

— CHALCEDON 50TH-ANNIVERSARY EDITION —

THE
Luxury
OF
WORDS



POEMS OF

Rouses John Rushdoony



VALLECITO, CALIFORNIA

The Luxury of Words: Poems of Rousas John Rushdoony

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by Mark R. Rushdoony

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CONTENTS



Preface / 1
The Idealist / 3

the 1940s

The Humbling Grace / 7
Trumpet My Dust / 8
The Road to Hell / 9
Winter's Blast / 10

the 1950s

In Nightless Day / 13
No More Alone / 14
What Was I Saying, Lord? / 15
 Love's Wrath / 16
 Nothing to Thee / 17
To Virginia M. Mackenzie / 18
 This Dying World / 19
 But How? / 20
 Traitor to Myself / 21
 Song of Grace / 22
The Sinner's Friend / 23
 Yet I Love Thee / 24
 My Tribe Is Levi / 25

Our Humble Span /	26
The Essence of Our Mortal State /	27
The Cardinal's Review /	28
Graveyards Unto Truth /	30
Bitter Wanderings /	31
His Splendid Ways /	32
For All Things I Am Not /	33
A Father's Prayer /	34
America /	35
On The Acquittal of C. W. /	36
Life's One Alternative /	37
Canyon Road in Winter /	38
A Barn to House Thee /	39
When The Silence Comes /	40
Life's School /	41
As Leaves Fall Lightly /	42
When Judgment Nears /	43
Strangers and Pilgrims /	44
Why Must I Sleep My Life Away? /	45
A Voice From the Tomb Called the Church /	46
The Ecumenical Church /	47
Let My Silence Speak /	48
Modern Poetry /	49
Church Processional /	50
Why Gone What Once Did Grow? /	51
Mercy Overarched /	52
The Cross I Dreaded Most /	53
His Great Hand /	54
I See Tomorrow's Face /	55
My Constant Guide /	56
I Still Have Prayer /	57

Of Such Is Not the Kingdom / 58
Before the Throne of Grace / 59
Wait . . . Watch . . . Trust / 60
 The Hamadryad / 61
 I Thank Thee / 62
The Hamadryad, continued / 63
What Was It, God, I Said? / 64
 Thy Victory / 65
 To Simeon Stylites / 66
 In This Hour / 67
 The Refined Heart / 68
 Open to the Rain / 69
 Fullness of Time / 70
 Give, God, Grace / 71
So Near and Yet So Far / 72
 Met Anew in Hunger / 73
All My Hands Can Hold / 74
 Thine the Sight / 75

the 1960s

The Breaking Splendor / 79
 Shiloh / 80
No Hope Beneath the Sun / 81
 Our Lives Are Marked / 82
 Death Shall Die / 83
 The Clock Strikes Death / 84
With Godly Flesh Endowed / 85
 No Resting Now / 86
 Time / 87

The Sun Shall Come / 88
The Liberty of Time / 89
The Coil of the Serpent / 90
Senseless Words / 91
Certain Peace / 92
Music She Was / 93
The Priests of Baal / 95
On Conquered Ground / 96

the 1970s

The Luxury of Words / 99
Double Movement / 100
Apocalypse of Man / 102
I Wept Once When I Was Young / 103
Time Is for the Living / 104
This Night Is Not for Sleeping / 105
The Singer and the Song / 106
New Eden / 107
The Sounds of Time / 108
Shower of Grace / 109
The Richness of Our Flesh / 110
A Woman's Loveliness / 111
Demolished by Grace / 112
Like a Child / 113

the 1980s

The Covenant / 117

Barriers to All Drift / 118
His Holy Purpose / 119
Death Begins to Die / 120
Justice / 121
Time and Eternity / 122
Newness of Life / 123

the 1990s

False Centers / 127
The Here and Now / 128
Beyond the Story / 129

undated poems

Rejoice / 133
Prayer / 134
O Holy Time / 135
Relief / 136

PREFACE



DR. ROUSAS JOHN RUSHDOONY, fondly known by many as “Rush,” is known primarily both as a theologian and as a scholar. In 1961 his *Intellectual Schizophrenia: Culture, Crisis, and Education* was published; two years later, it was followed by *The Messianic Character of American Education*, a telling exposé of the philosophy of state education. These two books, along with his lectures dating back into the 1950s, were instrumental in launching the great proliferation of Christian day- and home-schools in the last century. As a manuscript reader for Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, he saw the importance of a manuscript produced by Henry Morris and John Whitcomb titled *The Genesis Flood*. When the manuscript was rejected by Moody Press as being too long and too controversial, Rushdoony persuaded Charles H. Craig to publish it in full, thereby igniting the resurgence of Biblical six-day creationism. In 1973, Rush published his groundbreaking *Institutes of Biblical Law*, one of the most important works of the twentieth century, defending, expounding, and applying the Ten Commandments to all of life and society. He also wrote dozens of other books—many of which were originally lectures or sermons, and some of which are still unpublished—on philosophy, sociopolitical studies, education, commentaries on the Word of God, history, eschatology, and much more.

In addition to having an abundant production of insightful and Biblically-orthodox lectures and essays, Rush also penned the occasional poem—often on scraps of paper he had on hand. They were his personal thoughts; he never made any effort to publish them, or even to collect them in one place. He had a strong disdain for modern poetry: he loathed lawless and anarchistic poetry, the result of the radical rejection of the Triune God by existential man; “More recently, modern poetry and prose has abandoned meaning in favor of expression and has abandoned sentence structure and logical context,” he wrote in 1981. Rush loved order and structure, and this shows in his verse. The poetry in this book reflects Rush’s love of the Word of God, his love of life, and his love of the Lord. In reading these lines, those who never had the privilege of knowing Rush in real life can have a glimpse of his personal joys, sorrows, regrets, struggles, and frustrations.

Rush wrote many poems from high school through seminary, throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Unfortunately, most of these poems have not been located, with the exception of “The Idealist,” which was sent to the family by lifelong friend Violet Walker after his death. The poems in this book are arranged by decade in chronological order; undated poems have been placed in their own section in the back. Where Rush did not provide a title, a title has been supplied, denoted by an asterisk (*).

We pray that this small book will bless you and encourage you in your labor for the Kingdom. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).

THE IDEALIST

San Francisco, 1935



I shall build me a castle of sky-blue dreams,
Bounded by the sea and the sky,
With greatness and love as supporting beams,
Topping the clouds on high.

I shall build me a castle with walls of hope
And rooms with vision's thews,
With a storehouse of faith with which to cope
The wormwood of scorn and abuse.

I shall build me a castle with walls too high
For the strongest of foes to scale.
I shall work with the thought but to do or die,
Trusting that I shall not fail.

I shall build me a castle with the stones of defeat
For defeat is the staff of the strong,
And pray to my God that I may compete
In the battle of right against wrong.

I shall build me a castle that has been built before
And decayed and crumbled to dust.

I shall build in the sight of ruins of yore,
Build with my soul's stinging lust.

I shall build me a castle, though I've built in the past
Castles that have crumbled, all.
I shall build me castles until the last
Crushes me in its hapless fall.

I shall build me a castle with halls for all,
Build with unconquerable will.
I shall build me a castle with vision my mold,
Failing or dying, shall build on still.

the 1940s

THE HUMBLING GRACE

June 27, 1947



So be it. Pass me by.
I have learned, yes, little,
But have learned from waiting
Some patience.
So be it. But not without a sly
And sidelong glance of envy
I do labor in my appointed place.
Weary bones bring better rest
Than proud and angry lusting.
So be it. This, my station,
So much surpassed in daily hoping,
Measured well, surpasses me.
Who, casting mighty shadows,
Lost the stature of the man.
And so Amen.
The humbling grace has benediction.

