

While It Is Yet Day
The Quarto Press, 1977

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR SURVIVAL

1. We will have no other world but this.
2. We will not raise hopes of life on other planets to which we could escape. What we now do will affect the future, from country to country and planet to planet, from galaxy to galaxy, even to the furthest constellations. For the pollution of one place will be visited on another and the soundness of one place will benefit the whole universe.
3. We will not speak lightly of the human.
4. We will remember to allow for fallow times.
There is a rhythm of withdrawal and return in the universe, which we disturb at our peril.
5. We will honour those who have built, planned and worked for the good that we enjoy.
6. We will not destroy the earth.
7. We will not pervert the forces of creation.
8. We will not waste or plunder the resources of the world.
9. We will not justify exploitation.
10. We will not create for ourselves unreal needs.

We will love the world,
in its variety and abundance,
and will work for its future with our utmost powers,
and we will care also for the community of mankind.

INCANTATION

Not this sinking of the sun
in rainbow clouds
at Arisaig,
nor the darkly-gentian sea
and eagle-headed
Sgurr of Eigg;

Not the flowing cormorant

from wave of sky
to cloud of sea,
nor the splashes of white sand
in rock black
severity;

Not the salmon-yellow shells
sipped in and out
the shining tide,
nor the mauve and tawny flowers
wind-washed
on the mountain-side;

These are blessings for the sense,
but inwardly
I turn toward
people through the centuries here
sea-worn
rock-hard;

Battered between land and sea,
harvested
by sword and fire,
the legends of their tragedy
loom like islands
faint, now clear;

Now as the sun suffuses all
in golden blood
and swords of light
I pledge my feeble watching love
to those whose lives
are here by right.

A POEM ABOUT A CONCRETE POEM

I shall make a concrete poem
a place by art designed
where the stones and sand of life
a mould may find.

I shall open it by day
to the sunshine, and by night,
when it will be a lighted place

where people will find light.

I shall fill the place with books,
with books of poetry
wherein the very self of things
speaks its reality.

And through links and lines between them
seep like irrigation
waters from the deep earth,
the flow of imagination.

It will fertilise the thinking
and nourish into being
this intention for a concrete
poem that I am seeing.

The words of the poem
are people coming in and out
who in their intermixing
will make a work of art.

But the concrete of this poem
will never be quite set;
it will be for ever forming
that which isn't perfect yet.

A fusion of diversity
within a new creation,
a many-sided goddess
in one ecstatic person.

It is ecstasy of grace,
yet concrete as I say,
making personal the matters
that happen everyday.

The poem making concrete
the energies of grace
which generate the personal
through shapes of sacrifice.

I shall make a concrete poem,
a place by art designed
where the poetry of persons
is created in kind.

THE NEW GESTALT

(the liberated woman looks at the lotus)

It is virtually impossible for the well-educated person to think of himself as a complex, interlocking series of scintillating and pulsating energy-fields (George Meek, quoted by Lyall Watson in *The Romeo Error*.)

The Renaissance is over:

we can un-cling the fingers of causation
and unbend the thumbs of organisation;
we can leave that dark woodscape of hierarchies,
input, output, dialectic,
pseudo-Socratic computation,
classical classification,
caesarian sections,
absence of error as highest truth.

The Renaissance is over:

we are in transit in the back of beyond;
the world has put out its soul
and waits for the New Enlightenment:
the unblinding and release of sight,
undogmatic dance with both hands free,
movement in open space towards the future
towards Buddha-Compassion
Christ-Coming –
as we leave the Self we have owned
up in the treetops
on its huge thick trunk of objectivity
and dare to jump free
Into WHAT NEW CREATURE!

The Renaissance is over:

with Man as measurer,
Platonic myths of divide and rule,
feasibility studies in how to be human
as separate entities born to die
but first demanding abundant rights;
subdivisions spread and multiply
wild cancer-cultures, exact replicas
immortality in blue jeans
threatened by Bluebeard with a bomb:
and all peter out at a Hayflick limit in anonymity.

