

Synopsis of *Flashlights at the Sun: Poetry to Help Shed Some Subjects on the Light*

Flashlights is a collection of 80 poems, ranging from wry to devotional to convicting to thought-provoking to tricked-up ... for fun, challenge, contemplation, worship, and study. At the end of each poem is a series of usually six to ten Scriptural passages "for further reflection." This provides a springboard for deep discussion that makes this work ideal for educational settings (Christian middle and high schools, Christian homeschool associations, Christian colleges and universities, etc.), small-group book studies, and even church Sunday school classes.

The key to the offerings in *Flashlights* can be summed up in one word: *irony*. God's Word is rife with the spice of this implement/device/weapon/contrivance/utensil, from the notion in a parable that a mere slave, having accrued hundreds of millions of dollars of debt (the current value of 10,000 talents!) to his master, then beating a fellow slave for a pittance of a loan unpaid ... to the absurd idea that to live one must lose his life. Sadly, too often poetry proffered to the hesitant would-be consumer trends to a "SIP" of verse in one of two extremes: 1) Solipsistic-Inscrutable-Pretentious, mostly affecting the "best" (read: "highbrow") poetry of our age and of classical literature. In its frequent, "free-verse" format, if the reader "gets it" it's not worthy. For the rave reviews sought, it must elicit "feelings" but never deliver any identifiable meat – that's too "crass," "screedal!"

On the other end is 2) Stock-Insipid-Prosaic. Stars, birds, and oceans, such as they are, are fine objects for observation, but treatment too easily lapses into safe cliché zones such that little meaningful is drawn from symbols allowed to go stale. Again, but in a different way, "feelings" are tapped, but meager edification is meted out.

In one case, the "SIP" of poetry is discordant, confusing, unsatisfying; in the other it is pat, unexceptional, banal, boring. However, the entries in *Flashlights*, culled from over a thousand poems crafted over a decade, honor Christ and His Word in a rare way: slashing the iconoclasts with its own unique brand of iconoclasm ... while glorifying God. It is actually designed to be *understood* ... while *artfully* rendered. Dry humor is sprinkled throughout, though it is never meant to slight the solemn truths of Holy Writ.

The approach is putatively to make poetry truly engaging, even enjoyable! The strict adherence to meter and rhyme, rather than restricting the range of the writing (the English language is so much more versatile and accommodating than it's given credit for!), ironically (!) frees the creation to take on greater power to inject its meaning into the mind of the reader (e.g., the tongue-in-cheek fourth line of "Alter Ids" – with its hard rhyme – forces a brogue on the pronunciation of the last word as a "winking" nod to the reader for fun, something free verse is impotent to do; "winkers" are sewn throughout for the astute but are not essential for overall grasp). Consequently, many lines, even couplets or whole quatrains, become more memorable and even quotable.

The verse selections run the gamut from the tricked up (an entire chapter – 11: "Say What?") to the treatment of sin and evil (Lucifer even gets his own chapter – 8: "The Devil Wears Nada"). The goal throughout is to spur *thinking*, in a stimulating and fulfilling pursuit of *truth*. An index of chronological Biblical verses is provided at the end to aid in the exploration of favorite topics, characters, and doctrines.

Outline of *Flashlights at the Sun: Poetry to Help Shed Some Subjects on the Light*

The 80 poems of "Flashlights" are casually grouped into sixteen chapters according to loose association of themes. Samples of selected poems, rather than whole chapters, are provided following this overview. Eight illustrations are planned to be inserted where the "light" theme is touched upon. The Table of Contents of grouped poem titles is listed here as an outline of content:

CHAPTER 1: ILLUSIONS AND DELUSIONS

Hardier Canaries
Elijah Rolling Over in His Grave
Gnostalgia for the Gnostics

What Improvement I Have Seen!
Should Eden Pass This Way Again

CHAPTER 2: EITHER/OR ... AND/OR BOTH/AND

Raining Over There
Two Kinds of People
To Have His Cake and Eat It Only

God Opposing God
Either Side of Wings
On Both Sides of the Finish Line

CHAPTER 3: THAT'S NOT THE WAY IT IS

Darker than the Sun
Erato with Errata
Any Color Just as Long as it is White

Sentimental Gurney
Fierce as Lambs

CHAPTER 4: IN DIFFERENCE

Zeal with Indigestion
Iotas, Smidgens, and Scintillas
Let This Shot Glass Pass From Me?