TRUMPET MY DUST*

January 24, 1948



Time and tide and wayward flesh
Do strip a man of pride and circumstance
And leave him raw before the winter's blast,
Naked and dismayed.
An old road this
That wiser men have stepped in bitter faltering.
I drag alone, still comfortless,
And clutch about me still those filthy rags,
My law, my self, my life a kingdom still,
My mind a constitutional monarch:
I am my lord and my own sullen traitor,
High priest, apostate both, betraying myself with a kiss.
But naked, my God, I would come to thee and bring
All of my life and hail Thee Lord and King.
Break the damned prose and the sodden trod
And trumpet my dust into song, O God.

THE ROAD TO HELL*

February 25, 1948



Well, sullen flesh, what now?
Barrenness and death and creeping age,
And circumstance, the fallen Adam's world,
Draw in their net and sort me now.
Turn in your crown, vacate that throne
By usurpation seized from Him.
Let the Lord reign, and be no counselor of state to Him.
God is the one true circumstance of faith
Whom rebel man deserting
Falls headlong into time and time's own circumstance.
This road to hell is paved with circumstance that is not God.
And so, please God, I shall not walk this way again.

WINTER'S BLAST*

April 1, 1948



The weeds do choke me out.
They tangle round me and infest my heart.
They drag its beat to muffled drums.
Now winter's blast, a hell by Providence,
Lays on death's hand and summons me to court.
O my soul runs out of patience
And seeks in time what time is not.
I stumble on the moment in a yearling dream.
Now winter weather, rot my pride.
Lay down this tangled growth and set me free.
Smite down, my God, this proud, proud hope
And make me subject, slave to Thee.

the 1950s

IN NIGHTLESS DAY*

January 28, 1950



Our days are numbered by their darkness
And the midnight hour, silently, shovels under
The day's damnation, hopes and pride, ends the starkness
Of the moment's pulse. We are time's constant plunder.
It's noonday light brings snow, heat, rain,
Uncertain sun. The blood's old course pounds out its ancient lust
And time pinpoints, in pitiless glare, the stain
Of our old nature, founded in dust.

Yet by God's grace, the hours ended.
The nightless stainless endless Day descended.
My flesh, my heart, my life, all cleansed and white
Shall serve my God in cloudless, endless, timeless light.

NO MORE ALONE*

April 8, 1950



The footsteps of an ancient enemy rob
My peace, dog me like a shadow, stand
Where I stand, go with my heartbeat, daub
Me with unrest and drummed, insidious demands.
Always my peace, prosperity and hope
Are shadowed by his darkness. Unceasing driving
Warfare, unrelenting enmity: I cannot cope
With these. Listen: leave me alone. Your striving
Is with the dead. I was buried with Him. The stone
Was rolled away, and I am now beyond depriving
Past your reaching, and now no more alone.
Be warned, this of mine is more than human striving.
Adam's hounding footfall ends at last:
The grave his boundary, his dominion past.

WHAT WAS I SAYING, LORD?*

Omaha, August 20, 1950



What was I saying, Lord,
Before, so rudely interrupted, Hell
Was suddenly my habitation?
I spoke: You answered. It was well
With my soul. I am ever
Holy by moments only, then am again
Myself. The troop of sins sever
Me: Pride, sloth, a rising lust—I ken
Their coming and, as of old, fling wide
The door, weary of holiness, sickly
Of truth in a moment, brushing Thee aside
To trumpet eagerly: “I have been waiting. Enter quickly.”
As Thou hast raised me heretofore
Raise me again to sin no more.

LOVE'S WRATH*

Thanksgiving, November 23, 1950



Stay close beside me, Holy Ghost.
Burn, blaze within me with love's wrath.
Speak strong and often against the demon host
That tempt me from the narrow path.
I was not willing nor did I choose
To walk with Him who called me from the dark
And, blinking still, would often lose
Myself within the shadows, who am an ark
Of mercy, chosen vessel, all predestinate.
Mine the meritless and blackened past,
His the merciful and sovereign purpose to create
Of chaos, light, of clay a man the last
Made first, and hell's long habitation
A temple. Then since a temple, be my Host
And burning, blazing mold a new creation
Of this Thy dust. Even now, O Holy Ghost.

NOTHING TO THEE*

January 21, 1951



I am all things to all men, and nothing to Thee
I daily walk, not by faith, but by
My sight, and praying, ask that I be free
From my own consequence. All our wry
Revolt is against causality. Man would
Be the agent, free of all effect, unchained,
Immutable and free: to be myself. If I could
Drink this poison and be strong, be stained
By any lust, and thereby cleansed, my saying
Make it so, but no. I see all things
Except myself, and, daily praying,
Would be king, and have no kings
Yet in my folly, I depend on men
Whose end is known, even to my shallow ken,
And place my hopes upon the vagrant hour.
And spurn eternity, my only dower.

TO VIRGINIA M. MACKENZIE

February 13, 1951



God keeps His ancient place and power,
His grace abiding with us still.
The Church of men has died ten thousand yesterdays
While His Church lives in you who do His will.

THIS DYING WORLD*

March 3, 1951



Because this earth, this universe must be
The grave of sin and death, because Time
 Itself must be no more, let me
Make this, my only sight, an alien clime,
See in my robes of righteousness and hope,
 Ambition, pride and circumstance,
 Grave clothes alone, in all sin a rope
That binds me to death's grinning dance.
 This world is but my graveyard: hours
Mark the funeral march to dust. I work,
Run, hasten to the end of all my mortal hope and powers
 My very life the grave I cannot shirk.
Mercy, my God, on this my sin, my great offense:
 Each day I bathe, shave and dress to meet
Not Judgment Day nor Thee, but hopeful, tense,
 I greet this dying world, my winding sheet.

BUT HOW?*

May 15, 1951



The house is silent and the night
Still. The last of drunken horsemen now
Have left the road for sprawling sleep. Light
Soon will gray the clouds, allow
Another round of light in darkness. I, still awake,
Bed me in troubled doubt. I believe in God,
In all His Word, His blessed Son, take
All in faith, accept His healing rod.
Believe my hairs all numbered, total providence my
Staff and creed. All numbered. Yes, but how?
Here my faith trembles, humility turns proud, aims high
Walks fearful. Doubt like an old sow
Roots in the filth of my penned up hopes.
Numbered by God. But how? I will not abdicate
My hopes and pride. I pray, beg, plead, but the ropes
Of Adam's bondage are my native state.
As Thou hast called me, Lord, to be
Thy footstool, servant, tool—this is the humility
Of dead men—Then cast out the Garden swine
That rule me, and make me holy, wholly Thine.

TRAITOR TO MYSELF*

May 17, 1951



Well, it was done in a quiet place,
He said, no witness but myself, the deed
Dispatched, the hour ended, and in a span
Forgotten, unrecorded, ended, ended. But now read
The condemnation sentence written in my heart.
Who wrote it there? Who made me, sullen contradiction,
Traitor to myself? I can stand neither with nor apart
From any man and walk in constant malediction.
Man, I betray myself, cry out in flesh and bone,
We are undone, are not, can never, never be our own.
Our thoughts are public and our lives declare
The buried silences we will not share.

SONG OF GRACE*

May 19, 1951



Here I come, my God, to Thee
 Lazy, late and tardily.
My best is spent on little things
The mite of me alone now sings.

Thy praises, Lord should be my song.
And yet my heart knows all along
 It loves throughout to sing of me
And leave the last “Amen” to Thee.

Forgive me, Lord, and give me grace.
Teach me to take my destined place.
 Be it great or be it small,
Give me grace to heed Thy call.

THE SINNER'S FRIEND*

May 19, 1951



When Jesus walked the earth
They say He talked and dined
With sinners. Then welcome, Lord. Here is no dearth
Of sin. Here you will find
A vast concourse of flaws, evils, pride
And lusts. But, Lord, there is an open door
For Thee. My heart sits hungry beside
The banquet table of its hopes, at war
With its chosen quests. O welcome, Lord,
Make this Thy pulpit, bed and board.