The Renaissance is over:

airy rationality, earthy self-satisfaction;
now we learn to breathe
with heartbeat and hormone,
peace beyond proving,
that which makes good and comes true
like water, fire, blood transfusion;
like Water, for it circulates constantly
between earth and sky
horizontal, vertical, spiral, mutual;
like Fire, for combustion to change us;
like Blood, unique in every person
yet transfusable, usable.

There is prophecy in pre-life,
in plant, in person,
that breaks through fear-barriers,
diversifies, intensifies,
mates, re-creates.

Let there be light:

epiphanies, divalys, star-festivals,
when we are trapped in our stars
not surrendered to our situation,
nor striving to change it
but using it to leap
torches to run with and transfer.

Let there be light:

a pattern of points
like acupuncture of airports at night,
tabernacles, transfiguration,
Candlemas, Easter;
our haloes, our auras, our suns, our moons

Let there be light:

light – space – clearings in the wood;
tantra, tantra, thread of the necklace,
the open way, the way open
into life-in-love broken,
open tents, open fields,
space for atonement.

Beyond appearance, beyond ideas,
beyond form or emptiness,
spectrums, circles, arcs of energy,

annunciation, initiation;
driven, descended from high Surmang
Tibetan teachings for our time,
knowledge burned, hammered, beaten
into wise gold.

WHILE IT IS YET DAY

Nuclear scientists,
like laboratory rats
run the maze of arguments
that prove
we must develop death.

But the mind
even of rats,
has a mechanism
to make it err
however well-conditioned.

The deviation
of one nuclear scientist
could set free
four hundred thousand
in the world's laboratories.

The Sabbath of science
is for Man,
but the laws of economics
do not permit us
to do good.

If one voice breaks silence,
if one hand refuses
to work destruction –
Who shall prevent us
from saving the world?

LIFE'S SUMMERTIME

It is not yesterday that I would have
return, to pioneer again that path

I cut. Nor care I for the aftermath
which hedges round the present life I live,
narrowing down the choices I must take
toward the future, and to my decline.
And yet without each effort now of mine
the world may be a future none can make.

I choose the sense of having loved to be
alive, and draw in fragrance from the past;
I balance amiably on present flowers
as each new moment sets another free;
and while the buzz of my intentions lasts
I build my honeycomb of future powers.

WINTER SUNRISE IN EDINBURGH

The huge pale sun behind the Braid Hills
rising
glints on the city in wands of slanting light

The threadbare half-moon hangs above
Corstorphine
where winter branches stretch and silhouette

With sunrise in her hair the girl Queen
Mary
rode to dying Darnley out at Kirk o' Field

On such a frosty forenoon Cockburn left
the lawcourts
experienced the New Town, memorised the Old

Singing a cold cadence Fergusson
the poet
shivered down the Canongate with rhythm in his feet

And citizens of Edinburgh on this very
morning
set to partners, join hands and skip down the street

SNOW FOR SAINT VALENTINE

Soft yet grips me
white but burning
light and lies thickly
deep and dies quickly
silent returning.

Tempts and entices
to frolic and play
drifts but encloses
covers but buries
those gone astray.

Wherever the winds blow
flickers and dances,
sets green things a-grow
and slight streams a-flow
with darling fancies.

See how the love-flakes shine
pure, ever new –
each footmark of mine
treads to my Valentine
over the snow.

GOOD FRIDAY

Death has come to us with Spring;
stillborn the hope, the promise;
the slow maturing has slumped
to nothing,
the fierce fecundity
to failure.

When winter brings us barrenness
it comes as for a season;
we rest in the space of remaining
empty,
own the pain of the
impossible.

But death in Spring is revolution
it changes the direction;
primeval purpose checked
is thus diverted

into a wealth of wasted
passion.