Tuning Out the Silence
Pie in the Sty

CHAPTER 5: CLOSE CALL

Freefall on an Asteroid
Hypostatic Shock
Abrasive Laurels

Casket for the Living
Quadruple Bypass
Crowded Secret Spot

CHAPTER 6: TRIP TICKS

Sprinting on Our Knees
Stumble-Causing Head

Insufficient Sickness
Lightning Lagging

CHAPTER 7: SINKING FEELING SINKING IN

Troglodytes' Low Self-Esteem
Lady Taken Ill
Wilderness in Which to Cry

Decay by Half-Life
Misery, Inc.

CHAPTER 8: THE DEVIL WEARS NADA

Oh, That's All?
Contention Deficit Disorder

Departing in the Buff
Yelling "Flood" in Crowded Hades

CHAPTER 9: OH, GET OVER IT!

Complaint Department for the Kingdom
What Sort of God?
It's Not You, It's Me

Offending the Hermit Community
Lockcheek
Conquered Grapes

CHAPTER 10: NOW YOU SEE IT, NOW YOU DO

Justice Peeking
You Just Don't Ring a Bell
Flashlights at the Sun

Idiot Savant
You Really Had to Be There
Goodnight for Now

CHAPTER 11: SAY WHAT?

Reclining with the Laity
Tetragrammaton Unheard
Beginning to End

Explicating Expletives
My Mind's a ____
The Long and Short of S.O.S.

CHAPTER 12: STOP ME BEFORE I QUIT

Bard for Life
Phinehas, Please Hurl Your Spear
Sonnet Boom

Wait for It
Dying to Survive

CHAPTER 13: JUST UNDER THE SURFACE AND OVER THE TOP

Spelunking at the Summit
Enraptor's Flights

Sand Dunes Rising in the Stillness
Veils Still Let the Light Get Through

CHAPTER 14: DO YOU SEE A RESEMBLANCE?

Alter Ids
Mere or Merer
Crowbars into Keys

Antidote for Cures
Harbinger of Things Gone By

CHAPTER 15: HE'S AFTER YOU (ONE WAY OR ANOTHER)

Dog Star
Ruthlessness of Grace

With Whom We Have to Do
Angels (We Have Word) on High

CHAPTER 16: ADVANTAGE: HIM (I.E., US!)

Happy with the First Eight Clouds
Insured Against the Lord

Trophy Wife
Grin Reaper

Preface

Is it really that hard to see the Source of all illumination? Perhaps that Emitter is too dazzling to be seen. A bit like the sun. But none of us doubts the existence of the sun. No one takes a lantern in earnest search of that particular "truth." And all would confess that it would be futile – silly – for a seeker to use an instrument whose weak output is derived from the ultimate font of light that would swallow up the very rays being used to reveal it.

And yet ... *and yet* Maybe a handy little cylinder *can* shed some "subjects" on the Light, a few photons at a time. Granted, there is no place "where the Son don't shine," but it takes "de-scaled" eyes to make Him out. It just may be that a cool, dim beam could aid those eyes totally adjusted to the dark but unable to function yet in full, radiant brilliance. A dull pinprick of faint luminosity might be the only candlepower that a blinded man could detect. The first image of that pale guide may seem to him to be something like "a tree walking," but vision will improve with time. Eventually, some day, all these flashlights will be enabled to stare, unblinking, at the Son.

The poems to follow are offered in hopes that a few solar flares may become visible by the well-aimed projections of a "battery" of "glowworms." Some darkness is also put in the spotlight in these pages, but only in such a way that it might not cast a shadow on "reflections" made. May readers, in time, be energized to become lasers in a flashlight brigade.

Samples from *Flashlights at the Sun: Poetry to Help Shed Some Subjects on the Light*

