And so He died upon the cross
As if He'd been a man of vice:
The foretold special Lamb of God -
Passover Lamb and Sacrifice.

"All we like sheep have gone astray,
Turned every one to his own way;
And the Lord has laid on Him
The iniquity of us all."

A human being yet divine.
God has come down to man.
To put man back in tune with God
Through His Redemption Plan.

As if He'd been a man of vice
He died: this was His Plan.
God died for mankind's wrongs that day
- Was killed in place of man.

He still remained the Sinless One
Yet bore the sins of man.
Now how will Satan cope with that?
He knows he never can!
"The woman's seed shall bruise the serpent's head."
It was foretold.

God's Law told rules of sacrifice,
A substitution lamb:
Jesus was so: the Lamb of God
For sons of Abraham

And not for them alone - He said
"God loved the *world*, and gave
His son, that all those who believe
In Him, He now will save."

- "Do you believe in anything?
Believe in Me today.
You seek the way for man's return
To God? I am the Way."

His friends had never understood.
To them this seemed like doom.
And yet they took His body down
And placed it in a tomb.

After the feast a woman came
Still weeping in despair
With spices for the body, but -
The body wasn't there.

The risen Lord Jesus,
Once dead, now alive,
Was out of the tomb, and
He saw her arrive.

And for the space of forty days
He met them frequently,
And spoke with them upon the road
And by Lake Galilee

And other places, showing them
That they were not alone;
They found out too He was no ghost
But had real flesh and bone.

Eventually departing
To go back to His home,
His kingdom (for He is a King) -
And still some men were asking Him
"Now shall we throw off Rome?"

But knowing better, He had told
That, though He had to go,
His "Comforter" would come to them
To comfort them below.

Another promise, too, they had:-
One day He would return
As King, in glory and in power -
"We think it's soon, but it's an hour
That no-one can discern".

He will come like a thief in the night:
Come in glory with judgment and power
- Man will be unprepared in that hour
As he is for the thief in the night.

Ten days they waited, then there came
In cloven tongues of fire
The Spirit of the Living God
Transforming them entire:

The Spirit gave them courage, faith,
And understanding too;
As soon as He had come on them
They knew what they must do:-

Out to the crowded market square -
Their boldness contrasting
With how they'd been, they told the crowd,
"You crucified the King!"

The Spirit worked a mighty work
Among the throng that day:
Out of the crowd that heard God's news
Three thousand chose God's Way.

And many leaders in the Church
Objected once again -
But this was a God-given thing
Which they could not restrain.

Imprisonment had no effect
 (The prisoners were set free)
- A deacon then was stoned to death,
 First of the company

Of martyrs, laying down their lives
 For following the Way.
There have been many since that time,
 And still are some today.

One of the chief opponents,
 A young man, name of Saul,
Received a confrontation
 From God the All-in-all,

For God had chosen this young man
 To have a special call,
And he became a leading saint.
 He's better known as Paul.

See how God geared all to His Plan:
 The Roman Yoke spread wide -
State frontiers stood open when
 The Lord was crucified.

Thus Paul made several voyages
 Telling the Way abroad,
And Churches grew in several states;
 Though some men said, "It's fraud".

Without Rome, this could not have been
 - Nor when her power had gone.
It seems God chose the *only* time
 When He could send His Son.

Paul - and some others - preached the news
 Both near and far from home.
Paul lastly reached the centre of
 The then known world, in Rome.

The persecution which arose
In old Jerusalem
Made many converts flee - but see:
They took the news with them.

So, far and wide in many lands
God's folk began to meet
- And then the Jewish nation's hopes
Were ended in defeat:

The Roman arms put Jewry down,
The Temple was destroyed,
Jerusalem was sacked - again -
Rome's soldiers were deployed

To clear resistance from the land.
- See how the nation flees,
Never to gather there again
For nineteen centuries.

The wand'ring Jew, condemned by man
To move from state to state to state,
To suffer ghettoes, envy, hate,
And plots that would annihilate:
They had no state - no Promised Land
- Till 1948.

The Bible says: shortly before
The ending of the age,
The scattered Jew at last will then
Regain his heritage.

But now the Christians more and more
Felt persecution's hand
As Satan bred discouragements
To daunt the little band

- And now the Christian Church was told:
 "The Emperor on high
 In Rome: he is the mighty god.
 You'll worship him - or die".

And some who had professed the faith
 And been alright before
 Preferred to serve the Emperor
 On hearing lions roar,

But many went out - praising God -
 To their eternal home
Via this public spectacle
 - The lions' den at Rome.

Their lack of fear of grisly death
 Left some men so impressed
 New converts came and found the Way:
 The Church withstood the test

And grew in numbers - yet remained
 A persecuted band:
 And so a whole three centuries
 She had to make a stand.

Many had fallen, and she was
 By heresies distressed;
 For many said a different way
 - And not God's Way - was best.

These growing-pains unconsciously
 Brought priestly hierarchy:
 "You must obey the Bishop now"
 - Not so originally.

An Emperor named Constantine
 Gave freedom to the Way
 And so the Church, long underground,
 Emerged into the day.

Still up she strove, developing
A necessary Creed,
And stating it was heresy
To say you disagreed.

World politics now gave a twist
- Details would fill a tome -
Constantinople had become
A sort of second Rome,

A seat of Roman Emperors
With riches great - and so
Constantinople bishopric
Was now by no means slow

In growing great, and it became
The first. What do we now behold?
The Emperor will rule the Church:
His Bishop just does what he's told!

This could not be. But who could stand
Against this mighty power?
The Bishop who was set in Rome
Was God's man for this hour.

The Church was split in two - the East
(Constantinople-based)
Soon faced a new attack -
Mahomet's men laid cities waste.

Rome's Bishop led the Western Church
And herein lay men's hope.
They called him Father - Papa - or
(His usual title) Pope.

Before Mahomet's horsemen - a
Religion of the sword -
The Eastern Church seemed helpless, and
(Though freedom was restored

To worship in the way they knew)
What had been rich was poor:
The late-great Church of former years
Developed little more.