This death that comes to us in Spring
has broken through our boundaries
to open a way into rejected
talents
and revive the roots of
resurrection.

HOSPITALISATION

Illness tossed you over the rails
of our world.
The huge hospital swallowed you
then swam away
to go through its routines with you
deep and distant.

I could no more than paddle in
that element
but came often to watch from the shore
and scan the surface.

After a secret number of days
and hidden nights,
after fathomless hours enclosed
in the whale's belly
floating on tides of attention
and murmurs of movement,
the hospital will spit you out again
at my feet.

The sand is suddenly swept with
scuttling pebbles
sprays of scum and shells
as you come up on it.
I begin to lead you home, only
to discover
we are on a foreign shore.

WITH GRATITUDE TO INDIA

I was a baby in India
born among dark eyes and thin limbs
handled by slim fingers
bounced by bangles
and held high among the turbans,
surrounded by the light sari
black knot of hair
suggestion of spice,
wrapped up only by those songs
that spiral the spirit out of the dust
and lay it down again to sleep.

I crawled among bright toenails
ticked off ants by the gross
or touched the lizard in his cold quickness;
toddled past wilting bougainvillea
to watch hoopoes on the mai-dan,
caught flashes of minivet, oriole and bulbul
and peered up into huge flowers
on tree after tree
as I broke into their shade.

Never left with a strange
babysitter
I was part of the parties, parades,
the bazaar,
could swallow the stench and listen
to the poetry of bargaining;
heart's desire was to drink cool water
or chew a sugar-cane
and flap off the flies.

I had dysentery, sickness, paleness
boiled buffalo milk,
no welfare vitamins, no plastic pants.
The sun was a fiend, the rain was a friend
the stars only just out of reach.

Expressions were always changing:
a smile latent in sorrow
and a love in anger;
tears happened with laughter
but patience presided over every mood.

To have first found the world

in abundant India
is my life's greatest privilege.

OASIS

When we were young together by the Nile,
irrigated by our passion,
growing in the thoughts that fertilized,
constantly sunned by ideals,
it was the dawning of our Age.

You were a god and I goddess;
you were a king and I a priestess;
together we became creation;
with the cycles and rhythms of earth and sky
we held the cosmos in unity.

Then separation led us through the desert
and the centuries of toil,
of struggling for independence, of choosing
one way at the cost of another
in the building of our Age.

You were prince and I a peasant;
you were learned and I illiterate;
separate, we hardly existed;
trying to control part of creation
we upset the cosmic unity.

Strangely we came upon the same oasis;
raised our eyes from drinking deep
to recognise each other in the losing
of our painful, self-bound consciousness
in that maturing of our Age.

You were a maker and I a mother;
you a scientist and I a poet.
Together we recycled creation,
discovered the fire energy
that composes cosmic unity.

We no longer dread the dying or the desert
the disintegration or the distance,

for we have felt the movement towards sunset,
the breaking-through to cosmic ecstasy
and consummation of our age.

BLACK GODS OF OLYMPIA

Olympia 1975
the gods are black.

Apollo
chariots over hurdles,
the spokes of the sun
turning in his black body.

Peerless the pace of
Hermes,
and black as storm-clouds
the wing-strides of his speed.

Atlas bears his own
black weight
and lifts the slavery of centuries
on his victorious shoulder.

As if through dark jungle
young Artemis
swings and vaults and runs and leaps;
virgin-black,
she hunts her own success.

Only Poseidon has not achieved blackness.
The water he controls
with fishy flesh,
or he becomes a horse
to steal some thunder;
and cool-blooded Norse gods
race panting from pole to pole
perpetually.

The gods of the Parthenon
were sportively cruel;
men carved them in stone
to win favour from earth and sky
in love and war.

But new gods
have arisen, when men's own cruelty
extorted favours from land and sea
for cash and conquest.

