

SONS

*Though a man and his son begin as one
They must always end as two.
Like it or no, that's the way things go;
As surely for me and for you.*

The philosopher's son, when only a lad,
Looked up at his father and said to him "Dad,
Have you ever met God?"
The philosopher looked at his son and smiled,
He took some pains to explain to the child
That the finest minds had been able to show
That human beings can never know
If there is a God. The boy said "Oh!"

Said the preacher's son, on his father's lap,
Giving his father's chin a tap,
"Daddy, where does God live?"
The preacher waved his hand at the sky
"He lives up there in Heaven-on-High.
He lives in Heaven, and so will we,
Your mother, your brother, and you and me.
In Heaven Above". The boy said "I see!"

The philosopher's son, while still a youth,
Asked his dad about Absolute Truth
Saying, "Where is it found?"
His father grinned, and replied with a hoot
"There's no such thing as an Absolute.
Everything's relative don't you see?
Forget your Eternal Verity."
Murmured the boy, "Can this really be?"

The preacher's son, when his mother died,
Lifted his tear-streaked face and cried
"Why did God let it happen?"
The preacher held his son to him tight.
His jaw was clenched, and his face was white
As he muttered that ancient preacher's song:
"He's testing us son. Have faith. Be strong."
The young man whispered "It must be wrong."

The philosopher's son said, at twenty-three,
"Behind this fantastic complexity
There must be a God."
The older man said "All is merely and just
The action of time upon cosmic dust.
The concept of God is a tempting one but
The Razor of Occam quite clearly cuts
Out the need for God." His son said "Nuts!"

Said the preacher's son, at twenty-one,
"Why are we damned before we've begun?
I think God is a cheat.
If Man is by nature a creature of sin
The deck is unfairly stacked against him."
The preacher hissed "Be quiet, you fool,
Or the Devil will grab your tongue and pull
You down to Hell." His son said "Bull!"

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A Happy Symmetry

There is no explanation but to say
She loves me: this may be the only way
To make sense of the obvious emotion
With which she meets my obvious devotion.

She does not need my house; I live in hers.
She does not need my cash; she holds the purse.
She does not need my youth; I am the older.
She does not need my warmth; I am the colder.

And yet she clearly seems to cherish me,
For reasons that I simply cannot see.
What is it that she sees beneath my skin?
What there behind the eyes she's gazing in?

Perhaps her gaze detects my utter love:
Profound and true, perhaps it is enough
To train her heart and mine to beat together;
I only hope they'll stay entrained forever.

I love her laughing at me - keeps me real.
I love her getting cross - keeps me to heel?
I love her children's children, I adore them
And, but for her, put no one else before them.

Is love of mine what holds her close to me?
There is far poorer cause to love a man:
He may be merely wealthy, or may be
Convenient and available - to hand.

The heart is wild, and reasons I could cite,
Stranger by far than those I've named above,
To love another, but for her it might
Be that she loves to love another's love.

Let Me Try Again

If only I could take them back,
The hurtful things I say and do,
I'd pack them somewhere out of sight
Where they could never bother you
Or make you cry again.

I love you so. I cannot stand
It when you tell me of your doubts
And so, in fits of madness, I
Protest my love with screams and shouts;
And make you cry again.

Please, let me try again.

For Trish from Noel

No changes in popular culture, no developing fashion or fad
Or mutation of social conventions could disturb the convictions he had.
Early on he had formed his opinions, when the world was still young (or before),
Later on he was shocked that his mirror reflected an old dinosaur.
Left behind him were all the good reasons for thinking in this way or that;
One by one they had gone as the world had moved on, and the taste of his life had grown flat.
Vain attempts to convey to the youthful inappropriate standards and rules
Earned people of his generation contempt of the youthful as fools.
So for these and for other poor reasons he rejected the world in a funk;
Taking with him to bed only books to be read, for eight years he lived like a monk.
Resisting occasional offers from women as lonely as he,
In time he persuaded himself that life was just what he wished it to be.
Suddenly this smug conviction was shattered to bits at a blow:
He fell very hard for a woman he had met a few seasons ago.
Do the gods play these games for amusement? Do they pick on two people by chance?
Each had said "How d'you do?" and "Nice to meet you", exchanging no more than a glance.
And then, just a year or two later, the gods played their joke from above:
Recalling that coolish first meeting, they made them fall madly in love.
Let that be a lesson (they chuckled) for thinking he needed no other.
Yet the jest they conspired, since then has backfired for now they're in love with each other.

(An acrostic)

Regrets

I weep a lot...

For promises I've broken,
And unkind words I've spoken,
For the road to hell I paved with good intent;
For friendships I neglected,
And some that I rejected,
When what I did was just not what I meant.

With insincere persuasion,
And cowardly evasion,
I hid inside a camouflaging tent;
I did not dare reveal me,
And felt I must conceal me,
Or be exposed to well-deserved contempt.

So now I know what ails me:
My life's disguise has failed me;
That life that I so foolishly misspent.
I hid myself from others,
From my sisters and my brothers,
And no-one was aware of where I went.

And since no friend can find me
I have no-one behind me,
No-one to join in my lament
Without a friend to deem
Me worthy of esteem,
The taste of life is one of discontent.

... And so I weep a lot. Maybe it is an old man thing.