1. "Hardier Canaries," the first poem in the manuscript, turns a common idiom (the "canary in the coal mine" meme) into an Aesopian fable of sorts. The "finished" story thus adds a moral to the imagined event recounted (*pace* PETA!).
2. "Sprinting on Our Knees" makes a humorous attempt to wed two seemingly mutually exclusive directives: the warning from Solomon that "the race does not go to the swift" and the exhortation by the Apostle Paul for Christians to run the race of life with as little hindrance (i.e., sinful "baggage") as possible, all the while "praying without ceasing." Are the two concepts compatible? This poem makes it so!
3. "Goodnight for Now" does a high-wire act of simultaneously following two opposite tracks of meaning until the final three lines, where the reader suddenly realizes that the perspective likely taken was the wrong one. The basis, and inspiration, for this poem is explained at the end of it. The real-life eulogy that gave rise to its creation is there cited. This poet happens to have had correspondence with the author of the book referenced, and permission has already been secured for the quotation used.
4. "Alter Ids" is a light "tap" on the psychiatric-industrial complex, more for amusement than anything (yet still related to a Biblical world view), but as mentioned in the synopsis of this book, it has embedded in it a passing lesson on the fact that rules, in their right construction, actually *provide* freedom, rather than *frustrate* it, just as one's following God's laws (the gospel) sets the believer "free for freedom's sake." The fourth line of the poem is a gratuitous one, not germane to the theme of the verse, but it should produce a smile of recognition when the reader realizes that the forced rhyme (with the one two

lines above it) yields a British twist on the pronunciation as hinted; a writer of "free verse" cannot do this, so is hamstrung by his own "freedom" from the law of rhyme!

5. "The Long and Short of S.O.S." is one of the "tricked-up" poems, which the young reader might regard as "cool" (inviting further interest in reading poetry). It is precisely engineered with consistent eight- and four-iambic feet. Each line that ends with "dot" represents a word that rhymes with "dash," and vice versa. An illustration has been conceived to accompany this poem that will provide a Morse code key so that the encoded words can readily be translated (provided in brackets in this sample only).

6. "To Have His Cake and Eat it Only" is a morality play. It rolls merrily along as the subject matter is "tastefully" divulged without descent into graphic revelation, but the final four lines present the chilling consequences of the seemingly fun escapade. Such rendering drives home the moral lesson in a way that will be taken seriously in the end.

7. "Raining Over There" is a pensive meditation on the fact that God causes both the sun to shine and the rain to fall on both the righteous and the unrighteous. Indeed, each of these four permutations of events can be viewed, at different times in different contexts, as welcome or unwelcome, thus resulting in *eight* perspectives. Readers of all ages may be spurred thereby to reflect on the fact there are no set answers to the unexplainable experiences of life, which God is not required to justify to His creatures.

8. "Bard for Life" serves as a reminder that a little self-deprecation is always in order, even when tongue-in-cheek. The "clueless" poet invites a snicker here.

9. "Lady Taken Ill" is a frank look at the reluctance of the church, at times, to be bold and unashamed in representing her Husband-in-waiting to His would-be subjects, yet while they remain vituperative rebels.

10. "Complaint Department for the Kingdom" is a cautionary tale, whose metaphor should sober up the whiners among us.

11. "Stumble-Causing Head" muses on the corrective needed if the true source of man's waywardness were to be carried out in the way that Jesus "recommended" for other corrupting appendages.

12. "Grin Reaper" allows the reader to end his read on an upbeat, happy note, a testament that our Redeemer has bought for us joy, even ecstasy, in the eternal package purchased.

13. "Flashlights at the Sun" illuminates the seemingly backwards concept of the lesser-light-shining-on-the-greater-light theme (see the Preface above for further explanation).

1. HARDIER CANARIES

The sweetest thing you'd want to see
So dainty, yes, and pretty, too
Was lowered in obscurity
Confined before she ever flew
They quarried veins without a fret
As long as she had always chirped
But when she stopped they hedged a bet
Some miner's loss her loss usurped

Sad fauna lovers sang the blues:
The delicate should not be sent
To caves where noxious gases ooze
And men's dull noses miss the scent
From aviaries thence deployed
In hellish holes with danger fraught
To chastened diggers thus employed
Were hardier canaries brought

The birds that pray got answers fast
Extractors turned to mutant types
Resistant kinds that well outlast
The working stiffs who murmur gripes
But tragedies would take their toll
Though music rang from every cage
There's no one left to find the coal
Or bring the seed that's paid as wage

Sad fauna lovers sang the blues:
The delicate should not be sent
To caves where noxious gases ooze
And men's dull noses miss the scent
From aviaries thence deployed
In hellish holes with danger fraught
To chastened diggers thus employed
Were hardier canaries brought

With tunnels soon bereft of crews
The hunt for fuel did reach an end
No smoke would waft up cottage flues
All pets then froze, each feathered friend

In time the sturdy were replaced
By fragile flocks of feeble breath
Til all the shafts by these were graced
Despite the tears that mark each death
From out of depths the hale they'll whisk
They're not the ones who get the post
The durable pose greater risk
So weaker ones are valued most

For further reflection ...