The ancient learning of those lands
- A culture wide and deep
Of writers and philosophers -
Sank to a long, long sleep.

The Roman Empire breaking up:
Mahomet in the East
While Teuton hordes invade the West:
Has all man's progress ceased?

Calamity had come to man.
Culture was at an end.
And so was stable government
On which man must depend

If he will grow more civilised.
They cried in Heaven that day,
"How will man ever keep alive
The knowledge of the Way?"

God knew the dark age which had come
Would last a thousand year:
War, pillage, ignorance would be
The course that man would steer.

Some men had chosen to withdraw
Far from the evil days
To solitude where they could worship
God, and sing His praise.

The world might pass these hermits by
As men of no account:
But gradually they organised:
Their labours did amount

To one more step in God's strange Plan
Running through history.
Here's a new concept God can use:
It's called the Monastery.

Culture and knowledge were preserved
Within the monasteries -
And knowledge of the Way, while Earth
Bore dark-age miseries.

Light of the World? In cloister deep
God kept a little spark,
Its future seeming no more sure
Than Noah's in his Ark.

Augustine - Bishop - teacher - while
The world's affairs looked black as jet
He knew the Way: he taught the Church:
The flame of God was burning yet!

Eighth century: one Boniface
Came now: his legacy
Was that he greatly did increase
Power of the Papacy.

Kingdoms and empires rose and fell;
There lacked stability:
Men knelt as vassals to great lords
- "Better be safe than free!"

Thus feudalism came: it seemed
The future held no scope.
But world events combined to give
More power to the Pope.

A king once had to wait three days
Barefoot on snowbound slope
Clad in a penitent's white garb,
To see the mighty Pope.

The fierce Mahometans still held
 Jerusalem - and all the East -
 Bold knights took arms to make Crusade:
 "In God's name she shall be released".

Two bands of knights, mixed military
 And spiritual their earthly hope,
 The Templar Knights; Knights of Saint John:
 They lived to serve the Church - the Pope.

Saint Francis of Assisi came
 The next on history's page;
 With followers in simple robes,
 Poor preachers of that age.

Some may have preached as Jesus did,
 But some (and heads would nod):-
 "Deny yourself, forsake the world:
 Your *good works* lead to God".

(That's not what Jesus taught at all!
 He says, "Believe in Me:
 Repent: hold Holy-Spirit power.
 I've *paid* the penalty".)

Simple, sincere, beloved of men,
 They wandered, bringing hope;
 And under the control of - whom?
 Not Parish Priest, but Pope.

These men were sometimes eloquent
 While Parish Priest stood dumb -
 So see the power of public speech
 Under the Papal thumb!

Thus knights and preachers far and wide
 And kings both great and small
 And even public argument:
 The Pope controlled them all.

But power is used for good or bad,
And men saw, in that day,
Some men who wore the Papal crown
Had wandered far astray.

The power was not eternal: signs
Gave warning of defeat.
The French king's power was growing now:
He moved the Papal seat

To Avignon - but many felt
Him dethroned, far from home:
And then in 1378
A rival rose, in Rome.

Two mighty Popes sat,
Unable to agree;
The Bishops deposed both of them
But then there were three!

A mighty Bishops' Council
Deposed the rival three,
Lent full support to number 4:
So ended rivalry.

The Papacy recovered,
Soon reigned supreme once more:
But outside there are flutters
Which were not there before -
Flutters of parchments deep within
Some ancient knowledge-store.

A thirst for learning - here at last
A cultural new dawn:
Like Sleeping Beauty, knowledge
At this point gives a yawn.

And painters, readers, thinkers
 Asking, "What should we do?" -
 To some extent a spirit
 Of nationalism, too.

New intellectual spirit:
 "Science, philosophies -
 Where are there ancient writings
 Where we can read of these?"

Amid their many questions
 Men ask about the Way
 And also reach a verdict:
 "The Church is in decay".

In monasteries far-scattered,
 Preserved for this new day:-
 Libraries of ancient learning
 And culture and the Way.

"The Church is very worldly:
 It does not stand aloof.
 This - and corruption - warrant
 Reform, not mere reproof."

"Will not new culture bring reform?"
 - "Trust not the culture of the age
 Where Borgia, sprung from celibate Pope,
 Writes POISON large across the page."

- Yet as we see the dawn arrive
 The Church through thousand dark-age years
 Has kept God's Message still alive.

But God has got His Luther,
 Zwingli, Calvin for this hour,
 To see what is so needed, and
 Perform it, in God's power.

The just shall live by faith - not works -
And Luther (young monk then)
Upon a work of penitence
Left it unfinished when

God's Word, which he'd been reading through,
Told him: no need such works to do:
The just shall live by faith:
God's given man His Way.

"By faith, by faith - not works - believe,
Believe in Me today.
You seek the way for man's return
To God? I am the Way."

Then Luther with his faith new-born
Preached publicly the Way
- And found that monks who do such things
Will meet with ... Here's how 'twas that day:-

The Church would grant indulgences
Reducing - so it claimed -
A time spent after death to purge
The soul from all that shamed.

Indulgences for godly works
- But money bought them too,
So if you sinned, a money gift
Was what you had to do.

Now, as a monk, young Luther had
To hear confessions said.
He told men to repent - but found
They offered cash instead.

He wrote his points out full and clear:
"If Christian folk repent,
Without a Church indulgence God
Remits their punishment".

That point he wrote, together with
 Another ninety-four:
 And nailed them up for all to see
 Upon the great church door.

Controversy soon raged - and when
 He said the Pope did not
 Have right divine to rule the Church,
 Some would have had him shot.

And soon it was made clear to him
 By men in high position
 That he'd be labelled "heretic" -
 He'd gone against tradition.

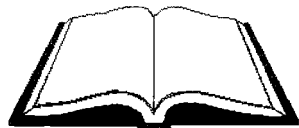
"You will be excommunicated
 If the Church is spurned
 Like this" - the Pope's decree, which Luther
 Then in public burned.

