

FIRST

NATURE'S COMPLAINT TO GOD ABOUT MANKIND

PHILIP CARLESTON

I. Complaint

(Choir)

Lord hear me,
Lord hear my voice!
Listen to the words
Of my complaint!
Oh do not hide your face
In this my time of trouble!

What have I done
That they should treat me so?
Humankind,
Ah humankind, unkind.
What have I done
That they torment me so?
Is it jealousy
Of your love for me,
Or despair at being lost
Along the road
So very far from home?

How can you stand aside
When you see what they do, Lord?
They beat me,
They bind me,
They burn me,
They blind me,
All trace of your love
From my soul
They would root out!

Lord when will you show your face?
Lord when will you show your strength?
Lord when will you break your silence?
Speak to them
That they may understand.
Speak to me
That I may find
My rest again,
My peace again,
My rest
My peace again.

Lord hear me...

2. First Passion (Soprano Solo)

You know
There was a time
When all was still enclosed
Within a dream.
I heard my name.
I heard you breath,
Softly you breathe,
Breathed my name,
And I turned
My face to yours,
And saw the stars
Like snowflakes
Floating down.
Creation overflowed from me
Bursting with wild variety.

3. Dance of Creation (Choir)

Shine,
Shine,
Shine in the dark!
Shine,
Startling sleepy shadows into light!
Sparkling
Sparkling seeds,
Come let me gather you,
Come let me press you
Into sun and moon and sky!

Flow,
Flow,
Waters of Heaven,
Squeezed from the clouds
Rushing down to the deep
And the waves,
Rolling and cresting,
The waves,
Rearing up
Thundering down
To be one
With the solemn ocean again.

Now you mass of earth,
Step out of the waters
And take a stand!
Concentrate
And feel your weight
In rock and mud and sand!
Search for your form,
Yielding then holding fast,
Pushing and pulling,
Solidifying at last!
Shape up and make
Everywhere be somewhere,
Up from the valleys
The rolling hills,
Then rise up you mountains
Stretch yourselves up to the sky!
Halleluyah!

Growing
Growing green
Rooting and shooting
Winding and weaving
Interleaving branches and fruit.
Then suddenly
A bloom appears
Astonishing the green.
Who is she
Who is flowering
Unlike anything ever seen?
One by one
The buds unfold,
Yellow red and blue,
Unfolding
In glowing colours,
Unfolding
Enchanting others,
Unfolding
In useless beauty
All for you!

Move
Move
Move through the deep,
Move silently and smoothly
Following the stream,
Gliding and surging
And diving down
To secret deeps again!

Soar
Soar
Feathery flight,
Swooping and circling
Hovering and looping light
Chattering
Fluttering free,
Winging your way
On the wind
Singing praises to Heaven
As the dawn creeps in!

Back down on the Earth
Mud is giving birth
Straining that a bubble

From the muddle
Might emerge.

Break
Break away,
Mischievous lumps of clay
Slipping and slithering
Wriggling in riotous play,
Pound-pound- pounding
The ground,
Sprouting new limbs
Go running
And jumping around,
Jostling and snorting
Stampeding
Trumpeting
Roaring and fighting
Uniting to worship you Lord!

Halleluyah!

4. Eden

(Soprano Solo)

The human seed,
That fragile pair,
To play with them
Was our delight.
We loved to hide things
From their gaze
And then to watch
Their faces cloud.
When they find
What they've been looking for
Solemnity dissolves
In smiles and kisses.
How blessed
Would have been their life
If they had understood
The garden.

How could I ever know
Our game would go astray?
How could they have known
That all was not just childrens' play?
The honeyed whisperings
Of the serpent...
The teasing Eve...
Adam's perplexity
At the shadowed tree...
The moment they tasted
They felt themselves apart.
A splinter of emptiness
Entered their heart.
Oh would I could
Unweave that deed
And go back to my dream.

5. Nowhere (Choir)

Foxes have their holes,
Birds have their nests,
But the son of Man
Has nowhere to lay his head.

Emptiness breeds emptiness
Void feeds on void.

Who drove them
From the garden?
Not you Lord,
Not I.
Who keeps them
From the garden?
Not you Lord,
Not I.

Emptiness breeds emptiness
Void feeds on void,
Man by himself destroyed.

Foxes have their holes,
Birds have their nests,
But the son of Man
Has nowhere to lay his head.

6. Something I don't understand

(Soprano Solo)

Now won't you give me
A helping hand?
There is something I don't understand.
We played together contentedly,
Now you won't even look at me.
What has possessed you
That you treat me so?

Your weary body,
Your broken skin,
I can hardly bear to see
Your suffering
But you reject me,
You lock yourself
In a little world of your own.
How can I touch you?
How can I leave you alone?

I showed you treasure,
Silver and gold
And stone which sparkle
Like the stars in the cold,
To tempt you back
Into our gentle play
But you saw it
And you seized it
And you took it away.
Why are you silent?
Have you nothing to say?