The carvings were in flesh,
the gods in chains,
whose offspring today –
immortal Olympians –
are worshipped with
earth- bronze,
 moon-silver,
 SUN-GOLD.

FOOD

Jesus said 'my meat is to do the will of my Father.' (John 4:34)

Another's *will* is my meat.
all the food that I eat
is *will* I accept for my own;

though I screamed with colic
in pain and in panic
for days and nights of rebellion.

The steel spoon threatens;
spoonfed, the gluttons
take any kind of medicine;

I must starve rather
than swallow the Other
whose will is my destruction.

Fruits here and there stolen
are strictly forbidden
in case they prove to be poison;

I must risk dying
or stomach the lying
that feeds me on the inhuman.

In Egypt the slaves
knew how the flesh craves

when the *will* is deprived of freedom;

my bread shall be stones;
my teeth and my bones
shall forcefully enter the kingdom.

The salt desert water
has not lost its savour
preserves my will from corruption;

let his will be my meat
that builds me complete
a body for resurrection.

SOME ASPECTS OF THE NEO-CHRISTIANS

THE WELFARE STATE

Rather than serve two masters
no-one serves anyone at all.
The Welfare State
takes thought for our lives –
what we shall eat and drink and wear,
but does not consider
the lilies of the field
for sufficient unto the day
is the evil of their morrow.

PRIME MINISTERS & PRESIDENTS

Turn the other cheek
so quickly
that the first is never struck.

INSURANCE FIRMS

Lay up treasure for themselves
on earth
because others are afraid
of moth, rust and thieves.

TERRORISTS

Rather than be angry
with their brother,
they will kill him
without cause.

THE OIL SITUATION

The wise
sell their oil
to the foolish
who run off
without waiting for the bridegroom.

MINISTERS & CLERGY

Rather than appear hypocrites
they do not pray or fast
at all.

CHILDREN

Everyone suffers them
so much
that they tend to lose
that kingdom-of-heaven quality.

ABORTION

If your body offend you
it is of no profit
to pluck out the unoffending part.

SUN WORSHIP

Jesus Christ, Superstar
we worship what we think you are –
you are the Sun, the Superstar.

Perpetual energy and fusion,
fire, combustion and fission,
magnetism, radiation;

in the whole spectrum
light of light,
in the whole process
god of god.

We dance you through your stages,
born each day in weakness,
dying each night in blood.

You descend to darkness
and rise to light,

you reach your zenith
with perfect timing.

Time is to count your movements;
seasons flow from your moods,
no man escapes your judgement.

With blazing eyes,
revolving arms,
circles, chariots, discs,
boats, horses, haloes . . .

Your priests are disc jockeys,
astronauts, matadors,
Red Guards, Van Gogh . . .

You are the judge, the king, the emperor.
The whole earth turns in your fingers
rhythmically seduced.

Now we have outgrown stonehenges,
pyramids, obelisks, golden temples,
static symbols.

Now we are tired of love-feasts,
golden robes and shining jewels,
artistic devices.

Now we have reached and mastered your secrets.
We build you idols
by stealing your substance,
squandering your gold.

We worship your infinite
powers of destruction.
In ecstatic frenzy
we gash ourselves,
tear out our hearts,
sacrifice the earth.

King of kings, and Lord of lords,
Sun God Superstar,
H-bomb, that's what you are!

OLD AGE AND DYING

One cup you did not taste
Jesus,
the cup of old-age,
of waiting to die
helpless and in pain.

You, with all your powers
Jesus,
of mind and body,
faced death
in throbs of blood and sweat.

Your friends left you alone
and slept,
then ran away
from the violence
of strength meeting death.

But our beloved dies
slowly,
in extreme weakness,
in distress,
in semi-consciousness.

We can watch and pray
the days and nights,
but we pray
not for the cup to pass
but to be quickly drained.

Pour into him now
Jesus;
for you became death
the cup becomes you
drop by drop.