Clearly there had to be a split:
 He had no wish to leave
 But would not compromise his stand
 On freedom to believe.

The Bible - God's own Word to man -
 Brought down from times of old
 Enables men to find the Way:
 This is worth more than gold.

He and his fellow "protestants"
 (As they are called) made haste
 To study further God's own Word:
 The Church is Bible-based.

Some nauseating horrors
 Resulted from the break;
 And many died as martyrs,
 Burnt (victors) at the stake.



Zwingli meanwhile in Switzerland
Preached forth the Way; but he
And Luther on some lesser points
Tragically disagree.

Though after Zwingli's death John Calvin
Partly healed the breach,
Two Churches thus were formed - and yet
The Way was preached in each.

While some men were protesting, some
Preferred to keep their search
Within what men began to call
The Roman Catholic Church -

The venerable body which
For long had given hope:
It much reformed - but still retained
Its teachings and its Pope.

Its teachings were expounded and
In 1870
It publicly proclaimed the Pope's
Infallibility
When speaking "*ex cathedra*" on
Faith or morality.

Among the Protestants I fear
That men could not agree:
As years went by its splits and breaks
Left it fragmentary.

Some said, "No Pope, but let us please
Have no doctrinal strife,"
Some said, "Conform to new Church rules,"
Some lived a holy life

But wouldn't keep the rules made by
The leaders for them all;
And some chose this course, some chose that,
And some chose none at all.

They quarrelled much among themselves
With weighty argument:
Men looking on saw not a Church
But Churches Protestant.

And yet God's Church is there - consists
Of all upon the Way:
The Church is these, though scattered in
Ungodly disarray.

In *this* denomination some
Are God's believers - and
In *that* one too - divided up,
Mixed in, like salt in sand.

And these post-reformation Churches
All inclined to stray
And follow on some other path
Than God's life-giving Way.

Reforming men then rose and taught
- Once more explained God's Plan:
Sometimes this meant *another* Church
Was added to the clan.

And individual nations
Indiscriminately came
To have a Church, or Churches - no
Two peoples were the same

Or so it seemed - no pattern could
Be readily discerned -
But somewhere in this sorry plight
The flame of God still burned.

It even spread. The last instruction
Jesus gave His band
Was: "Take the message of the Way
To all in every land".

And so they sent out far and wide
To preach the news to all:
The first time men had done so since
Those far-off days of Paul.

Nigerian and Eskimo,
Angolan and Bantu,
Inca, Turk, Bedouin, heard the news;
The Philippino too,

Auca, and peoples little-known -
Amarakaeri tribe,
Comanche, Tzeltel, Cakchiquel:
From all of these inscribe

Some names within God's Book of Life.
From other nations too.
God ordered, "Preach to all," which now
The Church proceeds to do.

But is she dying from within
E'en as she reaches out?
Can such things be? Well may we ask
How such things come about:-

The growth of learning multiplied;
The great world was transformed:
The castle-walls of Knowledge all
Methodically were stormed:

Old Abram rode upon an ass
And from his day to now
This was man's mode of transport: but
He now discovered how

To harness Steam and make it drive
 A coach along a track:
 Then trains and steamships followed - for
 There was no looking back.

A power called electricity
 And cures for much disease
 And motor-cars and aeroplanes
 And radios and T.V.s



- Man's life grew easier by far
 Than it had ever been.
 The manual work of man and beast
 Was done by a machine.

Or was life easier? Man knew
 More pressures than before:
 He'd many a test - and in his zest
 Threw faith out through the door.

Some teachers followed other paths:
 The Way became less clear:
 "It matters not what you believe
 As long as you're sincere".
 (Such words should bring a tear.)

From heresy within the ranks
 There was yet more to fear:
 The doctrine "saved by works" again
 Began to re-appear...

The "Social Gospel" - neighbourly -
 Be friend to one and all
 - But what about "Way back to God"?
 - "Why mention that at all?"

We have our great tradition from
 The centuries before:
 We're members of this noble Church:
 How can you ask for more?

Tell me, why *should* we preach the Way?
We don't believe He rose
Up from the dead: such tales are false,
As modern science shows!"

"A miracle?" - "We don't believe
In miracles today:
You are behind the times, my dear;
Those myths have had their say."

Some say, "We're most effectual
By being intellectual -
And so we now will bless you all
With doctrine ecumenical!"

Old Billy Graham preached the Way,
And, making use of all
The aids of television, spoke
To more folk than did Paul:

And some repented, chose the Way,
And gave to God the praise.
The flame was still seen burning then
In those uncaring days.

God's Spirit still worked, quietly,
Within the hearts of men
And women on the only Way:
In ways beyond our ken.

But what of all the human race
Now that these millions, unprepared,
Have jumped ('twas almost overnight)
From "cannot even read or write"
To knowing "E is MC squared"?

Within a short two hundred years
Of making use of steam,
Man had set foot upon the moon:
The first stage of his dream

To travel Space - perhaps explore
The planets of a star,
And maybe colonise and spread
The human race afar.

But there's another side to this
Great progress of mankind:
A dark side where disaster stalked
And struck him from behind.

He'd shown his skill at making war:
Two conflicts there had been:
Millions were dead, millions bereaved,
But no way could be seen

To stop the suicidal race.
Each feared "the other side";
So larger, deadlier weapons were
Developed and supplied

To give protection - "Ours are now
So big you need not doubt
That - if attacked - we can today
Wipe your whole nation out".

Thus man gained terrible control,
And graduated from
The sword and gunpowder techniques
To make the nuclear bomb.

But look at 1948!
A sign! The wand'ring Jew
Returning to his Promised Land,
Which blossomed then anew.

(The Arabs naturally object:
They've been there nigh two thousand years
And Jews now call on them to leave
- A great offence in Arab ears.)

The State of Israel, fighting hard
Its people to defend!
Then into Old Jerusalem
Their domain they extend!
Just look! The prophets *said* it would
Be so before the END.

