

Ananias

A poem written to St. Paul

The Woven Way You Grow Us

What's in this old body
governor of the universe
creator of the insignificant
significant of all time
that makes you believe
it must be running still
step-stepping hard uphill
huff-huffing as you will it

It must be strings of love you weave
Oh Lord
The woven way you grow us

What's with this old body
giver of sacred stuff
disassembler of death
monarch over all thrones
that gives you pleasure to
see it pruned over time
ruined by choices of mine
limping both coarse and fine

It must be strings of love you weave
Oh Lord
The woven way you grow us

What becomes this old body
healer of wounded souls
architect of mountains and valleys
winged piercer of our hearts
that quickens your resolve to
gather our dust for resurrection
no need for further correction
finished by your holy attention

It must be strings of love you weave
Oh Lord
The woven way you grow us

The story behind Ananias' poem

A dreamy tale not certified, yet almost certainly, maybe, his

Ananias sat in an alcove between an alley and a fountain wrestling with his odd assignments from the Lord. He had spent a lifetime hearing the voice of Jesus interrupt his meals and work, urging him to stop and set off to deliver news and messages, and sometimes food, to budding disciples and converted enemies of God. Now he sat, worn out from his last trek to see Saul in Rome and deliver only his friendship.

The scraggly apostle others now called Paul was due to die. Ananias had only heard of the evangelist's adventures, not seeing him since that first encounter years earlier. A few of his letters had been read at services that Ananias had attended, and he felt the power of the Spirit as he listened.

Poets had burst upon the scene of the People of the Way in recent years, old ones like himself, inspired to quip and ponder about God's loving ways. Ananias was one of them. He delivered Paul the scabbled words below, in Greek, translated here, as a comfort to the condemned Jew.

The parchment no longer in his hands, Ananias read the lines back to himself from his mind's eye as he sat, feeling his heart's slowing patter. His days, too, were numbered. Less than one, he felt certain. His poor, tired body would probably sink him into the rocks which he sat upon, he calculated. He had no more energy.

Once figuring that his own death would come at the hands of Jewish robed men, he had watched them move from curiosity to anger, and now to paranoia. He did not know that in less than a decade the destruction of Jerusalem would end their raging leadership and send both Christians and Jews into nomadic journeys, not dissimilar to his most recent travels to Italy to find Saul. Ananias' family had come with him this time, but they waited on the outskirts on a hillside for him. He feared he would not make it to rest in their arms.

While the condemned Paul sat reading Ananias' kind muse to comfort him, marking the minutes left to him as the Roman delay of his execution had come to an end, Ananias sat dying in a curved set of stones just across the river and some hundreds of cubits from Paul's sequester.

Ananias had no notion of future generations who might know either one of them. Maybe through his poems, he hoped.

"In any case, our bones will be drawn together," Ananias murmured. "I gratefully have done what you ask. For what purpose did you need us?" he wondered.