Joel 3:10; 1 Cor 1:27-29, 4:9-13, 12:22; 2 Cor 12:9-10, 13:4, 9; Phil 1:12-14; Heb 4:15

2. SPRINTING ON OUR KNEES

A pair of stilts to lengthen strides
And stilted boasts before the gun
Of riding high, the scoffer chides
The ones bent over for the run
Although at first all heads are bowed
Most chins thereafter elevate
And soon there's just a dusty cloud
That hides the ones off blocks quite late

Of strategies there's quite a clash
Apparent long before the start
With some spring-loaded set to dash
While we've been slower to depart
It looks as if we tripped and fell
But though we watch the "strident" breeze
When shins and track are parallel
We'll win by sprinting on our knees

Advantage goes to us who stoop
Despite the pace of those more swift
Our curving postures never droop
They serve as wings to give us lift
Our folded hands have better toes
With pleas, not hamstrings, having pull
Sharp vision's best for eyes that close
And hearts seem lighter when they're full

Of strategies there's quite a clash
Apparent long before the start
With some spring-loaded set to dash
While we've been slower to depart
It looks as if we tripped and fell
But though we watch the "strident" breeze
When shins and track are parallel
We'll win by sprinting on our knees

A praying man, 'tis such a sight
He darts ahead by holding still
While anxious ones cannot take flight
Encumbrances for him are nil

The early leaders finish last
They're finding hurdles in their lane;
Entreating stragglers, downright fast,
Are upright on another plane
Petitioners get final burst;
Of fleet of foot there's soon no trace
But passing us and into first
Are those flat prostrate on their face

For further reflection ...

Exo 17:8-13; 2 Sam 18:23; Eccl. 9:11; Isa 35:8; 1 Cor 9:24; Phil 3:14; 1 Thes 5:17

3. GOODNIGHT FOR NOW

Goodnight for now, my friend, I say farewell
I wish in fellowship we'd sit a spell
But death has early come to intervene
I will remember you though here unseen
We walked together close so many miles
I'll oft recall the times of sharing smiles
Remains remain quite vocal once interred
But conversations voiced must be deferred

I'm mourning not your body's there below
Fair flowers yet to sprout it's left to sow
Its dark environs beckon me to grieve
But harvests soon to come my thoughts relieve
I'm doing well, no tears for me should fall
My life goes on by God's kindhearted call
And when it seems this parting wasn't right
I know we'll have reunion in the Light

To sense of crushing loss I bid goodbye
I promise you no weeping of the eye
You surely know I'm gripped by no despair
I'm comforted you're fine in perfect care
His will be done whose timing's never wrong
I picture you now singing Him a song
With others gathered 'round to give Him thanks
That He has lost no member in His ranks

I'm mourning not your body's there below
Fair flowers yet to sprout it's left to sow
Its dark environs beckon me to grieve
But harvests soon to come my thoughts relieve
I'm doing well, no tears for me should fall
My life goes on by God's kindhearted call
And when it seems this parting wasn't right
I know we'll have reunion in the Light

Some things I wished I'd said will have to wait
You'll hear them yet, I know it's not too late!
An angel legion's here to see me through
Until that day we'll have our rendezvous

It makes me wonder which estate's preferred
To enter bliss or stay to share His Word
We both must be at peace and envy not
Great blessing's poured on each in either spot
Our separation's brief so do your best
Exulting 'til you've entered into rest
While here in heaven I with saints cavort
I'm glad your sojourn there in night is short

[At the funeral service for Charles H. Spurgeon on February 11, 1892, a pastor friend of the deceased, Archibald Brown, spoke the following words at the graveside: "Beloved President, Faithful Pastor, Prince of Preachers, Brother Beloved, Dear Spurgeon – we bid thee not 'Farewell,' but only for a little while 'Goodnight.' Thou shalt rise soon at the first dawn of the Resurrection Day of the redeemed. It is not the 'Goodnight' ours to bid, but thine. It is we who linger in the darkness; thou art in God's own light. Our night, too, shall soon be past, and with it all our weeping. Then, with thine, our songs shall greet the morning of a day that knows no cloud nor close; for there is no night there." (From *The One Year Book of Christian History* by E. Michael and Sharon Rusten, Tyndale House Publishers, 2003, pp. 84-85.) In following the ambiguous perspective suggested by Pastor Brown, the viewpoint of the poem above was purposely crafted not to be determinate until its final three lines.]