(The Bible says: shortly before
The ending of the age,
The scattered Jew at last will then
Regain his heritage.)

But men saw not the warning signs
Nor thought the prophets true;
So men and nations carried on
With what they chose to do.

And as man grappled blindly with
The problems of the age,
The Powers of Evil now prepared
To make their Great Rampage.

Church buildings seemed so empty now
Like a great lonely vault.
"The spirit of the age", you say?
- It's largely their own fault!

Look at this massive building, near:
You never see it full.
"Oh, we shall never move from here:
It's architectural!"

So they'll erect an ugly sign
Called "Renovation Fund",
And so the poor blind beggar Church
Sits - like a beggar - shunned.

Men sought some place wherein they might
 Rest from the progress-whirl,
 But - *that* cold place - there, *no* young man
 Would wish to take his girl.

And if he did, he heard the Way?
 - Sometimes. But more, I think,
 They concentrated on their rules -
 "You must not smoke or drink".

- I ask them *WHY* did Jesus die
 To make His children *wear a tie*?

They might be welcomed at the door,
 But inside was a clique:
 They'd all been there for years, of course -
 Newcomers didn't stick!

And so the Word was preached in Church:
 The Church was old and slow,
 And cliquey, cold and desolate -
 Of course men didn't go!

And many looked for substitutes
 In gurus and astrology,
 Aetherius and Myung Moon
 And Zen and Scientology.

Sometimes, new forms of service and
 New hymns and songs were tried:
 Some put on quite a lively show,
 But not all said, "Christ died".

The charismatics came along
 Praising the Lord with such *loud* song:
 Their praises set the echoes flying
 - Hark, how they've set the babies crying!

Bright spots there were amid the gloom,
For some whose faith was real
Preached forth the Way - God's only Way -
With missionary zeal

And some were heroes - notably
In iron curtain lands
- Which might allow a formal,
State-controlled Church, but no bands

Upon the Way, against the ways
Of Lenin and Karl Marx -
But seemingly the flame was now
A shower of bright sparks.

And atheistic Communism
Spread across the world -
The Russian bear and Chinese dragon
With red flag unfurled -

And she had formed her timetabled
World-domination plan:
This godless ideology -
A well-laid plan of man.

What of the Church alive in this
Materialist world?
She seemed like an old, tired dog
In sleeping posture curled:

Men said the sparks were growing dull
- If men remarked at all -
Some thought that for the Church it was
Final decline and fall.

But most no longer looked to see
If she would live or die,
Or merge into the world, disband,
Or simply atrophy.

But in the blackness still the few
 Bore witness of the Way:
 God's light was shed on that dark world
 Even to that dark day.

And if the Russian power waned,
 Islamic faith grew strong,
 With strict rules of morality
 Laid on their mighty throng:
 While into Christian groups there crept
 Habits our God will not accept:
 Which He has labelled, "Wrong".

Onward Muslim soldiers
 March to *jihad* war,
 With the crescent symbol
 Going on before...

The view from here is not so clear.
 Have I foreseen it wrong?
 I've got the gist of it, I fear
 - We'll know before too long!

Then: war. The Jew and Arab fought.
 The world did not much care.
 "Why don't they kill each other off?"
 - They're *always* fighting there!"

The West and New World gave support
 To Israel 'gainst her foes.
 The bear supports the Arab cause
 - See now how history goes:-

The war is on a second front!
 There's an advancing line
 Of Red militia coming west
 - We'll stop 'em at the Rhine!

And so the Common Market lost
The Deutsch (though not the Dutch)
- But soon the linking western states
Will know a sterner touch.

Ten nations join together and
A leader they will need.
In course of time they find a man -
A genius indeed.

The Arabs never liked the Jews.
(That's why there was a war.)
But Mr. Genius has found
An answer, on that score.

And Mr. Genius persuades
All sides to sign a Pact.
But he does not put faith in God,
And, though it may seem very odd,
The Bible has foretold this day,
When "Peace, Peace," is what all men say,
It's Armageddon's prelude-day
(From then, just seven years away!)
Believe it. It's a fact.

"Hail to Mr. Genius,
King for Age Aquarius.
Uniter of the warring states.
King of Peace."

For a time, there is peace.
Then a war. - What, again?
- Yes, again. And it's bad.
Very bad.

The Middle East again the scene
Of carnage and dismay,
As rank on rank of armoured tank
Rolled southward on its way.

Down from the North the armies came:
 Arab and Russian too.
 Israel they quickly overran;
 And Sinai: right through

Across the Suez: Cairo fell:
 The pyramids were red.
 "They mobilise in North and East -
 We must return," 'twas said.

Across the Sinai once more
 And into the Negev.
 - Then God Almighty moved His hand:
 "I'll teach them not to thieve!"

Such cataclysm never hit
 A mighty force before.
 The troops fell on the desert sand;
 Each one had passed death's door.

The tanks and mighty weapons all
 Were silent, by the score.
 The whole world saw what had been sent
 (A "hail", white-hot, is what is meant)
 And what it was sent *for*.

To Israel, something happened then,
 And many men were sealed
 From all the Israel tribes, to be
 Servants of God their shield.

But still the war was fought, worldwide,
 The bombs on Russia fell,
 And Europe, and America.
 An overture of Hell.

But though a global conflict raged,
 The world somehow survived:
 One third of Earth was burnt, and famine
 Stalked as men revived,



And death was very widespread
Through pestilence and dearth;
But life, trade, joy, continued:
Men married, wives gave birth,

But - what was that great shudder?
Could it have been a bomb?
We've never known one that big!
And where did it come from?

And then, with ghastly horror,
Men thought that that great force
Had been a fatal blow: their Earth
Was moving off its course!

There had been dreams of setting out
Upon conquest of space
From Earth, man's base; but - horror - see
Destruction of the base.

