

Judgment



A Hymn to God the Father

Wilt Thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which is my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt Thou forgive that sin, through which I run,
And do run still: though still I do deplore?
When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done,
For, I have more.

Wilt Thou forgive that sin by which I have won
Others to sin? and, made my sin their door?
Wilt Thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year, or two: but wallowed in, a score?
When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done,
For I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
Swear by Thyself, that at my death Thy son
Shall shine as He shines now, and heretofore;
And, having done that, Thou hast done,
I fear no more.

John Donne

Who Made a Mess?

Who made a mess of the planet
And what's that bad smell in the breeze?
Who punched a hole in the ozone
And who took an axe to my trees?

Who sprayed the garden with poison
While trying to scare off a fly?
Who streaked the water with oil slicks
And who let my fish choke and die?

Who tossed that junk in the river
And who stained the fresh air with fumes?
Who tore the fields with a digger
And who blocked my favourite views?

Who's going to tidy up later
And who's going to find what you've lost?
Who's going to say that they're sorry
And who's going to carry the cost?

Steve Turner

Judgement

Death is a gift, God's last,
Perhaps his greatest,
Setting us free to know him
As he is, and see ourselves
Uncluttered by our outward
Circumstance. And then,
Our motives bared before us,
Will we stand,
Looking God in the eye, gladly
Acknowledging our inmost selves?
Or will we understand at last
Why we pray, 'Lord, have mercy'?

Heaven

How can our language,
Formed for time and space, express
The timeless graciousness of God?
What of ourselves, how will we be
When limits to loving are removed?
To know how we are known,
The judgement past, should fill us
Not with terror but with joy.
Complete acceptance in the love of God --
Will that be Heaven?

Ann Lewin

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Love

Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,
 Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
 If I lack'd anything.

'A guest,' I answer'd, 'worthy to be here:'
 Love said, 'You shall be he.'
'I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
 I cannot look on Thee'
Love took my hand and smiling did reply,
 'Who made the eyes but I?'

'Truth Lord; but I have marr'd them: let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve.'
'And know you not,' says Love, 'Who bore the blame?'
 'My dear, then I will serve.
'You must sit down,' says Love, 'and taste my meat'
 So I did sit and eat.

George Herbert

Judgment

For I the Lord your God am an unjust God,
And fling my unfairness like a thick warm cloak
Over the cold hard naked bones of justice,
So that even in her hands you lie soft and safe:

For what do you know of justice, small one.
With your demands for fairness? Two equals two,
Love equals joy, injury requital?
But justice is far different from that

MY justice is the FIAT of creation,
But fallen creatures are too weak to bear it,
And in my love I smile in myriad judgments.
The Judgment of the rain issues in apple blossom
And a thousand more flowers; of the wind issues
In seedling forests: of ripe grain in bread,
And bread in music, and music in My praise.
O small and dear, rest in my unfairness
Whose name is mercy, and learn to reap
What you have not sown, and not to reap
What you have sown: and bless My grace
That you are spared the reaping.

Margaret Moffat Brown

The Mistake

With the mistake your life goes into reverse.
Now you can see exactly what you did
Wrong yesterday and wrong the day before
And each mistake leads back to something worse

And every nuance of your hypocrisy
Towards yourself, and every excuse
Stands solidly on the perspective lines
And there is perfect visibility.

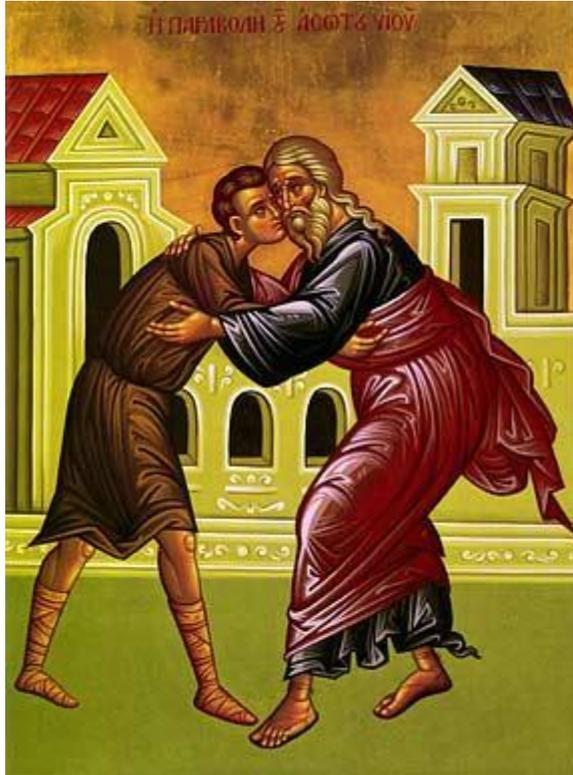
What an enlightenment. The colonnade
Rolls past on either side. You needn't move.
The statues of your errors brush your sleeve.
You watch the tale turn back — and you're dismayed.

And this dismay at this, this big mistake
Is made worse by the sight of all those who
Knew all along where these mistakes would lead —
Those frozen friends who watched the crisis break.

Why didn't they say? Oh, but they did indeed — Said with a
murmur when the time was wrong
Or by a mild refusal to assent
Or told you plainly but you would not heed.

Yes, you can hear them now. It hurts. It's worse
Than any sneer from any enemy.
Take this dismay. Lay claim to this mistake.
Look straight along the lines of this reverse.

James Fenton



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Poems: Ann Lewin, Watching for the Kingfisher: Poems and Prayers (Canterbury Press 2009); Steve Turner, Poems selected by Rebecca Winter (Lion Publishing 2002); M M Brown, New Christian Poetry ed. Alwyn Marriage (Collins)