YET I LOVE THEE*

May 19, 1951



There is nothing, Lord, that I have given
Thee—I have not taken back
A thousand times. My life is riven
Between two loyalties. I lack
A final trust in Thee too often, lean
Upon myself, mold a god
Of my own will and hopes, distrust the unseen
If it will not bless me and pray:
“Give me the broad way by Thy side.”
Yet I do love Thee, Lord, and hate myself.
Though I rebel, draw back my gifts, am not above
The lowest sin, and daily trifle, daily sow
My life’s seed into the lap of every lust
A roving eye can seize upon, still
I do love Thee and cannot give this sullen dust
Will, hope or peace except in Thee and in Thy will.
Lord, Thy mercy must forever flow
If mercy goes, my life will go.

MY TRIBE IS LEVI*

June 3, 1951



My tribe is Levi, and my name
The same. I have no inheritance, my God
But Thee. Landless, homeless I came
Into this world, and shall go under the sod
Naked of the wealth of nations and of men.
So be it. Yet I hereby claim and demand
My tribal heritage, the inheritance promised when
I was called, A dry stick still that cannot stand,
A withered, rootless dying brand. Endow
Me, God, who made dead Aaron's rod
To bud, yield blossoms and bear fruit; come now,
Make me a harvest, this lifeless clod
A teeming earth, I hereby file suit and claim
My sole inheritance, and in Thy name
Demand it. Lord, make this dry rod to be
Rooted and fruitful now unto Thee.

OUR HUMBLE SPAN*

June 9, 1951



The wisdom of our humble span
Is shallow, and the years add
Only patience at their best. Man
As his master can give only sad
And miserable sins to the total of his life.
In this our sicklied age, diseased have been
Our prophets in their cackling doom, the only wife
For proper men, a whore. For sin
Is custom, now the mode and virtue rare.
Our one cheap meat is human flesh, and man
The master has enslaved himself to Vanity Fair
And with it death, and, in its van
The plague of conscience. Thy will be done,
O God. It is Thy hand that now hath spun
This net of circumstance. Give us more futility
Until we learn to turn to Thee.

THE ESSENCE OF OUR MORTAL STATE*

July 28, 1951



The essence of our mortal state is death, and man,
 Peccable and frail, has nowhere shown
 His frailty more than in the sewing of himself.
A span of years, he wastes as an eternity, grows
 Profligate of meager time in sordid waste.
Man sees within his mirror skin and flesh, not bone,
And as he walks and stands, goes slow, makes haste
 Only by unseen bones, his life's sharp
 Its skeleton and structure, its moving force
 Is death. Its courses in our blood and veins
 And all our life is but an interlude in death.
Its source is darkness and it returns to darkness with life's stains.
 But my God is light and He shall raise
 This mortality from dust to give Him praise.

THE CARDINAL'S REVIEW

October 2, 1951



They are all gone, the girls I never touched.
Dead or faded, withered or full-blown
They sag with years. Faint memory of past beauty.
Lisa once whose jutting breasts
Burned into dreams through long black nights
Is gone, is dust.
Trivial and transient is all beauty.
Marianna laughed at me and was too proud
For one whom stupid louts called fat boy then.
She kissed my hand last month, a pious crone,
And went back home to boast of it.
Peg and Kate and all the rest
Are now but hags and I
A Prince of God. Praise Him for His goodness.
I confess, O Lord, my sins, dark, dank and many
Yet in humility declare myself innocent of the taints
That blacken even princes in Thy House.
Punish these wicked, and use me still for greater things
For Thee.
I have hated sin in all its forms,
Avoided the high profaneness that goes clothed in scarlet
And sought the fervor to give light

To these vast multitudes whose strength
Is muscle, whose beauty is a fattening
Fading lust, and whose world is anarchy
But for the bonds of Holy Church.
They are all gone, the girls I never touched
And I remain a potentate in Thee.

GRAVEYARDS UNTO TRUTH*

October 24, 1951



The purpose of the tongue is noise
And words are graveyards unto truth,
We are but liars who will poise
And preen our feathers, and, without Ruth,
Sell Christ, not for Judas' silver, but
For vanity. Clothed, we are hypocrites who
Hide the man, and naked, liars who cut
Philosophy to emperor's cloth. We rue
The accidental slip of truth and try
To gain our souls, become adjusted, then
Become in ease the incarnate lie
And proudly enter "We are men."
The truth becomes a lie upon our lips.
Our most confession lies. Into an alien pride, it whips
Reality. God, before Whom all lies fade away,
We are not men, until Thy Spirit turns us, and we pray.

BITTER WANDERINGS*

October 25, 1951



I have wandered these many years
In the wilderness of my own heart,
Lived on the waters of bitterness, and fears
Of my own choosing. I have lusted from the start
For Egypt's fleshpots, wearied of freedom, yearned
For the pilfered past, found in manna monotony, called
That golden calf my God, and spurned
My Moses, Jesus Christ. There is a walled
City around my heart, set in lonely
Useless splendor in a desert place.
Building on the moment, or only
Longing backward, I die apace.
The promised land is Thine, O Lord, the vision too.
Heal and pardon, and I fall anew,
A pilgrim only by Thy grace,
An alien to this world, myself—and to Thy face.

HIS SPLENDID WAYS*

October 26, 1951



Burn, fire, burn, within my flesh. Flame
More brightly, blaze and heat
With warm bright light, let nothing tame
You save your destined course. Go meet
Your happy housing and rejoice.
O blessed heat, which God made
Undeiled, giving flesh voice,
Blood trumpets, hands music, a parade
Of flesh to feast upon. This is a round
Of wonder: the same familiar hills
And vales are ever new, resound
Each time with music, stills
Us as in Eden, long ago. Praise
God for His blessings, splendid His ways.
Homeward bound again tonight:
God bless our love and keep it bright.

FOR ALL THINGS I AM NOT*

October 31, 1951



For all things I am not,
For all I will not be,
For each day's pledge, each day forgot,
Thy mercy, Lord, to me.

A FATHER'S PRAYER*

November 11, 1951



God bless my son, my daughters too,
And give them grace and strength to do
His will more faithfully than I
With hearts that daily do God magnify.

AMERICA

November 13, 1951



This is the good earth. Let knaves
Disdain it. Its heritage and bounty
Teem with timeless power. It staves
Off age with God's own youth. Each county
Is an empire ancient Caesars never
Touched. It struts with lusty awkward youth.
Not this grows old, but men who sever
Themselves from God and heritage and truth.
They have no roots and hence no seed
And in their sterile anger will exalt
Their impotence, mouth words for deed
And make a virtue of their abject fault.
Our youth must be renamed by heavenly birth.
We are born old upon the earth
And ancient ills afflict us still
Until reborn within His will.

ON THE ACQUITTAL OF C. W.

November 17, 1951



Praise God for Hell, where justice reigns
Supreme. Here, in our sordid span,
We hate, circumvent and murder it. The veins
Of human judgment, from the time of Eden's ban,
Have run with syphilitic blood. Set
This down and mark it: Men will have no
Justice and will be only judges. We will let
No master stand, unless we make him so. Go
Through the streets and seek for one who calls
For justice on himself. All fight and flee
The common verdict. Who falls
If justice reign, but all humanity?
There is a court where no man guilty wins
Where justice reckons up the total of our sins
And freedom has its only price
Christ's great atoning sacrifice.
Then must we go to sue for peace
Before the summons come of no release.

LIFE'S ONE ALTERNATIVE*

November 27, 1951



Only because its one alternative is death,
Men love this life, declare it precious, find
No other migrant half so sweet. Since breath
 Has as its other face the unkind
Worms, corruption, nothingness, and dust,
 The quality of life is thus enhanced.
This daily round can outweigh worms, a crust
Of bread is famine wealth. The slow chanced
 Hope gives substance to an empty shell
 And the living who have yet to live
Pace hungrily within their narrow hell
 For life which living cannot give.
 The life which I now live in Thee,
Which is not mine, and is Thy life in me,
Has taken famine from my wayward heart
 And given it a new and deathless start.

CANYON ROAD IN WINTER

December 1951



This journey must be made.
The road which once with ease
Was traveled has been laid
With sudden snow. Broad green trees
Are bare and grim. Falling rocks
And icy turns are strange new dangers
On old familiar miles. The new road mocks
My old assurance, and we are strangers
To the well-known place. I vainly drive
The summer mile and find
The winter mile with which I strive
Has long since left behind
That which I live with. The seasons pave
New roads on ancient highways. God who gave
Me traveling orders for the road
Will guide me safely to His own abode.

