

And better than thy stroke; why swell'st⁰ thou then? *puff with pride*
 One short sleep past, we wake eternally
 And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.⁵

1633

11

Spit in my face ye Jews, and pierce my side,
 Buffet, and scoff,⁰ scourge, and crucify me, *scoff at*
 For I have sinned, and sinned, and only he,
 Who could do no iniquity, hath died:
 5 But by my death cannot be satisfied⁰ *atoned for*
 My sins, which pass the Jews' impiety:
 They killed once an inglorious⁰ man, but I *obscure*
 Crucify him daily,⁶ being now glorified.
 Oh let me then, his strange love still admire:⁰ *wonder at*
 10 Kings pardon, but he bore our punishment.⁷
 And Jacob came clothed in vile harsh attire
 But to supplant, and with gainful intent:⁸
 God clothed himself in vile man's flesh, that so
 He might be weak enough to suffer woe.

1633

13

What if this present were the world's last night?
 Mark in my heart, O soul, where thou dost dwell,
 The picture of Christ crucified, and tell
 Whether that countenance can thee affright.
 5 Tears in his eyes quench the amazing light,
 Blood fills his frowns, which from his pierced head fell;
 And can that tongue adjudge thee unto hell
 Which prayed forgiveness for his foes' fierce spite?
 No, no; but as in my idolatry
 10 I said to all my profane⁰ mistresses, *secular*
 Beauty of pity, foulness only is
 A sign of rigor:⁹ so I say to thee,
 To wicked spirits are horrid shapes assigned,
 This beauteous form assures a piteous mind.

1633

14

Batter my heart, three-personed God; for you
 As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;

5. Cf. 1 Corinthians 15.26: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

6. Cf. Hebrews 6.6: "they [sinners] crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh."

7. Kings may pardon crimes, but the King of Kings, Christ, bore the punishment due to our sins.

8. Jacob disguised himself in goatskins to gain from his blind father the blessing belonging to the firstborn son, his brother Esau (Genesis 27.1—36).

9. In Neoplatonic theory, beautiful features are the sign of a compassionate mind, while ugliness signifies the contrary.

That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
 Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
 5 I, like an usurped town, to another due,
 Labor to admit you, but O, to no end;
 Reason, your viceroy¹ in me, me should defend,
 But is captived, and proves weak or untrue.
 Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,^o *gladly*
 10 But am betrothed² unto your enemy.
 Divorce me, untie or break that knot again;
 Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
 Except^o you enthrall me, never shall be free, *unless*
 Nor ever chaste, except you ravish³ me.

1633

17

Since she whom I loved hath paid her last debt⁴
 To Nature, and to hers, and my good is dead,
 And her soul early into heaven ravished,
 Wholly on heavenly things my mind is set.
 5 Here the admiring her my mind did whet
 To seek thee, God; so streams do show the head;^o *source*
 But though I have found thee, and thou my thirst hast fed,
 A holy thirsty dropsy^o melts me yet. *immoderate thirst*
 But why should I beg more love, whenas thou
 10 Dost woo my soul, for hers offering all thine:
 And dost not only fear lest I allow
 My love to saints and angels, things divine,
 But in thy tender jealousy dost doubt^o *fear*
 Lest the world, flesh, yea, devil put thee out.

1899

18

Show me, dear Christ, thy spouse⁵ so bright and clear.
 What! is it she which on the other shore
 Goes richly painted? or which, robbed and tore,
 Laments and mourns in Germany and here?⁶
 5 Sleeps she a thousand, then peeps up one year?
 Is she self-truth, and errs? now new, now outwore?
 Doth she, and did she, and shall she evermore
 On one, on seven, or on no hill appear?⁷

1. The governor in your stead.

2. Humanity's relationship with God has been described in terms of marriage and adultery from the time of the Hebrew prophets.

3. Rape, also overwhelm with wonder. "Enthrall": enslave, also enchant.

4. Donne's wife died in 1617 at the age of thirty-three, having just given birth to her twelfth child. This very personal sonnet and the following two survive in a single manuscript discovered only in 1892.

5. The church is commonly called the bride of

Christ. Cf. Revelation 19.7—8: "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. / And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white."

6. I.e., the painted woman (the Church of Rome) or the ravished virgin (the Lutheran and Calvinist churches in Germany and England).

7. The church on one hill is probably Solomon's temple on Mount Moriah; that on seven hills is the Church of Rome; that on no hill is the Presbyterian church of Geneva.

Dwells she with us, or like adventuring knights
 10 First travel we to seek, and then make love?
 Betray, kind husband, thy spouse to our sights,
 And let mine amorous soul court thy mild dove,
 Who is most true and pleasing to thee then
 When she is embraced and open to most men.⁸

1899

19

Oh, to vex me, contraries meet in one:
 Inconstancy unnaturally hath begot
 A constant habit; that when I would not
 I change in vows, and in devotion.
 5 As humorous⁰ is my contrition
 As my profane love, and as soon forgot:
 As riddlingly distempered, cold and hot,⁹
 As praying, as mute, as infinite, as none.
 I durst not view heaven yesterday; and today
 10 In prayers, and flattering speeches I court God:
 Tomorrow I quake with true fear of his rod.
 So my devout fits come and go away
 Like a fantastic ague:¹ save⁰ that here
 Those are my best days, when I shake with fear.

*subject to xvhim**except*

1899

Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward

Let man's soul be a sphere, and then, in this,
 The intelligence that moves, devotion is,¹
 And as the other spheres, by being grown
 Subject to foreign motions, lose their own,
 5 And being by others hurried every day,
 Scarce in a year their natural form² obey;
 Pleasure or business, so, our souls admit
 For^o their first mover, and are whirled by it.
 Hence is't, that I am carried towards the West
 10 This day, when my soul's form bends toward the East.
 There I should see a Sun³ by rising, set,
 And by that setting endless day beget:

instead of

8. The final lines wittily rework, with startling sexual associations, Song of Solomon 5.2: "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled." That biblical book was often interpreted as the song of love between Christ and the church.

9. Arising from the unbalanced humors, inexplicably changeable.

1. A fever, attended with paroxysms of hot and cold and trembling fits. "Fantastic": capricious, extravagant.

1. As angelic intelligences guide the celestial spheres, so devotion is or should be the guiding

principle of the soul.

2. Their true moving principle or intelligence. The orbit of the celestial spheres was thought to be governed by an unmoving outermost sphere, the primum mobile, or first mover (line 8), but sometimes outside influences ("foreign motions," line 4) deflected the spheres from their correct orbits.

3. The "sun" / "Son" pun was an ancient one. Christ the Son of God "set" when he rose on the Cross, and that setting (death) gave rise to the Christian era and the promise of immortality.

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