For further reflection ...

Luke 20:37-38; John 11:25-26, 12:26, 14:3; 2 Cor 5:6-8; Phil 1:21-23; 1 Thes 4:13; Heb 11:16

4. ALTER IDS

“Imagine this, imagined friends”
(...I said to them with no response)
“Impulsive aims with noble ends!”
(They’re British, listen...) “Not a chance!”
That rigid clique could stand a change
So ads were printed, fliers tacked
Most applicants I’d re-derange
But all had left before they’d packed

The upper brain, high-minded, delves
And clears the senses when it rids
Itself of all its others’ selves
Dismissing even alter ids
The superhero ego cheers
Analyses of psycho states
But still my blinded “I” has fears
Of reborn “me” that “alter-nates”

A knee-jerk from my RLS
Awakened me from reverie
My conscience squirmed, I must confess
It really got the best of me
Ideas spring from ids, you’d think
But quickly shrivel, not expand
When hotly questioned by a shrink
Do instincts wither on command?

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And clears the senses when it rids
Itself of all its others’ selves
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But still my blinded “I” has fears
Of reborn “me” that “alter-nates”

I had to break out from my shell
And find a second nature source
So that the first would not compel
What chiropractors dare not force

The men I was, though quite annoyed
Split personalities (that stung!)
I chickened out, avoiding Freud
To hatch a better egg (foo, Jung!)
This new man has evicted most
Now whittled down from two or three
Inviting in a single Host
To safely alter my ID

For further reflection ...

Rom 6:6, 7:15-25, 13:14; Gal 2:20; Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:9-10; 1 Pet 2:11

5. THE LONG AND SHORT OF S.O.S.

He wasn't "dashing" in appearance but He had a plan so brash
To sign His father's "dotted" line, the ink He spilled a bloody jot
He gave it quite a dot-dot-dot, dot-dot-dot-dot, dash-dash-dash, dash [shot]
So dreams of saints won't turn to dot-dash, dot-dot-dot, dot-dot-dot-dot [ash]

Response won't take eternity; He always shows up in a flash
The sacrifice upon the cross was made for all your sins to blot
To pay your debts He gave it all He's dash-dash-dot, dash-dash-dash, dash [got]
He's got the dash-dot-dash-dot, dot-dash, dot-dot-dot, dot-dot-dot-dot [cash]

Unsinkable His saving yacht
Plucks swimmers lest they flail and thrash
All high and dry on heaven's plot
Unlike the ones whose teeth will gnash

To Him you're more than just a tiny dash-dot-dot, dash-dash-dash, dash [dot]
He gave His life to spare your own and always thinks of you a lot
Although He seems far off He swiftly comes to head off every crash
He'll make a quick dash-dot-dot, dot-dash, dot-dot-dot, dot-dot-dot-dot [dash]

When trouble's brewing and it's so dot-dot-dot-dot, dash-dash-dash, dash [hot]
He is the Life Preserver sent to float you when you're in a knot
And you will not be under water; you won't even feel a splash
You're not just dash, dot-dash-dot, dot-dash, dot-dot-dot, dot-dot-dot-dot
[trash]

Unsinkable His saving yacht
Plucks swimmers lest they flail and thrash
All high and dry on heaven's plot
Unlike the ones whose teeth will gnash

To Him you're more than just a tiny dash-dot-dot, dash-dash-dash, dash [dot]
He gave His life to spare your own and always thinks of you a lot
Although He seems far off He swiftly comes to head off every crash
He'll make a quick dash-dot-dot, dot-dash, dot-dot-dot, dot-dot-dot-dot [dash]

His puffy vests support your load
And rescue boats are out in force
He will rush in; He knows the "code"
If you will signal true re-"Morse"

With angel watches synchronized they're always right there on the "dot"
He's Johnny-on-the- dot-dot-dot, dot-dash-dash-dot, dash-dash-dash, dash
[spot]
So "dash" the thought He'll leave you drowning swirling in a boiling pot
Perhaps He will forget you in your need ... dash-dot, dash-dash-dash, dash!
[not!]

For further reflection ...

