

*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.