A BARN TO HOUSE THEE*

December 22, 1951



There was no room for Him, once long ago,
Only a cold and drafty barn, and, like a blow,
 The smell of dung did greet
Him, Who came from heaven, none to meet
 Him, save the displaced cows and sheep
Whose restless night disturbed His sleep.
 Only some sheep men came to pray.
 No scholars came to mark the day.
 Still as of old the world denies
Room to its King and from Him shies,
 The Cross His only gift from men
 And man as brutal now as then.
Lord, if again a barn do not offend Thee,
This dung and filth would comprehend Thee,
 Here is my heart, with its unclean floor
 A barn to house Thee, as of yore.

WHEN THE SILENCE COMES*

January 18, 1952



What shall I say when the silence comes?
The words, which like lush grass,
Grow rapidly on Babel's soil, will wither. The scums
Of speech, which with unhallowed brass,
Trumpet the emptiness, shall turn to shame.
Silence, that borderland of all our speech,
Sends lengthening shadows on our name,
Lays hands upon us. It is a death we never reach
But daily live in. It comes most surely.
The last is the essence of the first
And the certain guardian of the purely
Providential silence, hunger, thirst.
Lord God, when the time of silence comes,
When my sustenance is less than crumbs,
When I stand without a plea,
Let Jesus Christ then speak for me.

LIFE'S SCHOOL*

February 13, 1952



Mercy, Lord, on this poor fool
Who, humbled daily in life's school,
Is still most apt at last week's sin
And daily taught, and daily purged within
Turns to the error of yesterdays
And sulks at the lessons sent his ways.
God have mercy, cleanse me now
And make me faithful to my vow
To be Thy servant. Shape me, God,
Before this earth reclaims its sod.

AS LEAVES FALL LIGHTLY*

July 6, 1952



As leaves fall lightly from the autumn tree
The years drop quickly from my aging life.
Lord God, please harvest fruit of me
Before I perish under winter's knife.

WHEN JUDGMENT NEARS*

July 26, 1952



In this day and in this very hour
When men have found their heart's desire
Fulfilled, their hands fall limp and power
Is gone. This fullness serves to sire
Only a greater hunger. The filled
Are empty, and the rich poor.
Their lusting is not stilled
And turns to anger. The sure
And certain envy of all fear
Breaks down all fences, turns
Wrong into right, lays in a bier
All justice, and all structure burns.
And now at last the judgment nears.
The Hour shall hear the burden of the years.
And justice shall not hasten or delay
To mete out judgment on that day.

STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS*

September 17, 1952



Arise and depart. Though roots tear
Deeply, go. Tenting time tonight,
Tomorrow and throughout. The snare
Of goodly houses blinds the sight
And seeks in transient time foundation.
Not this my rest. The sands of time
Are never founder's rock. False veneration
Rests on time and circumstance, its prime
Or sole arena. Break camp today
And tent tonight. Guards on the line
Both day and night. A week away
The City lies: the great assize, then bread and wine.
Even so in time we rise and go
And leave behind the world we know
And daily camp on alien ground
And only bound to exodus, unbound.

WHY MUST I SLEEP MY LIFE AWAY?*

September 21, 1952



Slowly, slowly through the night
Breaks the gray of morning light.
Unwillingly, to bed I make my way:
Why must I sleep my life away?

Quickly, quickly pass the hours.
End my days like wilting flowers.
Soon the working span is done
But my work is scarce begun.

More time, O Lord, before my bed
Rests at last among the dead.
My eyes already close with sleep—
I striving still my task to keep.

A VOICE FROM THE TOMB
CALLED THE CHURCH

October 3, 1952



Abandon hope, all ye who enter here:
Unto all truth, a constant mute,
Unto Christ's body, this a bier.
Turn from the sullen prostitute
And to the written Word adhere.

THE ECUMENICAL CHURCH

October 8, 1952



See how the whore grows gross and wide
And spreads abroad her legs
And summons sinners to her side:
“Ah come to my lap,” she begs.
“Union” is her constant cry:
A tumble in the grass,
In unity to crucify
The truth in her morass.

LET MY SILENCE SPEAK*

February 19, 1953



Let my silence speak.
I have no eloquence but this.
All my sentences are bleak
With emptiness. Between each word an abyss
I cannot bridge. No written, spoken word
Can now annul the past but only add
Its burden to it. I heard
Your silence and am glad
At nothing but the unveiled eye.
Cover it quickly. See
No more. Life has no thigh
For nakedness. Blessed are the tamed, the meek.
Now good. Nothing begun is nothing ended.
And I the false and non-magnetic north
When once the compass has been mended
Am pointed to no more thenceforth.

MODERN POETRY

April 3, 1953



Puddles and piddles and poodles and pop
Verses to riddles and poems to slop.
Sing a song of garbage
Pockets full of it.
I am full of bucket waste
But must I sing of it?

CHURCH PROCESSIONAL

Santa Cruz, April 8, 1953



Now smell them as they march, these living dead
Whose feet turn all the earth into a grave
A sepulchre, a tomb, who make their bed
In hell. These are the dead. They crave
A life they will not have, and in dumb show
Parade in robes, that cover lies
With black. The dead love order, row on row
Of tombs obedient and in line. Their crosses rise
On dead men's bones. Peace, let nothing mar
The sanctity of silence. This nave
Is but a barren, withered womb, far
From gusty bearing pains, too much a grave.
Destroy this church, O Christ, and raise
A body fit to give Thee praise.
The grave that could not hold Thee then
Must not claim Thy flesh again.

WHY GONE WHAT ONCE DID GROW?*

Kingsburg, August 6, 1953



Why must this moment pass?
Why fades the flower so?
Why brown the once green grass?
Why gone what once did grow?

I nothing know tonight.
This morning all I knew
Tomorrow may be right.
But now my blood runs new.

Why must we say goodbye?
Why must our loves grow cold?
Why must we grow to die?
Why soon so old, so old?

MERCY OVERARCHED*

Kingsburg, August 6, 1953



When yesterday was hope and green
The year, tomorrow was the dream
Of ripened life. Now yesterday
Is promises, the past returns to seam
The cloth upon our table spread.
Tomorrow and today are dust
And ashes, and a cloud draws near
To drench us. Quickly we go, and must
Be travelers in a barren land
Miraged with teeming promises. Parched
Lips that anguished pray
Learn mercy overarched.
No man can learn that song unless
The Lord redeem him from duress.
Then in the midst of drifting sand
We sing His song in an alien land.

THE CROSS I DREADED MOST*

September 7, 1953



I do not know why God has brought me here
Into this place of sorrow, tears, and woe.
The very cross I dreaded most is near.
The hour comes when I must rise and go.

I do not understand why easier roads
Are closed to me who prayed so long.
I only know that yesterday the loads
I dreaded He took up and gave me song.

He led me here and blessed me in new ways.
How can I doubt His goodness then?
He who blessed me in my yesterdays
Will bless me yet beyond my ken.

HIS GREAT HAND*

October 8, 1953



What God has given never changes.
All other things shall pass away.
The needs we give Him, He arranges,
And turns our darkness into day.

What God has promised, He delivers.
His love and bounty never fail.
He leads us through the dark deep rivers.
His love and promise shall prevail.

Then wait on Him in patience still
And trusting, understand,
That what we leave to His good will
We find again in His great hand.

I SEE TOMORROW'S FACE*

October 23, 1953



My hands have touched God's promises and seen
The miracle of answered prayer. I know
He loves me. And yet I fret when in between
Two miracles. Teach me, Lord, to undergo
The desert wait. Teach me to be patient still
And trust that even this Your love ordained
Not in neglect, rejection, or for ill,
But for my blessing, that I might be sustained
Not by my strength or pleasure, but by Your grace.
I now can wait, and quietly without a doubt
Because in faith I see tomorrow's face
Today, and know His blessedness throughout.