Gen 49:13; Psa 107:23-32; Matt 8:23-27, 14:22-33; Acts 27:20-44; 2 Cor 11:25

6. TO HAVE HIS CAKE AND EAT IT ONLY

How she loves that “Honey Pie!”
Endearing but there’s no true filling
Thinnest wedge and then goodbye
A “flaky crust,” he’s so unwilling
Then she finds that he’s half-baked
No deep-dish pastry or soft custard
But “de-floured” dry mix caked
On ungreased pans, it’s all he’s mustered

Eat and run is all he wants
The nuking’s fast but so’s the cooling
She’d like “long drives” but he “bundts”
“Got milk?” “Buy cow!” “Come on! No fooling?”
Then she gives away the farm
And wonders why she’s sad and lonely
As he ponders: what’s the harm
To have his cake and eat it only?

It’s collapsed! She melts in “tiers”
And all she feels is cold as icing
Though it’s thick the sugar smears
Then drips off every piece he’s slicing
What a recipe he’d foist
With cheap ingredients low-costing
Sweet! He coos and likes it moist
But merely samples bowls of frosting

Eat and run is all he wants
The nuking’s fast but so’s the cooling
She’d like “long drives” but he “bundts”
“Got milk?” “Buy cow!” “Come on! No fooling?”
Then she gives away the farm
And wonders why she’s sad and lonely
As he ponders: what’s the harm
To have his cake and eat it only?

Sit with her and don't consume
Like empty calorie confection
Close your mouth and "leave some room"
No grab-and-go with no affection

Served dessert, he'll skip the meal
Not bothering with good nutrition
Kisses cause his lips to seal
Accomplishing his only mission
No commitment, what's at stake?
He's satiated, why now tarry?
Then she screams, "That takes the cake!"
If only first she'd made him marry

For further reflection ...

Rom 13:13; 1 Cor 6:18; 2 Cor 12:21; 1 Thes 4:3; 1 Tim 5:6; 2 Tim 3:6; Heb 13:4

7. RAINING OVER THERE

Inclement is the distant scene
Where angry clouds are drab
The bleak horizon's looking mean
As lightning's needles stab
Opaque the gray streaks lash that land
And pity here I feel
Because my air is calm and bland
Will all their gullies heal?

Inscrutable are weather's moods
But dry my eyes are not
The far-off climate gloats or broods
But dousing is their lot
The pallor of my sunny sky
Now fades from bright and fair
I'm never told the reason why
It's raining over there

Outlying vales another day
Midst welcome shouts are drenched
Their foul debris thus washed away
And dusty thirsting quenched
Abundant showers meads caress
In envy here I pout
They've been relieved of deep duress
While I endure my drought

Inscrutable are weather's moods
But dry my eyes are not
The far-off climate gloats or broods
But dousing is their lot
The pallor of my sunny sky
Now fades from bright and fair
I'm never told the reason why
It's raining over there

Have they been cursed or grandly blessed?
Has wickedness been paid?
Or have rewards been there assessed
For righteous gains they've made?

Precipitation knows no bounds
The good and bad get wet
As heaven's nimbus makes its rounds
The terms of witness met
I stare no more but turn my gaze
In gratitude to squalls
Of cleansing sheets that clear my haze
When here the mercy falls

For further reflection ...

Lev 26:4; Job 2:9-10; Jer 5:24, 14:22; Ezek 34:26; Amos 4:7; Matt 5:45; Acts 14:16-17; Jas 5:7

8. BARD FOR LIFE

My doggerel I briskly walked
And saw that all the neighbors balked
About my mutt's bad breed they've talked
It's up to low-class status chalked
His waggish tales, I quipped, were droll
They've charged my verse uplifts the soul
So votes were cast upon a scroll
They read as drums began to roll....

"To join our club you must refine
Each stanza, take a morbid line
Until your readers are supine
Glad notions you must undermine"
Society for poets "dead"
Grants memberships; was I ahead?
"You're bard for life!" they sternly said
So tears of joy were what I shed

Once loosed, my canine loves to bark
Just lively yips, he's on a lark
He's never liked those meanings dark
But plays in every well-lit park
The experts though don't want a dose
Of happy themes, preferring gross
That bring on sobs and sighs morose
Announcement seemed so bellicose....

