

CHAPTER TWENTY

My mouth sings the praises of the God who made me
Formed me from dust, molded me with hands that shaped me.

Word-spoken life and Word-splendored beauty
Word from Beginning and Word never-ceasing
Master Creator, thou hast created me
Wind-blown the Spirit you breathed into me.

Man out of woman and woman from man
One flesh from two in Your master plan
One Spirit fills us, one body we
So is the church joined forever with thee.
Thou art the Head and we are your body
Hands, arms and legs and heart beating free.

How do I know Thee? How came I here?
I was sin-driven, lost, dead in my fears.
In love you reached for me, dried every tear.
Dark was my journey, night my abode
Light is your Presence, gone is the load.

Beautiful Savior, Jesus, Lord and King
Lilting like music through bright-spattered dreams.
My cup runneth over in Living Water stream.

God-splendored rainbow that arches the skies
Lovely tales, tinkling bells, laughter-rimmed lives.

Voice soft as shadows, brims with delight
I know Thee, I love thee, Your Word is my Light.

Walk in the noon-day, tree-shadowed trails
Wind-wafted whispers, hands scarred from nails
Blood-spattered cross, life freely given
Mouth speaks forgiveness and purchases heaven

Was there a time when
I didn't know you?
Did I ever exist
Unforgiven?

Ah, but you have forgotten those previous times
Day one in your memory is the first one in mine.

Massed ranks of angels
Chorus of praise
White robed splendor
Throne-lighted grace.
God the Almighty
Forever to reign

Silk-shrouded silence surrounds the praise-pillared throne of the triune God. Heaven holds its breath for an eternity out of time. The Anointed One sits on the throne, close by the Father's right hand. He stands and

applauds the angelic choir. "It is good," He says, "Now a song from my bride."

White is her vesture, a bright holy flame. She is multitude, the Church, the Redeemed of the Lamb. With one voice she proclaims it, her love for her Lord. Loud rings the anthem down the corridors of the Eternal City, like mighty crashing waves of the white crystal sea.

Emerald-green Sun shine and velvet-cool streets with many-roomed mansions. Sparkling clear water of River of Life, tree-lined from the throne, flowing forever. Music-filled day with never a night-dimmed moment. Friends calling, no leaving, no lingering farewells. Talk on forever, praising God all the while.

Do I speak in riddles? I wonder at questions I once pondered, no longer asked. Mysteries revealed I never knew existed. What was important once to know I have long forgotten. Only One is important, and in Him is no question at all. I know He loves me; everything else is unimportant.

Did I tell you I saw Paul? Oh, you already have! I once wondered about his thorn, but now we only talk about His Lord – and mine – and yours. We never mention Damascus or the letter to Rome. Not a word on beheading, but why does it matter? What's past is no more, shadows of another life, life before life.

Oh, yes, and Abraham. Lazarus laid in his bosom. He was a patriarch, we learned, but to me he's a brother in Christ. We held the man almost in reverence, in awe, because of his faith, but he just loves the Lord, like us.

Sleep was one thing I dearly loved. I used to sleep out on the ground. Remember, Betsey? My guardian says I could sleep almost anywhere, at the drop of a hat, even though he didn't wear a hat. Now – I don't even remember what it was like, and I don't really care. That's just another thing I gave up that I don't miss.

Remember how I used to love your cooking? I ate like a horse, you said, and never gained a pound. Now eating is a form of communion with the Lord, an act of worship, as it should be. It's strange we didn't see it that way back then.

Remember the glass, George, the dark one? Your eyes were almost blinded by the sin around you. I could see you as long as you were under the Blood, but if you weren't you were covered with blackness.

I was always there with you, but you weren't always with me. I've forgotten those times, so they aren't important. People in the old earth often had strange ideas of what was important. It always made me so sad to see them chasing after things I made for them or each other, instead of coming to me.

I never intended anything for them but the very best, but they sold their souls for a pittance. If it would have made a difference I would have shown all of them the glory of Heaven, but they were too blind to see.

George always loved you, Lord, it seems to me. I can't remember a time when he didn't. His mother is just like him, or he's just like her. I was so silly when I was George's wife I was actually jealous of you, a little. That seems so unreal to me now, and I wonder if it really happened that way.

I don't remember that part. I do remember that the two of you had a lovely marriage, so much like my relationship with the church. Every time I saw how much you truly loved each other I had to smile. The night when your old body died, George was so sad I cried with him. I sent one of my angels to talk to him that night.

I was so surprised when he was suddenly just there, in front of me, but I knew right away who he was. He told me he had seen me in the hospital the week before, when they sent Betsey home. I remember he appeared to me as a kind old man, a lot like that time by the campfire.

He has a deep love for you. You are the last of his charges. I will set a task for the two of you, so that you may work together once more.

I would like that, Lord, very much. Can Betsey and I do something for you together, too?

Of course! She'll be special to you for all of eternity, and you to her. What I have in store for you is a much greater joy than the union of sex you knew in your old bodies. You won't miss that part of your knowing.

Spring-scented summer, grape-laden vine

Fruit of the Spirit, flower divine.

Praise without ceasing, garments like snow

Whither thou goest bright dawn showers flow.

Mind entered, Christ-centered, God Three in One

Full-powered Life-given freely to spend.

Unmeasured grace and limitless love
Glory on glory, Christ Jesus, Master, Lord.

Beginnings, beginnings, but never an end
God will not suffer His people to spend
One moment, eternal, save only in Him.

I seek you, I follow
The sound of your voice
Words spoken inward and outward rejoice
Stay close, ever closer, reach inward, seek, find
Soft treaded footsteps down corridors of mind
Spirit and Savior, Counselor and Friend,
Brother and Master, world without end.

Joy is for living, and living for joy
Your presence is rapture, your promise fulfilled.
Lord only Jesus, soft touch on my brow.

Forever to praise you
Hands now upraised
Word of the Father, throne-centered grace
With words uttered simply through unending age –

Jesus loves me, this I know.

For the Spirit tells me so.