MY CONSTANT GUIDE*

December 29, 1953



I do not walk alone,
The Lord walks by my side;
He makes my heart His throne,
He is my constant guide.

I do not walk alone,
You walk beside me too.
Pilgrims whose life's cornerstone
Is God who makes all new.

O nothing, nothing can dismay
The soul that on the Lord is stayed,
Whose trust is in the Lord's array,
That waits with patience, unafraid.

I STILL HAVE PRAYER*

January 24, 1954



Give me, Lord, a task to do
And strength to walk and still be true,
Someone to love me, someone to love;
This I ask of the Lord above,
Children whose lives will glorify
The Lord of glory ere I die.
A church that ever faithful stands
Amidst an alien world's demands—
And having these, I have my share—
But having none, I still have prayer.

OF SUCH IS NOT THE KINGDOM*

January 26, 1954



We have learned too much
To be happy, not enough
To be wise. Of such
Is not the Kingdom. The rough
Hard finish has grated
On the flesh, abraded
And rawed the sated
Heart. We are amazed
At nothing, are born old,
With wonder gone. Call no more
Sky-deep glaciers cold.
The ice has now a higher shore.
The furnace must flame high and turn
The acid ice into a cleansing burn.
Run for the mountains. The flood
Shall come, the blade, the blood.

BEFORE THE THRONE OF GRACE*

January 28, 1954



Before the throne of grace we meet
And our petitions bear.
To Him we cry, and Him intreat,
O Lord, hear Thou our prayer.

We lose the day and gain the year;
Eternity is ours, and grace,
In patience, confidence, without a fear
We watch and wait a little space.

Our times are in His hand, we know,
His love for us forever sealed,
His love will never let us go,
His love in Christ has been revealed.

WAIT...WATCH...TRUST*

May 15, 1954



Speak not
Fight not
Fret not
Haste not
Wait and pray

Trust Him
Thank Him
Praise Him
Love Him
Watch and pray

Grace comes
Hope comes
Faith comes
God comes
Trust and pray

THE HAMADRYAD*

September 28, 1954



The hamadryad was a venomed snake,
Small and white, once caged, now lost.
Escaping in the garden, it did break
All certainty, and every step will cost
Me peace. Where no peace was, there now
Is knowledge. The innocence is eaten
And the vow became a haunt. Allow
Me hope, I pray. Must I be beaten
Into dust and then remade?
Is dreaming turned from hope to hell?
From this burning can no shade
Give respite, none dispel?
Still, still with Thee my hope and trust.
With Thee true knowledge: Thou art just.
I only wait Thy sovereign will,
Believing, keep on waiting still.

I THANK THEE*

October 6, 1954



So much to wait for God,
And all so good. I thank Thee.
Today I falter and I plod.
But Thou hast made me
 Hopeful in distress,
 And so I wait
 In patience to possess
My hope: He never comes too late.

THE HAMADRYAD, CONTINUED*

February 7, 1955



The hamadryad has been treed
And wilts in bondage to the bark.
Now only grows the climbing weed
And daily, daily does the dark
Move deeper. Where lies
The axe, and when the hand
That fells the tree shall rise
To sever bondage? The land
Cries out to drink not tears
But blood. Wait, wait, the clock
Shall strike the hour though years
Be seconds in its beat. O that Rock
Shall be a mountain
Sightless tears a fountain
That shall crush and flood this generation
When the axe shall swing damnation.

WHAT WAS IT, GOD, I SAID?*

February 10, 1955



What was it, God, I said
Last night? To look at me,
I had forgotten it. Dead
Words, and bland hypocrisy?
My God, my heart and blood
Cried out in it. O Lord,
I was and am a stud
To impotence that burns to board
The earth. So now the night
Grows shorter. Nothing remains
That went to bed. The light
Will trap no glory, only stains.
Empty of dreams, I shall return
To dust. So be it. At last
The answer death, then grace to learn
Peace when the perishing is past.

THY VICTORY*

May 6, 1955



O what sweet buttocks, death,
Thou has reclaimed, what thighs,
What fire iced, what breath
Turned cold, with sly surprise
What breasts, what beauty dust,
What health to sickness turned,
What tears and joys, what lust
Destroyed, and, unconcerned,
Robbed hope of tears, defeat
Of time, the seed of sprout.
Your victory here is full, complete,
And our poor struggle, total route.
But out of dust returned to dust
And out of God whose word I trust
I shall arise in flesh and see
Thy victory, death, bestowed on me.

TO SIMEON STYLITES

May 13, 1955



Remount your stone-cold pillar, sir,
For lack of column in your soul
And flesh. But I cannot deter,
Will not hinder the rising pole
That testifies to God's own blessing.
I have my tower, holes and hills
Of wonder, to climb upon, caressing
Flesh not marble. This wine distills
New vigor unto spirit. By God's grace
I was created soul and flesh, great
Miracle and wealth. Shall I efface
His wonder? The twain are mate.
God bless my flesh and spirit now
And give them joy in His appointing,
And guide me, feed me, show me how
To find in both His rich anointing.

IN THIS HOUR*

October 23, 1955



Now, stubborn soul, the testing
Time has come. The temper of the years
Is under strain. There is no jesting
With God's providence, no toying with new fears,
But only trial. Now nothing stands
That is not God or of His giving.
There is no resting from His hands
But only marching orders. Living
Love, not man's, has measured
Out this course. Necessity brings
On the climax, which no treasured
Hope can alter. Time has no springs,
But God gives fountains. In this hour
God gives strength, and God gives power.
Let no other hand now intervene,
Not mine but God's alone be seen.

THE REFINED HEART*

October 30, 1955



Thou hast made Thy way straight
But not my heart, which would stand
Apart from consequence, confess too late,
Indict Thee for its own effect, and band
With Adam against light. Lord God,
The timing is too late for bounded
Hearts whose clock is their own hope. Rod
And staff give, to the astounded
Heart, cold comfort. I grow old
From waiting, weary in prayer, glad
Only in Thee, Who makes me bold
Only in trust. Still, with these, I have had
God. Thou hast made Thy way
Straight, and now my heart also. Yea,
Let me be patient who gains all,
Not for my sake, but by His call.

OPEN TO THE RAIN*

November 17, 1955



All hungry thighs have answer now
In hunger. All thirsty lips
Have answer in their thirst. The plow
Of circumstance now rips
The ground. Let nothing hide
From God. Stand open to the rain.
Walk deep in hunger, ride astride
Your thirst and filling. Remain
In time, the moment's pulse. Hold
Hard the hour. No gentle God
Is met without the cross. Be bold
In hunger, ripe in thirst, naked to the rod.
God gives to hunger, clothes the naked, slakes
All thirst. And so, until our aching breaks
The hiding man, God waits, He waits
To give when our subterfuge abates.

FULLNESS OF TIME*

February 2, 1956



There is no present time
But always fullness. The moment
Can be myth and non-existent
Against the burden of the past
And future. Time, time, time,
No other time than this,
The fullness. Face the past
To see the present, hold the future.
There is no time in isolation:
Every moment interacts all time,
All people, places, things, and rests in God.
No vagrant hour exists or can exist
Except in myth. Deliver me, my God,
From myth and legend; deliver me
To time come from Thy Providence
And entered as inheritance by willing hands.
Save me from the creeping myth that darkens time
And gives men over to vague dreams.
Destroy this vast conspiracy at time,
And sound the clock.
I thank Thee, God, for time
And grace to live it.

GIVE, GOD, GRACE*

February 2, 1956



Let desperation have no hold,
My God, in me. Let rebel doubt
Command me nothing. Make me bold
In faith. Let patience put to route
All civil war within my walls.
Hear me as I beat upon Thy doors
And hunger for an answer. My calls
Are fearful now. The reservoirs
Of doubt have broken. I homeless walk
Towards higher ground. Let never
Care be master; anxiety will stalk
My sleep, unless Thy mercy sever
Bondage into grace. Give, God, grace
To take Thine answer, find my place,
But more, my God, a full rich call
To know and serve Thee with my all.