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Each stanza, take a morbid line
Until your readers are supine
Glad notions you must undermine"
Society for poets "dead"
Grants memberships; was I ahead?
"You're bard for life!" they sternly said
So tears of joy were what I shed

So odd the tension in that room
Such cheerful news just brought on gloom
Though my award made losers fume
Ecstatic leaps I did resume

It seemed they hated rigid rhyme
With rhythms firm declared a crime
Ambivalent on thoughts sublime
They're melancholy all the time
But Fido's faithful just as billed
And warm reception's bound to build
To mordant "mugs": with mirth be filled!
I'm now forever in your guild!

For further reflection ...

Psa 5:8-9, 42:10; Luke 6:26, 10:20; 1 Cor 1:17, 1:26-29; 1 Pet 2:23, 3:14-17; Jude 10, 16

9. LADY TAKEN ILL

Expected was the queen-to-be
Who's tarried at the throne
Though most despise her royalty
A woman they'd disown
Uprisings foment in the realm
Where few respect the crown
Unless it's witnessed at the helm
With manifest renown

A scepter in her hand's been placed
Acknowledged not by most
And by her silence some have based
Rebellion, hear them boast
A word from her the crowd might stir
Or else the masses still
Dissent will rage if she'd demur
The lady taken ill

Inaction brings on more travail
It sullies all her work
Protesters think they might prevail
Insurgents go berserk
The longer she extends delays
The more they mutiny
So thus behind the scene she stays
Avoiding scrutiny

A scepter in her hand's been placed
Acknowledged not by most
And by her silence some have based
Rebellion, hear them boast
A word from her the crowd might stir
Or else the masses still
Dissent will rage if she'd demur
The lady taken ill

She utters no disturbing word
Pretending to be sick
For lack of any censure heard
Revolts raise smoke that's thick

Resisters write outrageous laws
By popular demand
Preposterous with judgment flaws
That poison all the land
Behind a curtain yet she'll hide
Defending not her courts
And when her Husband fools deride
She offers no retorts

For further reflection ...

Ezek 3:17-21; Mark 8:38; John 12:43; Acts 20:20, 27; Rom 1:16; Rev 2:18-29, 3:14-22

10. COMPLAINT DEPARTMENT FOR THE KINGDOM

With smiling face he greeted me
To hear with eagerness my woe
He listened with great sympathy
And took a survey so he'd know
The problems that I'd lately had
Assuring me there was a fix
He wrote long notes upon his pad
Predicaments he said he'd nix

His queries I did not expect
Were troubles like what Joseph knew?
Or more like Job's? Would I reflect?
Say, Stephen, at whom stones they threw?
"Please state the trial, name the saint"
Responses he did gently coax
By asking questions at Complaint
Department for the Kingdom folks

Was I like John in exile long
For testimonies he'd regale?
"Explain where you have suffered wrong;
Like John who lost his head in jail?"
He merely fished for just a hint:
The crushing headache Samson felt?
Or Jeremiah's cistern stint?
Perhaps like Paul I'd scored a welt?

His queries I did not expect
Were troubles like what Joseph knew?
Or more like Job's? Would I reflect?
Say, Stephen, at whom stones they threw?
"Please state the trial, name the saint"
Responses he did gently coax
By asking questions at Complaint
Department for the Kingdom folks

He brought a huge "Disgruntled" sack
And said, "I've got 'returns' for *you*:
A daily cross that fits your back
So pick it up to get you through"

It's not what I had come to get:
Big restitution for my pains
Solution surely was all wet
I cut him off at talk of "chains"
"Oh, one more thing," I weakly dared
"Is there resemblance you can make?
With what great man am I compared?"
"Er, Jonah with a 'belly ache'"

For further reflection ...

Gen 50:20; Judg 16:21; Job 1:20-22; Jer 38:6; Mark 6:24-28; Acts 7:59-60; 1 Cor 11:23-30;
Heb 12:3-11; Rev 1:9

11. STUMBLE-CAUSING HEAD

On one hand ... I could get along
A hook where fingers should belong
Though typing's hard with "forkéd tong"
For picking teeth you can't go wrong
A stub won't help me "shake a leg"
I'd mosey on with wooden peg
On pole-vault vows I'd then renege
With just one foot I'd sit and beg

If it offends it must be thrown
Appendage used when wrong's been sown
In hell it does no good to own
The cause by which to sin I'm prone
But that's not where my evil's bred
I ought to chop the source instead
That surest cure I'd greatly dread
To toss my stumble-causing head