It is finished now
for him.
He has made the final
utmost effort
to hold the cup,

with weak fingers
Jesus,

and spent mind,
panting and thirsting
to drink you in death.

POEM WITH A PURPOSE

God knows – I'm not a poet for pleasure –
shut up in the workshop of my mind
experimenting in the science of words,
in language for its own sake.

God knows – I want my poems read –
not for literary fame, or fame at all
which would be pesticide to the poetic germ
allowing only those thick weeds to grow
which have become immune to it.

God knows – a poet is a messenger,
a fire-engine at full siren –
and poems are as dangerous to dump
as radioactive waste!

God knows – a poem is a thermal thing
that has been set alight and pulses on
until the heat contained within its form
has been conveyed, converted.

God knows – this is a poem for the world
and I press-ganged by love to work at it.
Poems will be made to serve some purpose
if they have no purpose of their own.

Science has been wielded as a weapon,
Religion has been made a slave,
Art has been manipulated.
We are not free in being purposeless,
but with purpose ever calling, pulling us.

Would we were free to show what we are –
the clear and colourful image of God,
creating and intending good things,
releasing love by loving,
transforming hate by suffering.

What a love awakened the atom –

a love for the world like God's,
sufficient to split up good and evil.

But ancient rocks of Caledonia
because they solidified for centuries,
Rocks of Ages,
these will be made into harbours for death.

Which of us wants, with reason,
by breeding evil to hatch the good?
to avoid the pinching of poverty
by stockpiling slow, unnatural deaths?

We drive ahead on the motorway
of manufactured needs with NO U TURNS
unless we reach a roundabout Repentance
or opt out on the verge.

God knows how the double-glazing
of our double-thinking deludes us
while we keep indoors, indoors.

There is a darkroom of the mind
where poets may develop words
while cathedrals of nuclear power are built
and skilled technicians are ordained as priests.

Did I elect the scientist as priest,
the public-relation man as politician,
the salesman as my evangelist,
the economist to extort my confession?

God knows – I have something to confess:
I have listened to patter about happiness
supermarketed in 57 varieties –
while the price was being paid by someone else.

God – do not bring us to the test –
Let there be no more tests,
no more going on testing until the final test,
the one more slight accident . . .

Your kingdom is not paved with uranium,
but plutonium is a perfect hell
bubbling perpetually to the power often.

Deliver us from everlasting evil,
from a monstrous mutation within mankind

of the image in which we are made.

Now you know – I'm not a poet for pleasure –
For happiness I would not lift a finger
All I care for, all I work for, now, hereafter,
is a world in which children can play.

Poem – you are composed to agitate,
to ask what on earth the earth is for
and the mind of man when unmindful?

Our motorway will reach no destination
because its destination is extinction.

I will campaign for a campsite,
a Workcamp for the New Way
where peace is made through peace
and a loving world through loving the world.

ISLANDER

Long-legged heron
crested in head-scarf
flapping solitary along the road;
transparent as shells your skin,
wrinkled like rocks,
quiet as a calm sea.

All that you do not need
and have not craved
leaves you elegant
and single-minded
as you dive into pure waters
and exult in your daily catch.

THE GO-BETWEEN GOD

(From the title of a book about the Holy Spirit by John Taylor)

Give me space to go-between
in spaces that look foolish.
Grant me place to come unseen
in places of most weakness.

Let me gently press upon
the pressures of your illness.
Allow me to stumble on
your barricades of hardness.

Find me a room to find you in
when you are crowded out
where slowly labour may begin
and new birth come about.

Empty a space for me to fill –
unconsciousness or death,
the womb, the stable, the hill,
the seed, the light, the breath.

Some area of passivity,
diminishment, distress,
incompleteness, inactivity,
failure to progress.

Neither before nor after
the present goes between,
leads into the future,
leaves what might-have-been.

God between-us-going
keeps us going by becoming
in-between-us ever growing
us-in-new-God-forming.