And, reeling somewhat, Earth flew on.
- If ever in my motor-car
I drive against the traffic-flow
I crash before I travel far:

And so it was. Into the sea
Like a great burning mountain crashed
A *thing* - was it an asteroid? -
And what its properties? - One third
Of creatures perished - and of ships:
One third the sea was turned to blood.
- And then another fell! One third
The rivers were made "wormwood" - many
Died. Now mark what next occurred:-

Rotating faster, Earth had now
Eight hours of day and eight of night
- Then came another fallen star
- And then there came up, into sight,

From the abyss - the blackest pit -
Vile "locusts" who could sting;
Then came strange "horsemen" terrible
Which death to one third bring.

Still, man stayed unrepentant. But
Two Witnesses came then
With powers like prophets had of old
And they tormented men;

And drought as never known before
They called down on the Earth:
Of crop of corn and even growth
Of grass there was a dearth,

So when the Beast from the abyss
Left both of them stone dead
Mankind was glad - for half a week -
But then was filled with dread:

Their corpses still unburied lay
- 'Twas ignominious -
When, "Come to heaven and leave the Earth!"
A cry came, glorious!

Alive they went, in public view,
Then further horrors came,
In some ways like those gone before
But they were not the same.

I am abbreviating much:
Some things I'm leaving out.
The Bible gives more detail - of
Whose truth I have no doubt.

And Satan stood upon the Earth.
Impressive, mighty he appeared,
Knowing his time was short. There was
A dynasty - seven heads up-reared

Across the world. 'Twas called the Beast:
Out of the depths came he.
And Satan vests the evil beast
With great authority.

Men worshipped Satan; furthermore
They worshipped too the Beast,
Who warred with those upon the Way
(For still these had not ceased)

And they were overcome, and yet
They would not worship it.
They still said Jesus would return
One day when He saw fit.

Then there He was! The Lamb of God!
He seemed to be the one.
But no! His purpose was: deceive;
This one was not God's Son.

This prophet false did wonders great
- A sort of Frankenstein -
He made men make an image of
The Beast. Now here's a sign:-

Unto the image of the Beast
He then gave speech and breath:
And then could make men worship it
- Or have them put to death.

The Temple in Jerusalem
- For God it had been built -
But scarcely was it finished when
- Monstrosity of guilt -
The image - that vile abomination -
Made it a spiritual desolation.

And whose is this image? - What man so devious?
- This Satan - this Beast? - It's Mr. Genius!

The Temple in Jerusalem
- The Jews were just appalled,
For *scarcely* was it *finished* when
The image was installed.

When Israel cried, "It shall not be!"
The Beast moved swiftly, and
United Nations forces came
And occupied the land.

The valley of Jehoshaphat
Is where the armies stood.
Jerusalem is right close by:
They've come to shed her blood.

A slaughter in Jerusalem
And many thousands flee
- And look! The Mount of Olives splits!
- Like Moses at Red Sea,
God's hand has opened them a path!
That way will make them free.

"The valley of decision"
Jehoshaphat is named:
And multitudes decided
That they could not be blamed

For swearing their fidelity
For better or for worse
To that king-god - that 666 -
That Mr. Genius!

"Hail to Mr. Genius!
God for Age Aquarius!
You vanquished wicked Israel's God
And left Him impecunious!"

(The impecuniosity
Of Jew and Christianity
Is just a very temporary
Phase.

'Twill end in less than thirteen hundred days!)

So pressing on still further,
He spread his hand worldwide.
It seemed nor Earth nor Heaven
Could stand against his tide.

In statesmanship and eloquence
He won men with his charms
- But also knew of occult arts
And drugs, and force of arms.

So Satan ruled upon the Earth
In war and politics:
The "inter-faith World Church" (rich, new,
Led by the Pope) is with him too
- Great leader 666!

Yes, Satan ruled upon the Earth
As Emperor and deity:
And through his man the Prophet False
He ruled the whole world's treasury.

'Twas under him that men received
What's called "Mark of the Beast"
And anyone without the mark
Found hardship much increased:-

(The *mark*. A world-computer sign?
- But laws decreed, "At least
You must, to put yourself on-line,
Make worship to the Beast!")

God's people all rejected it
But - let the Bible tell -
The people who refused the mark
Could neither buy nor sell.

Thus suffered those upon the Way:
But knew that God would send
Deliverance - and so it was;
The age was near its end.

Then came those "locusts" that could sting
We mentioned back-along:
And "horsemen" - are they China's troops?
Two hundred million strong.

Before the final coming doom
A mighty angel flies
Proclaiming: "Fear God: worship Him
That made Earth!" through the skies.

A spinning-top, knocked over, soon
Will right itself again:
Applied to solar gravity
That principle seems sane?

The Earth seemed less off-balance and
Would probably survive:
Why should men think the ending of
The age would now arrive?

Life carried on, in those dark days,
With trading, travel too:
For if men would not turn to God
What else was there to do?

Those "horsemen" reached Euphrates, that
Great river in Iraq.
Its very broad though shallow flow
Could maybe hold them back?

And then a trumpet-sound, worldwide!
 And those upon the Way
 - That persecuted, faithful band -
 Rose up to Heaven that day
 - Or (as their prison-guards exclaimed)
 "Got spirited away".

The Christians gone, the Jews secure
 In God's protecting care,
 God's Wrath came on the evil world,
 And do not say, "Unfair!" -

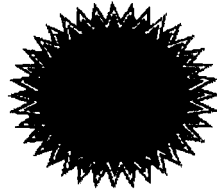
For they had spurned the Way of Grace,
 The Way of God's dear Son.
 They *still* would not acknowledge Him.
 Not one of them. Not one.

Thus did the cataclysm come.
 God's Wrath is sevenfold:-

First, sores on skin, then sterile sea,
 Then drinking-water turned to blood:
 Fourth, scorching heat, then darkness thick
 Upon the kingdom of the Beast:
 - And next, the great Euphrates *dry*
 To give those Eastern hordes a road!
 And last, the cataclysm came:-

The Day of Wrath, when black obscured
 The sun, and red the moon.
 And see the stars - across the sky
 They fall - and very soon

As reeling like a drunkard Earth
 Went hurtling off her way,
 And radiation-hazard from
 More bombs grew day by day,



Men fled the planet's surface and
 They hid themselves for fear
 In caves - "O shut us in, and hide
 Us from God's Wrath, in here!"