SO NEAR AND YET SO FAR*

February 2, 1956



So near and yet so far. Body and soul's
Hunger, closer than heart beat,
Stands within touching. Paroles
Can come to time, not life. The heat
Of hunger knows no morrow,
Wants all now. So near and yet so far
From fullness. This is sorrow:
An inch, mile long, but touching char
The future. And yet I fret, so bold
The blood's deep hunger, so slow.
The time of waiting, longing to hold
All fulness: when shall I know?
Lord God, I cannot wait, but wait
I must. Let not the time abate
My hunger. Let it be nursed
With answer, for from Thee this thirst.

MET ANEW IN HUNGER*

February 10, 1956



Fulness never fed me like
This hunger. My richest fare
Was poor, my thirst tame dyke
For torrents come to tear
Old banks away. Good morning,
God, now met anew in hunger.
Here is blessing, and, with it, warning,
Of maturity much younger
Than my youth. Now singing
Hunger warms me, feeds with life
The flesh long fed, comes bringing
Blood to bones, comes to wife
With promise, hope: And so, my Lord,
For hunger, thanks; and now accord
Me fulness; let me be versed
With answer to so rich a thirst.

ALL MY HANDS CAN HOLD*

March 27, 1957



I nothing know and nothing am
But weariness and weariness and wear.
My sin is all my hands can hold.
The roots of mind grow cold
And bare; erosion runs
The lines far deeper year by year.
No time for silence now,
Or words, but O the Word
That must be spoken and must speak.
My God, I wait without a prayer,
But praying always.
Make haste, my God: deliver me,
For Thy Name's sake, O Lord, deliver me.

THINE THE SIGHT*

November 19, 1959



I lay me down to sleep, O Lord,
And now commit into Thy hand
My burdens, cares, and needs. Reward
My hopes: my person cannot stand.

I come in faith, and trusting pray
Watch o'er my loved ones thru this night
And guide us through the coming day:
Be our's the faith, and Thine the sight.

O nothing, nothing can dismay
The soul that on the Lord is stayed,
Whose trust is in the Lord's array,
That waits with patience, unafraid.

the 1960s

THE BREAKING SPLENDOR*

September 3, 1960



Now the hidden splendor
That far outshines the sun,
That floods all music under
And leaves the mind outrun,
Breaks like thunder over
The wind-whipped hills and plains,
And suddenly all promises
Cascade in splashing rains.
My Lord, what a morning!
My Lord, what a day!
Suddenly a singing
Comes rising on my way.

SHILOH*

October 3, 1960



I died last night,
Have died a thousand times,
Will yet die more.
Hedged by God and bounded,
Alive by death and mended,
I am the shipwreck shore of ended hopes.
“He will overturn, overturn, overturn
Whose right it is”
And burn past ashes
Till His will be done.
And I who dread this firing
Dread more the passing by.

NO HOPE BENEATH THE SUN*

October 4, 1960



Cold, cold the heart of man
Though fire be in his tongue.
Old, old the heart of man,
More foul and rank than dung.

The Family of Man is Babel,
Lot's daughters are his bride,
Incestuous self-love his pleasure,
His freedom, suicide.

No hope, no hope in man himself,
No hope beneath the sun,
But hope by God triumphant shall
The mind and time outrun.

OUR LIVES ARE MARKED*

December 15, 1960



Hedged by God and bounded
Our lives are marked
By sharpest periods, birth and death.
Beginning and ending, first and last,
Do punctuate our thinking and our sleep.
Not so with God, who moves a thousand courses
In each pulse
And plans beyond the hour,
Whose goings forth have no beginning and no end,
Whose last is first
And holds eternity in time.
This measureless and sudden span of God
Alone must govern, punctuate and undergird our thinking,
To wait on God: let this be wisdom,
The punctuation mark of life.

DEATH SHALL DIE*

February 17, 1961



Time's circle narrows down
The years, and bring to weary hope
Surcease, and death to drown
All mercy. Too weary blind to grope
For help, man slips past life
Too weak for hunger. O never, never
This. The moon-soft night cries
Out for hunger and desire. Sever
The bond of death that dies
By living. Hidden the heart,
The circle drawn, and remorse
For dying, oh the thoughts that start.
When thought remains the sole recourse!
Keep me hungry; stir my hunger deep.
I have, my God, no other keep
Against death or dying. Satisfy
Me richly, cup run over, gratify
My thirst, make thirst to prophesy
That death shall vanish, death shall die!

THE CLOCK STRIKES DEATH*

January 2, 1962



Thus far, thus dead. The clock
Strikes death, ticks time
To die, to die, to stock
The grave, to prime
The pump of vengeance
To full flow. The knocking
Rain, against all vigilance
Seeps in. The clocking
Death rides high. No kirk
Can ever stand
Unless man's work
Be done, unless the land
Be blessed, redeemed,
Its every pulse esteemed
By meaning, unless this drought
Be flooded life throughout.

WITH GODLY FLESH ENDOWED*

February 3, 1962



The grand necessity of life
Is flesh. The delight
Of creaturehood, (a knife
To vanity), is appetite
To faith. O the ripe
Rich lushness body holds!
It is the warmest type
Of fullness, and unfolds
A paradise ablaze
Within our blood.
Warm are the rays
Thereof, and flesh the bud.
God's paradise and Eden stands
Never in those alien lands
Of vaunting spirit. Now
With godly flesh, "I thee endow."

NO RESTING NOW*

May 12, 1963



That word against chaos stands,
Against chaos that appears supreme,
Against chaos that with disordered hands
Is the essence of all unhallowed dreams
 Against order. Arise, arise,
 There is no rest, there is no rest
 Except in battle. The prize
Is to the victor, battle-bleed and dressed
 In winters. No resting now. Indeed,
 No peace except in war. Arise,
 Arise, we cannot plead
 The past at this assize.
 This is our destiny: death
 Or battle; surrender or the breath
Of enemies in war. Now therefore stand
And, battle-born, possess the land.

TIME*

June 28, 1964



Marking time with time, and days
With waiting, pricing life with life.
And always aging, the moment stays
No man, and gives no substance. Rife
With change, it plunders all things save
The dead. To live, to move, to change
Is all the same, the same. Who gave
Then timelessness to echo time, a range
Of timeless life to frame the hour?
Why does the moment thunder proud
With promise, resound with power,
And plunder time with time avowed?
Since time shall be no more,
Then time must be conspirator
To end all time. This is the power
Time promises in every hour.

THE SUN SHALL COME*

March 9, 1965



Suddenly the sun shall burst
Upon us, as thirsting for light
We stumble in the accurst
Darkness. Blind in the darkness
And the noonday sun, we run
With chaos, dreaming glory, and
With fretful heart still shun
All healing. We are never done
With folly, until folly have done
Us. Then suddenly the sun
Shall come. God shall overrun
Our folly with judgment and with light.
We are never done with God
Who by His healing rod
Is never done with governing
A world He made and trod.

THE LIBERTY OF TIME*

New York City, April 5, 1967



Man's clock runs wild:
It keeps no time.
It moves on impulse all its own.
Men leap in time
To fall far backward,
Fret against the moment
And lose the moments and the hour.
"Time, time, time, the tyranny of time,"
This their cry who will not know
The liberty of time,
The healing certainty of death,
Of certain passage, sure release,
Against man's sin.
Life has its punctuation marks
That give clear meaning:
Time, death, and decay.
God marks the page,
And then moves on.

THE COIL OF THE SERPENT*

June 20, 1967



The coil of the serpent tightens;
Its fangs are opened wide.
The air is death.
In swift silence the pride
Of evil glistens in the sun.
Out of darkness into light
The nightmare takes on flesh,
And rears its head upright
To strike its terror.
The mind is numb,
The panic come,
And wisdom turns to error.
But by the Son, the serpent's head
Is crushed, is dead,
And even now the last
Is visible in all the past
For the word is spoken, the earth
Established from its birth.