I'd "see me through" with just one eye
Though half my tears I couldn't cry
A pirate patch would get me by
At least I'd face at most one sty
I'd soon run out of sets of two
Where even twins seem much too few
The noggin's just a one-man crew
No back-up's there to get me through

If it offends it must be thrown
Appendage used when wrong's been sown
In hell it does no good to own
The cause by which to sin I'm prone
But that's not where my evil's bred
I ought to chop the source instead
That surest cure I'd greatly dread
To toss my stumble-causing head

The best solution brings on fright;
To grasp or walk or keep my sight
Is not the key to my delight
But losing life's the cruelest plight

This leaves me in the direst strait
Will henchmen me decapitate?
Detaching from this trunk my pate?
No "sever-al" good choices wait
Yet now I learn my "Head" did fall
I tripped Him up; He lost it all
But with two ears I'll hear Him call
There seeing, clasping, standing tall!

For further reflection ...

Gen 6:5; Job 15:35; Prov 18:2; Isa 53:8; Matt 18:8-9; Mark 7:20-23; Rom 8:6; Eph 4:17-19

12. GRIN REAPER

They don't show his face just an empty black robe
This guest uninvited could freak "morte-phobe"
At first I was leery but soon rather blithe
Since no one got cut when he wielded his scythe
It's sadness or dread that he conjures up most
A "gasper" for some but a kind friendly ghost
A peaceful quaint farmer who's looking for crops
Mere frowns that his weapon most frequently lops

The giggle he muffled just gave me a tickle
My funny bone shook when he rattled his sickle

Grin Reaper has entered to cultivate laughs
He keeps the wit sharp at the end of his staffs
Elation spills out from his bountiful sheaves
Ecstatic rejoicing goes on when he leaves
His visit brings terror to sowers of wrath
But joy is the yield of his glad aftermath
The corpses of fear-mongers heap up in piles
But all that he's after is harvesting smiles

To silos it's life that he's longing to bring
His pest-control Agent has stripped death of sting
The fields he was sent to were drooping from gloom
Expecting his advent meant coming of doom
The mood lifted quickly in happy surprise
Though no one could make out the glint in his eyes
They chuckled to think that his form had no head
But spirits unseen get confused with the dead

The giggle he muffled just gave me a tickle
My funny bone shook when he rattled his sickle

Grin Reaper has entered to cultivate laughs
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His presence is meant to send frightfulness falling
It's always good news when that angel comes calling

I no longer run or let muscles get tense
That good-humor patron has cheer to dispense
With bushels of corn and a countenance good
(And "ear-to-ear" grin when I pull back his hood)

For further reflection ...

Job 8:21; Psa 126:2, 5; Hos 10:12, 13:14; Amos 9:13-15; Luke 24:37-39; Rev 14:13-16

13. Flashlights at the Sun

The rumors made their way around and spread to certain camps:
The circulating legend's true!
Some teams were prepped to check reports with plenty volts and amps
For documenting camera crew
They didn't want to scare off any specimen they'd find
So spots and floodlights had to stay
Then off they went with visions of some image in their mind
Small batteries would pave the way

The mythic orb was said to ply the skies above their heads
But looky-loos were sternly warned:
Those ultraviolet rays will rip your corneas to shreds!
And amateur attempts were scorned
With smoky goggles expert eyes were shielded from the burn
But how could filtered glimpses stun?
So when it was supposed to rise these scouts were told to turn
Their puny flashlights at the sun

In darkness they could hardly know just where to point and click
But witnesses who'd seen the sight
Implored them all to drop their beacons – was it just a trick?
They gripped them harder in their fright
They wanted most to outline every slight and faint detail
So switches all were set to max
And back-up alkalines were there in case the old should fail
Both Duracells™ and Rayovacs™

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Our Helios sends dazzling shafts His own can well perceive
His brilliance shines in every stream
But those with shaded faces here His glow cannot receive
They'll see it in the eyes that gleam

His chosen "Solar panels" all get "juiced" in Sunday pews
With currents that will never quit
And though His candlepower's great the blinded miss clear views
But some might make out bulbs He's lit
The shrouded souls can never handle high intensity
So lesser lights must show the way
He bids them point their inner beams at Him so some might see
It always brightens up His day

For further reflection ...

Matt 5:14-16, 13:43; Luke 1:78-79; 2 Cor 3:17-18, 4:6; Eph 5:13-14; Phil 2:15