But: every mountain moved! Came hail,
 And blood and 'quake and fire
 And thunders, voices, lightnings - yet
 The Earth remained entire.

I must abbreviate so much
 But mention must be made
 Of how the mighty city (which
 In culture and in trade

Was at the centre of the Earth)
 In *one hour* was laid low:
 Civilisation's centre - gone.
 Men saw that it was so.

Civilisation too had gone:
 She with the city fell.
 The merchants saw that men no more
 Would seek to buy and sell.

The Earth had suffered blood and pain
 And searing heat (no doubt
 She'd passed - off course - too near the sun?)
 - Then came the final rout:-

The King of kings and Lord of lords:
 As Judge and Warrior-king
 To rule the nations He arrived,
 From Heaven He rode with mighty power
 In righteousness - *The King!*

So preparations on the Earth
 To combat this new foe
 Brought kings and armies and the Beast
 To gather forces: so

Came Armageddon - where the King
Of kings and Lord of lords
Won final perfect victory o'er
The force-of-evil's hordes.

(He will come like a thief in the night:
Come in glory with judgment and power
- Man will be unprepared in that hour
As he is for the thief in the night.)

There is a punishment for man,
To last eternally.
It's like a burning sulphur lake
And has no remedy.

The Beast and Prophet False were cast
Alive into this lake,
To punishment which has no end,
To torment none will slake.

And Satan, bound, was cast away
Into the deep abyss;
Chained for a thousand years he lay,
To wait for his release.

The Earth at peace a thousand years:
The strifes of ages cease.
From war - by sword or nuclear -
At peace, at peace, at peace.

Immediately there came to pass
In this millennial age
A sign of Glory - see who ruled
The nations' heritage:

Those men who worshipped not the Beast
Nor image of the same;
Those men without "Mark of the Beast" -
To them first, Glory came,

With those beheaded for the Way.
- These folk with Jesus reigned
Upon the Earth as Priests and Judges:
Victory was gained:-

In that first resurrection they
With Jesus at their head
Controlled the nations of the Earth
- Control divinely led.

So: Peace. The thousand years rolled by.
Satan came forth once more
And stirred men up, deceiving them:
The World is wanting War!

Around the dwellings of the saints
The troops had circled, when
Divine God's fire devoured entire
That host of Satan's men.

And then into the sulphur lake
Satan was cast away.
And then the dead all rose again,
For this was Judgment Day.

A great white throne - Someone thereon -
And Earth and Heaven fled;
And standing there before the throne
The myriads of the dead:

And books were opened - and the Book
Of Life: a separate one -
And in the books recorded were
The deeds the dead had done.

But those whose names did not appear
Within the Book of Life
(No matter what the other books
Recorded) had no Life

But went into the burning lake
Without a remedy.
Eternal punishment began,
And lasts eternally.

The fire will never purge away
Man's wrongs: the pain is great,
But this fire is not meant to purge,
Nor to annihilate.

This is unending Second Death
Into eternity:
Those who reject the Way have no
More opportunity...

There were more lost than saved that day -
Look - there - I knew those four -
They were kind, decent, honest folk -
They ran a grocery store -

And now they're in the sulphur lake
- The lake of no return.
How strange that gentle friends like those
Eventually should burn...

And yet, like *all* the human race,
They'd done wrong, in their day.
- Jesus has cast *my* wrongs far off:
God gave mankind His Way.

- Where are you going - reader - friend -
Weren't you upon the Way?
- Make sure your name is in the Book
Of Life, for Judgment Day.

And all whose names are in the Book
Of Life: the glorious dead:
Rise up to the Eternal Life
Just as it has been said.

Now Heaven and Earth are passed away,
For God makes all things new -
New Heaven, new Earth, Jerusalem
The Golden comes in view -

A city built by God, and there,
No mourning, crying, pain;
And God shall wipe away all tears
And we with Him shall reign;

And no more death. All promises
Fulfilled, and all is new.
And now, the crowning joy of joys:
See: God Himself - in view:

Not as it was of old on Earth
In discord and in night,
But we can meet Him face to face
In harmony and sight.

There is unending, glorious Light
- No need of moon or sun -
God's Glory, and the Lamb, shed Light
Wherein no night can run.

Unending Light, unending Life
Into eternity.
We who are His are brought to His
Eternal purity.

Here on the throne God and the Lamb:
His servants worship Him
And see His face. - With this great throng
I too belong to Him -
By grace:

And we shall reign with Him
For ever and ever.

Epilogue:

The Way:-

Some folk believe in politics
And some believe in gold:
But Jesus says, "Believe in Me:
I've paid the penalty.

Rely on Me
Like sailors trust a lifeboat in the sea!

Just turn from sin to Me this hour -
You'll find there's Holy Spirit power
And you'll belong to Me:
I've paid the penalty."

----- 0 -----

JG



The Tale of the Witch

(concerning Black Dog Hill near Warminster, Wilts, and written in October, 1967, before the road improvements of the 1970s transformed the twisting hill into a straight three-lane highway)

Pelting rain and darkness...
 Lonely ... cold ... cheerless...
 Black tarmac ribbon winding upward 'twixt high hedges,
 Sunken in a cutting in the hill.

Black-cloaked hag
 With cat and pointed cap and pointed nose
 Squat on a blood-red sleeping-bag
 - Appeared there.

Sound of distant engine grows:
 The drone of an approaching heavy truck
 - This is the main route from the Severn Bridge
 To Salisbury and Southampton and the south.
 She hides the red 'neath cloak, prays evil luck,
 And round the bend just sits, hid by the ridge,
 And grinning horribly with toothless mouth.

Black-cloaked hag:
 Blood-red sleeping-bag:
 On Dog Hill - Black Dog.