Now won't you give me
A helping hand ...

7. Gods

(Choir)

Gods you will be,
So the serpent did say,
As gods you'll be
If you eat
Of the fruit
Of the tree.
What is a god,
You asked,
And what are we?
You said
A god must be
What we are not
And creation
Must be a plot
To keep us human.
Come and let us
Build a tower
Up to Heaven
So we shall be gods,
Then we shall
Possess the earth.

Gods you will be...

On and on
And up and up!
Brick by brick
You build
Your new Eden,
Build a prison
And call it
Freedom!

End of First Part

SECOND PART

8. Tell me

(Soprano Solo and Choir)

Tell me,
Does the donkey
Stare in envy
At the hawk all day
And bray for wings?
Tell me,
Would the oak tree
Cut its roots
And lumber off
To higher things?
Do stones crave petals
Or metals fruit?
Have you ever heard of these
Manifest absurdities?
All beings revel
In being what they are
Save Man,
Who would be anything but human.

How long must I look on
A mother humouring her child,
As he tears creation
Limb from limb
In grim pursuance
Of eternity?
How long must I put up
With these bags of wind
Trying to box
The wild variety of time
Into their petty laws,
Crying
“Where is now this God of yours?”

And where is now
This God of mine?
There's not a word,
No not a sign.
Did I not do
All that I could?
Did I not love him
As I should?

Maybe he's hurt
And lying wounded
In the sky,
Too weak to move
Or even speak.

What kind of God then
Must you be
To look away
And let me fall?
Maybe you've gone
And left me
For another world,
Or were you never here at all?

Enough! Enough!
My patience has been stretched
Upon the rack to breaking point
And now it snapped!
I'll take the matter into my own hands
And make an end of it!

What has been created
Can also be dissolved,
Not some lurid apocalypse
As dreamed up by morality
To cash in on its chips,
But in a dance for all
Revolving slow at first
Then ever faster
Circling to a blur,
All things becoming one
As once they were.

9. Dance to the End of Time

(Choir)

Come
Come
Come and join me,
Come and join the dance,
Come and join me
In the dance
To the end of time!

Follow me,
Just do as I do,
I will lead the way.
There will be a place
For all of you
Upon the final day.

All will dissolve
Into one again
On the final day.

There will not be
One of you excluded
From the final feast.
You all will be welcomed
One by one,
The greatest with the least.

Earth will be raised
Up to the heavens
And then all things
Will be one,
All things will be one again.

10. Back into Heaven

(Choir and Soprano Solo)

Long,
Too long
I've been wandering.
Far,
Too far
I have strayed.
Now as I float
Through the clouds
Back into Heaven,
Now I know surely
The realm to which I belong.
Lord, look and see!
Don't you recognize me?
I'm coming home to you
From bonds of earth set free!
Oh so sharp
Sting unforgiving wounds
In my memory.
Just let me bathe
In the light
Of the stars!

Sorrows and joys,
Laughter and tears
Whirl ever closer,
Whirling in to a point of light,
Now even the point
Is gone.

II. The Garden

(Soprano Solo with Choir a capella)

A garden bathed in golden light.
What sudden calm!
What silence deep!
Am I waking
From a restless night
Or gliding smoothly
Into a dream,
Enfolded in the arms of sleep?

Thoughts of the past
Are weighed down by care,
Longing to soar like birds
Into the air,
Away from the cruelties of Man
Who, like a machine,
Purges all life
Of life in between.

My eyes sought the shade
Beneath the trees,
The shadows absorbing
All my sight.
Out of the darkness
Moving,
Robed in white,
The one
Whom my being
Cries out to see
Drew near
And embracing me
This he did say:

“Fear not my dearest,
Your troubles will pass.
No man-made walls
Can ever keep us apart.
You’ll not be bound
By calculation
Nor by earthly might,
Source of all my joy,
How I long to lose myself
In your infinite delight!”

12. To be Human

(Choir and Soprano Solo)

Humankind
With their sleepless lights
Have dazzled me
But now I can see again.
Humankind
With their never resting machines
Plague my ears.
Now I can hear again.
Humankind
Waging war on me
Would rob my body
And my soul
Of all their sensibility,
Numbing by numbers
All the parts of me,
But now I can feel again.

How could I think
For one moment
You'd desert me?
Did I believe
You'd withdraw
From the world
And leave me alone?
For nearer than near
As you are,
Your presence
Cannot comfort one
Who knows you not.
Light without light,
Warmth without warmth,
Cast out of my own creation...
What will become of me?
... Wandering lost
In empty space
But now,
Now I know
Your embrace again.

What will become
Of the children of Men?
Tell me
What will become of you

My children?
Why do you run after eternity
And all you cannot be?
Won't you return to the earth
And learn to be human?