SENSELESS WORDS*

November 6, 1968



All words are blurred because the Word is lost.
 The sense is gone,
 The meaning done,
And all man's mouthings are but idiot's tongue.
 Time and man are now no more
 Than floating dreams.
 The tongue is dead to sense
 And thick with mindlessness.
All words are burdened but their sense is lost,
 Bowed down with weights forgotten
 And with speech undone.
The words are gone: there is no other Word.
 No nightmare ends in sleep:
By waking only man can speak and reason.
 There are no words without the Word
 And man is only mindless man,
 Wordless, never waking.

CERTAIN PEACE

November 6, 1968



There is a loveliness that comes
In quietness like falling night.
It warms the blood and brings serenity to rest
In every thought and bone.
Quietly the heart alive
Commands the flood
With certain peace.
Here now have I,
In love content,
Found joyful Eve
And life unspent.

MUSIC SHE WAS*

October 5–6, 1969



This is the stroke, the beat,
The rhythm made flesh,
The bone of myself made music.
Here the incarnate image
Clothes flesh to life in wonder.
Ah flowing loveliness and light,
Be night around me and full time.
Let timeless time now come
And room be made for wonder.

Music she was all sudden
Lush blades of grass on fresh warm hills,
And healing like a fertile river
Runs deeper than the years.
Let this be time, this wonder,
This ageless blaze of light
That clefts all suns asunder,
In a moment, bone-deep in freshness:
This be night enough for living.
This is the rest, the healing rest,
This is the time all moments seek,
When time and life are one, no passing by,

One pulse, blood deep, full conquest now,
All aching years made new in wonder.

Music she is, and music,
The stroke, the beat,
Behold how very good
And under all the loneliness and aging void
A sudden laughter.

THE PRIESTS OF BAAL

October 11, 1969



Confound these bastards, Lord,
Who have no guts.
They are not men but eunuchs:
They cannot breed, make men,
Make love nor hate.
They only snivel, whine,
And strike in darkness.
These eunuchs cannot breed:
They only seek to cut up men,
To castrate and reduce
All men to their own level.
They neither love nor hate
But only envy.
So let them perish, Lord,
Cut down by wrath,
The judgment of Thy Throne.
Castrate the castrates of all power,
Position, prestige, office.
Lay bare their self-made evil
And let men prevail in Thee.
So be it, Lord. Amen.

ON CONQUERED GROUND*

December 17, 1969



This is the road, most plainly
Marked. The many signs
That point to other lanes
Confuse the issue. The lines
Mapped out are straight
All journeys drag
At times, but this goes well,
On time, without a lag.
Each step on conquered ground,
The enemy unmanned and downed,
Stomped to dust and dead;
No resting now: Go straight ahead.

the 1970s

THE LUXURY OF WORDS*

August 27, 1970



The luxury of words, beyond all
Empires, makes me lord
And king. No beggar here,
In majesty, I can afford
The treasured wealth of ages.
Come, gather round and never fear
A drought of gold and silver.
This is the sphere
Of endless plenty, a dower
Of wealth and hammered power.
All words when servant to the Word
Are potentates whose laws are heard.

DOUBLE MOVEMENT*

April 29, 1971



There is no time for living now.
Death is the order of the day.
The clocks race faster unto death,
And every birth is quick decay.

Down, down, down the earth declines.
It rises but to fall.
Our wisdom is all backward bent,
Not foresight but recall.

By virtue of that sovereign cross
This process is reversed.
From death comes life, from hunger
Food, and fullness out of thirst.

There is a double movement here,
A headlong plunge and race,
A suicidal urge to death,
A bursting forth of grace.

And I am part of both these worlds,
A dying and a birth,

A stubborn clinging to decay, and
A spring-fresh, budding earth.

APOCALYPSE OF MAN*

April 30, 1971



The sums of yesterdays are clouded now,
The drums of conquest muffled, gone.
 We speak to silence
 And hear a wordless roar.
 The heart is murder
 And the open door invites disaster.
Waiting for the great apocalypse of man,
The nations on parade have trumpeted its dawn.
Now they strain and wait to see the march
 Of paradise and man triumphant.
And then amidst the fanfare and the blare,
The roll of drums, it comes, it comes,
 A sudden nothing, death,
 A dying, crying,
 Emptiness triumphant now.

I WEPT ONCE WHEN I WAS YOUNG*

September 3, 1971



I wept once when I was young
And life's hot stream ran shallow then.
It overflowed with ease and stormed
The barricades of temper.
Now the stream cuts deep,
And far below the canyon's rim
It stirs with currents
Banks have never seen.
Age does not still the heart
But cuts more deeply into flesh
With currents deepened by the years.
Time passes, not the cut.
The years run in the bed of yesteryears,
And all our yesterdays enlarge tomorrow.
Then when the current runs with joy,
The depths shall know that healing flow
And the spring flood's happy thunder.

TIME IS FOR THE LIVING*

Hillsdale College, August 17, 1973



Not alone, not alone, we were born
But into the burden and wealth of the ages,
Born rich and in debt to the ages.
Man that is born of woman
Is born of movement into movement,
From growth to growth, from womb to womb,
To the glorious birth of the new creation.
The living move and mate and interweave,
And life is ever linked with life;
With past and present and tomorrow.
The dying lie alone, alone, alone.
They only live within their skin.
The tie is gone: they do not reach beyond themselves.
They only feel and cringe in pain.
Bury the dead in their own dead rubble.
Time is for the living, not the dead.
Time past and present and time future,
The wealth of life is time, life lived in content.
No, not alone but rich is man:
His poverty is born of sin and is his own.

THIS NIGHT IS NOT FOR SLEEPING*

April 30, 1974



It has been long this night,
My patience thin.
The pulse of time is God's,
Not mine.
This night is not for sleeping.
It moves too swiftly or too long
For wakeful men.
To be a thief and steal is dignity,
Re-steal a world once robbed from God,
This is a holy task and mine by grace.
Come with me now
And we shall laugh in happy pleasure
In the morning.

THE SINGER AND THE SONG*

November 2, 1974



A dabble with a dibble,
And a dibble for a dabble,
And the world flows by too soon.

The hills grow old,
The nights grow cold,
And life is a foreign rune.

But the singer and the song,
Are a King who is strong,
And we are the chords of His tune.

NEW EDEN*

November 30, 1974



New Eden comes
And all else passes.
The hills grown old with time
Shall see their youth again.
The cold stone walls of Jericho
Around the heart of ancient man
Shall fall before the trumpets' blow
As victors seize the land.
The time that comes
Beats with the loudest drums.
Creation has but one conclusion.

THE SOUNDS OF TIME

August 26, 1976



The sounds of time are lovely sounds,
The endless ticking of a clock
A thing of beauty, setting bounds
Upon the present, an opened lock
Into the future. There still
Is time, O lovely time,
And opportunity to fill
Tomorrow. The chime
Of clocks is music, holy
Music. It is a call
To action, until, never slowly,
Comes the end of time, a wall.
Lord, let me never now
Despise this treasure nor allow
Its passing to dismay me. Gown
My station with exultation's crown.

SHOWER OF GRACE*

August 26, 1976



O lovely flesh, that withers
And grows old, how rich
A journey ours! This niche
Of time and flesh now hithers
Us, as always, beyond the hour.
We cannot linger
Nor keep our finger
On its pulse. Our power
Is limited though rich. Now
Is the time for joy
Without alloy
In God's good promise, solemn vow
To resurrect this flesh in power.
Always remember, life is a shower
Of grace. Its time and place
Are His good pleasure, our swift pace.

THE RICHNESS OF OUR FLESH

January 13, 1977



The richness of our flesh,
A festival of joy,
Surrounds us, O my darling.
Our love is both necessity
and luxury combined,
A wealth to feast upon,
A fleet of clouds to carry
us to sleep.

We revel in our flesh
And feel the pulse of God's
great bounty.
The luxury of flesh is paradise,
Creation's glory,
The singing pulse of life.
All glory be to God who
makes us rich,
And gives us grace to know it.