A black apparition in the blackness of the night,
 Malevolently squatting round the bend just out of sight.

Why came she here?
The cross-roads here is called "Dead Maids" -
Here's one returned...
Never forget her love was spurned
And - ugly now - she seeks revenge:
'Tis this desire has made her vile
And this is why once in a while
With cat and cap she comes again
- She leaves her haunt on Salisbury Plain
And flies invisible as black to black
With blood-red bag tied on her back
To Black Dog, from her haunt at far Stonehenge.

This is the UFO called the Mystery Light:
The bag, rolled or unrolled, glows in the night.

- And suddenly the headlights' beam
Picks up the figure: fierce brakes scream:
One moment, all ahead was black -
The next, sat shrivelled in the night,
The hag! And she flings forth the bag
Which dazzling red reflects the light,
And where there was black a moment ago
Is the terrible sight of the mystery UFO!

The truck-driver swerves, hits the bank, overturns;
The fuel-oil ignites - ah, how quickly it burns!
And the glow of the bag and the flames' leaping red
Reveal the still form of the driver. Stone dead.

New moon lights up the nightmare scene
For seconds, then the scudding cloud
Once more provides a ghastly shroud
As if the moon had never been.

- And suddenly the witch has gone!
She flew away as black as coke,
The red bag wrapped inside her cloak,
Invisible as black to black
As silently she races back
Along the route she rides upon!

- An ambulance with flashing blue
Came speeding to the scene:
A police car, too - but no-one knew
The Black Dog Witch had been.

'Twas all a mystery...
They held an inquest, very formal,
And all men swore the road was normal...

The hag (she's an adder by day, it is known)
Like a great vampire bat - noiseless though - back she'd
flown
To her bleak uninhabited haunt on the Plain.
She'll not be found at Black Dog again
Until - and I fear it is much too soon -
She squats there again at the next new moon!

----- 0 -----

JG



Black Dog

Black dog...
Looming ethereal out of the fog
On that infamous hill known as Black Dog Hill.
Malevolent spectre unearthly in form
And fiendish its yell that out-shouted the storm
And made men look well to the bolt and the grille
- Though some said, "Can't stop him: he'll come at you
still -
He'll come from the night through the *wall* and he'll *kill!*"

The terrible legend - never been seen for a hundred year;
But now they can hear his scream - he's *near!*

This midnight beast of fearsome size
With dripping fangs and baleful eyes:
Twin rows of white: twin lights of green;
And darkness where Dog should have been:
A thicker darkness than the gloom
- A howl that could be heard in Frome
Rent the air -
He's *there!*

The horrible spectre
Came out of the fog -
Leaped at the Inspector -
And, licking his face,
Seemed friendly and docile
- And such was the case:
For this poor lost sheepdog who'd been out all night
Just wagged his tail, saying, "No, I'm not a sprite;
I'm Rover! I'm so glad you've found me alright..."
And all burst out laughing - they'd had such a fright!



Frustration

Leisurely rolling over the Solent,
Midge glides on gently; smoothly she's sidling
Over the wavelets, gliding and idling,
Sidling again. The waters sing plain:
Slopping and plopping, slapping, flopping, chopping.

Bronzing I laze, right hand on the helm,
The other the mainsheet, bathed in the sunshine,
Yet mind in a torment -
Mind in a ferment,
Thinking of ... someone
With whom I have had a
Misunderstanding.

Puzzling and thinking,
"What can I do?"

Dipping her bow now, Midge sails on softly,
Heeling to starboard as the breeze sighs;
Swinging to windward - tug on the rudder,
Back on course safely as the breeze dies,
Wavelets running bubbling gurgling
Past the keel.

Again the breeze dies.
Drop the sail.
No movement now but a gentle roll
As we drift,
Gently, drowsily,
Drift...
Who cares:
The tide is bound to take us hard by Cowes in half
an hour:
I've got a pair of oars to take us in by muscle-power!
Oh relax...

The sunshine pouring down, the bobbing waves,
The precious peace of solitude so rare,
The peaceful sea. There's not a sound.
No other boats. I gaze around.
The cloudless sky. The distant shore.
Smooth lake behind, beside, before.
The Solent seems a pond today.

A hovercraft a mile away,
Nipping across from Southampton to Cowes with a cargo
of trippers,
Zipping along like a big marine bumble-bee
Whipping o'er wavelets and leaving a spray:
"Keep it away," I muse.

Hovercraft passes a mile away.
Her bumble-bee motor is audible here,
But only two minutes, then fades for the day,
And the silence enfolds Midge again,
Even sweeter than first, for its balm
Seems deeper far with the returning calm.

Drifting ... peace.
Tick-tick-tick - hear my watch ticking,
Hear ripples gurgling
Under the keel - I can feel
How the tide's running.
Hear a gull calling,
And an old pigeon,
Distant replying
From a far cornfield.
Feel the sun scorching,
Gentle tide rising,
Drink in the sun and the taste and the smell of the sea -
It's great to be free!
Just carried along by time and tide,
My servants, and in their care I abide,
And let life be.

There's a huge liner several miles away:
 She's drifting, too,
 Awaiting the tide and her tugs.

Yet I am not at ease.
 Five senses restful, the sixth sense alert.
 I am being tugged -
 There's a tugging at my heartstrings:
 How can I put right
 That misunderstanding?

What can I do?
 - God who can guide the currents
 Can guide this too.
 Can ... and will? - I hope.

- - - -

A surging now, a gentle sound
 Of waters lapping on a shore,
 So, time to use the oars once more.
 The tide has gently brought us round.

The harbour opens to the south:
 A few swift strokes, we're through the mouth
 And into Cowes.

----- 0 -----

JG, Sept. 1966

The Bristol Channel

Southward and westward, Midge sniffs the sea-spray,
Dipping and diving over the foam;
Into the Channel, beating and tacking
Into the West: this sea is my home.

Chanel of beauty, green hills of Exmoor,
Seagulls and dolphins, Steep and Flat Holm,
Sunset's red orb dropping into the ocean,
Crimson the clouds and Midg's fittings of chrome.