A WOMAN'S LOVELINESS*

July 5, 1977



A woman's loveliness is like a song alone,
Beyond compare,
Breaking the silence with a joyful flow.
There is a loveliness to flesh
That turns all other wealth to beggar's fare.
There is a grace to life
Which when made one with saving grace
Lights up the eyes and time with living gold.
How glorious this, to be alive in God's own world,
In God's appointed place.

DEMOLISHED BY GRACE*

July 29, 1977



Our speech betrays us.
A poverty of truth marks all our words.
 We tongue our ways
 Through days and nights of lies
 And clothe ourselves in robes of evil.
Our words do magnify their god, ourselves,
And, like the planets, circle all our being.
 The words, the words, our every words,
 All have their orbit and their sun.
 This burning sun is death itself
 And all the worlds are barren stone
 And nothing lives that is not miracle.
 That Word alone is life and lives
And blasts all other words to nothingness
And by His death brings death to death
 And life to life.
We are a miracle of God's great patience
 And all things stand by grace alone,
 By grace alone.

LIKE A CHILD*

July 29, 1977



I have grown old and young with time.
A child peers through my aging eyes.
I feel the weight of tired years
And see new realms with fresh surprise.

Come, lead me now,
I grow too small,
From age and youth
Both prone to fall.

Only the birds are singing now;
The world in sullen dreams is sleeping.
And, like a child, my only rest
Lies in His sovereign keeping.

the 1980s

THE COVENANT*

August 15, 1981



The ancient landmarks have been moved, but not by God,
The rivers run their ancient course,
The sun remains unchanged in place,
And, underfoot, the very sod
Moves mindless to the rule of God's sure laws.
All altered landmarks open doors
To flooding judgment, running fire,
And burning justice without pause,
But still thine ark in safety rides
The floods. God's covenant abides.

BARRIERS TO ALL DRIFT*

May 23, 1983



Down the draining years of empty time
When men are full and minds are barren,
There comes the drift of impotence and
 Bobbing wood. Dead pieces drift.
 Their life is past, and only currents
 Move them.
There must be tides against the river,
 Dams and barriers to all drift,
 Against the drift of death,
 The stand of life.

HIS HOLY PURPOSE*

September 14, 1985



When this is done, this trouble passed,
Another grief begins. We see
No time ahead when we at last
Shall know our days as free.
“In Adam’s fall, we sinned all”
And sin and death now rule.
Our past is present till
The Lord, with us His tool,
Makes every tempest still.
Our fallen history goes
From past to future close.
God’s holy purpose comprehends
The total span, with joyful ends.

DEATH BEGINS TO DIE*

September 30, 1985



I grow not old but young.
The years but strip the age
From me; old Adam's unsung
Years give way; here is a newer page
Of life, and death begins
To die. I have not sorrow
For time's passing. My sins
And griefs have no tomorrow
In our God. The past
Is old, the future vast
With life. There is no death
And life is more than heart and breath.

JUSTICE*

September 30, 1985



Hope dies when justice dies
For at the heart, the core
Of life, is God's Assize,
His judgment. Shut the door
Of justice and growing time
Turns on itself; men sicken
Without justice; no rhyme
Nor reason stands to quicken
Life. Where there is no right
All greatness shrivels into spite
And men are old at birth.
For without God, not even mirth
Remains, but only spreading death.

TIME AND ETERNITY*

October 26, 1985



Past griefs grow cold
And present griefs roil
Hotly in the blood. The old,
Forgotten, is but ancient soil
And seedbed. We are still
The past, unknown and known,
And we cannot kill
Our yesterdays, which have sown
All our tomorrows. Are we then
But history's men?
God's throne creates our ways,
Governs and orders our days.
All that comes within our sight
Is but eternity now come to light.

NEWNESS OF LIFE*

January 30, 1987



Something alive, new born each day,
Comes out of sleep to a realm of light.

We are renewed. We cannot stay
Our destined growth to a newer height.

If I would strive to hold
Myself to a cherished dream and make

A stop in time, to set my mold,
Then He will shatter, He will break

The "I" in this His creature. I must

Not set my course, nor trust

My vision. No human lust

For life can ever turn my dust

Into a living soul. Only God who said

The creating word can raise me daily from the dead.

the 1990s

FALSE CENTERS*

August 15, 1990



False centers will not hold. Things fly
Apart, confusion reigns, and only taxes hold
The state together. Powers now do lie
Within oppressor's hands, and men are cold
Towards virtue, prone to sin and treason.
There is a hunger for false goals,
A riot of unreason, a season
Of insanity. Men scamper in the shoals
Of death, all heedless of the waves
Of danger. False centers throw
All things into destruction. Nothing saves
The centerless. The dead can never grow.
The center is not of us. Neither time nor man
Provides the gravity, neither can
Be God. Neither can provide
The center, save He who rose again, when He had died.

THE HERE AND NOW*

August 17, 1990



Time moves, and yet is motionless.
We only know the here and now.
Our past is always with us.
Our eyes give us tomorrow
At this moment. We live astride
All times in living now.
Without the Lord the moment shrivels.
The future dies, the past grows dim.
Time then becomes a razor edge
Of nothingness, futility in motion,
A wingless flight.
How rich is time when God is God,
How fluent is the hour with life.
Then wealthy is our burdened hour,
And time is sight.

BEYOND THE STORY*

October 20, 1990



The middle time, an undone story,
Is where we live. And we leave
Before the plot unfolds, with threads
Unfinished, the tale not fully told.
We enter in the middle, and we leave
Within that middle, as minor
Characters whose work is done.
The center is not us, nor we the story.
The plot moves on beyond us.
We neither start nor end the tale.
The Power beyond us having written
Us into a moment, then moves on.
The story is too vast for us
To grasp the whole. And yet the Teller
Knows all details, forgetting none.
Unforgotten, but all completed
And all made whole in Him,
We stand beyond the story,
In eternity, beyond all time,
The story done
And victory won.

undated poems

REJOICE*



And so they die, all things, all flesh,

Rejoice.

The pride of man, his citadel,

The storied towers of vaunting flesh,

They all shall pass,

Rejoice.

A woman's thighs and fluid hips

And those old hills of home

Grow old with years and shrivel to the grave,

Rejoice.

This tree, this state, this hope, that circumstance

All fade, all wither into dust

Which still the tread of ages keeps from grass,

Rejoice.

This moment's weight is nothing on the morrow,

But O rejoice!

Its faith and joy do stand, but not upon the hour,

Nor on the day, the place, the time.

Eternity and God mark time that stands.

And so rejoice.

PRAYER



I asked Him once, I asked Him twice:
A thousand times I prayed.
His answer this: let it suffice
That grace is given, prayer is made.

It is enough my God does know
And hears my daily prayer.
His gifts shall come. His mercy flow:
I stand not idle but prepare!

O HOLY TIME*



O holy time, eternity's dear child,
The only-born of heaven's blessed light,
By God created and conferred and crowned
Be now my wealth and storied power.

Yet sand in my shoes and pebbles chaffing socks
Bring to a halt my wandered steps,
For I have stubbed my toe on the hour's rock and stumbled in eternity.
O burdened, burdened, burdened hour
Lift up your sorry shame-faced head and see
God stands upon the present hour
And Heaven's circumstance is time's own stubbled way.

RELIEF*



Call, robin,
Winter's end is here
And all the promises of God
Are leaf and bud,
How long the storm has covered me.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



ROUSAS JOHN RUSHDOONY (1916–2001) was a well-known American scholar, writer, and author of over thirty books. He held B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of California and received his theological training at the Pacific School of Religion. An ordained minister, he worked as a missionary among Paiute and Shoshone Indians as well as a pastor to two California churches. He founded the Chalcedon Foundation, an educational organization devoted to research, publishing, and cogent communication of a distinctively Christian scholarship to the world-at-large. His writing in the *Chalcedon Report* and his numerous books spawned a generation of believers active in reconstructing the world to the glory of Jesus Christ. For the last twenty-six years of his life, he resided in Vallecito, California, where he engaged in research, lecturing, and assisting others in developing programs to put the Christian Faith into action.