Rhythm of poem, and touch of a kiss,
Gentle in might: welling heart-beat smooth motion;
Sea of south-westerlies, bringing ships homeward,
Havenward, up from the wild Western Ocean.

Sea of contentment, of silence and freedom,
Ofttimes so soothing, yet waters of power:
Lifeboats are six,¹ and brave all those who man them,
Knowing the perils: on call any hour.

Sea of Saint Joseph - sailing to Cornwall
And into Somerset, trading in tin:
Sea of our Saviour² - He knew the tempest,
Yet stilled our storm when He died for our sin.

¹ *at Mumbles, Barry, Weston-super-Mare, Minehead, Ilfracombe and Clovelly - at the time this poem was written.*

² *The reference is to the legend of Christ's visit to Glastonbury.*

Coal-boat and sand-boat, paddler and tanker,
Liner and tug-boat - but room for them all;
Not overcrowded nor foggy with smoke-haze:
Ships here and there, but 'tis peace I recall.

These holy waters soft outward bound, guided
Now by the lightships and star-studded dome:
Land of the Daybreak is my home eternal,
But, while I'm mortal, this sea is my home.

----- 0 -----

JG, Dec. 1966

Lifeboat

Dashing down the staircase,
Out into the the storm,
As the flashing crashing rockets cleave the skies;
Roused from sleep
To face the perils of the deep
Where some broken stricken ship slowly dies.

The floodlight o'er the slipway gleams
A ray of friendly light
Through the vicious pelting rain
On this evil gale-lashed night
As the lifeboat-crew come running
 down the trackway to their boat
Past the seething rolling maelstrom
Great in fury and in might -
A proud majesty of terror
While the gale is at its height -
The rolling turmoil onto which they
 soon will launch afloat.

Now all the crew are here,
And outward show no fear,
Though deep within their hearts they all are yearning
To see once more their wives,
Children, loved ones of their lives,
To whom they well may never be returning...

At once they put to sea,
As the church clock strikes three;
But through the stinging rain there's nothing we on shore
 can see.

Leaping o'er the rushing running waves,
Watching for the distant lightship's flash
Warning them that they should now beware
The sharp-toothed reefs which stand, a deadly snare,
In the path of their mercy dash -
Will they be safe?
Will they return?

----- 0 -----

JG, Nov. 1960

Rescue Service

A wild nor'-easterly with flying clouds
Through which a crescent moon breaks pale and wan:
A moonbeam silver-glints the crackling frost;
Then clouds roll thicker, and - the moon is gone.

Dark waves crash on a beach with mighty power,
A surging bell-buoy clangs his warning note;
A coastguard, warm but watchful in his tower,
Looks out for need of help for man or boat.

A flick'ring light is seen from on the sea.
The coastguard studies it. The light goes out.
But it *was* there. Forget that cup of tea:
Someone out there needs help. There is no doubt.

A telephone call notifies the police.
Two loud maroons alert the lifeboat crew.
Cliff-rescue team and fire brigade stand by.
An ambulance. A helicopter too.

And so the rescue-system goes to work.
The helicopter first - but in this gale
The 'copter's grounded. Lifeboat therefore launched.
They search. Two hours. Find nothing. They will fail...

The coastguard thinks he sees another light.
It's near the lifeboat: quarter-mile to port;
Invisible from lifeboat in the troughs.
He quickly, calmly, phones with his report.

The lifeboat's short-wave crackles:- call-sign first,
And then the message: "Port a quarter-mile".
The lifeboat turns. - She's broadside to the gale,
And all her crew, grim-set, hold tight the while.

And there she is! A fishing-boat. Broke down.
A man and boy. A box of matches. Fear.
And shiv'ring cold and wet. But they'll be safe.
The lifeboat circles round them. Help is here.

Screening them from the stormblast of the night,
They come alongside, take the two aboard,
Then take their boat in tow, and head for port:
These two have lost all strength they can afford.

"I baled and baled and baled, and said a prayer -
And hoped we'd keep afloat till break o' day;
And then I burned my socks to make a flare:
Thank God you saw the light and found the way..."

In t'lifeboat-cabin they are given Warmth:
First-aid and blankets, cocoa piping-hot:
And after half an hour they reach the port -
Four-thirty in the morning "on the dot".

The rescue-services are told, "Stand down".
The ambulance takes both the men away.
A day of care and rest will see them well,
And fit to fight the sea another day.

The lifeboat and the fishing-boat are moored,
A mobile canteen backs along the quay:
"Come on, boys: mugs of stew - sup this lot up!"
And all the frosted crew sup: gratefully!

They will receive a payment for the job.
Not much. They'll see their names in t'paper too.
But 'twasn't done for glory nor for gain.
They did it 'cause there was the job to do.

Some party-goers roll along the quay;
"Why don't you learn to live, and have some fun?"
They cry, and wave a bottle, and roll on
Not even knowing that the job's been done.

----- 0 -----

JG, Nov. 1968

Christmas Eve in Alfoxton Park

The moon shone full with a golden light.
A distant choir sang "Silent Night".
The red deer gave a low soft bark
To guide his hinds to the ancient park.



Crystal candles of firs rose high
As a star shone down from an ice blue sky.
Towering beeches with arms outspread
Welcomed the deer to the manger bed.

"Bambi, tonight is Christmas Night
When God came down in a star's bright light.
An ox, an ass and a lamb were there,
But the Quantock deer must His Glory share."

"Who is God?" the young calf replied,
Wide eyed with wonder at his mother's side.
"He gives us the sun and the soft green grass,
And the breath of the sea in the winds that pass."

Midnight chimed from the stable yard
Across the old Park so crisp and hard.
The rabbits, the ponies, the sheep took care
Like the Quantock deer to kneel in prayer.

God looked down on that starry night
As His gentle creatures were bathed in light.
Kings and shepherds made obeisance too,
But I'm sure that He noticed His moorland few.

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