

Sonnets to be read by Shakespearean actor Matt Schwader as part of
 2017 February 2 Thursday 7 pm **Candlemas** with lutenist Beau Bledsoe
 and the twelve-voice Sacred Arts Chorale directed by Dr Rebecca Johnson
 performing the “Mass for Four Parts” and with other music by William Byrd at
 Grace and Holy Trinity Cathedral, 13th and Broadway, downtown, Kansas City, Missouri
 For details, photos, and other information about the program: www.cres.org/Candlemas

The sonnets are
 arranged by parts
 of the musical
 Mass. This sonnet
 is from the section

INTROIT

1. *Al-Fatiha: Opening Instruction*

Cui dono lepidum novum libellum . . . ?

OPEN, BOOK, open to the reader — *wide!*
 and let the peace lodged longing in one’s heart
 be burning in these pages ranged, and guide
 all yearning for the universe to start.
 As god creates us through the Word to know,
 be known! let faith emblazed these pages hint;
 cessation of all disconnections show;
 and friendly pure and fleshy passions, print.

LET ALL COMPANIONS, gay and straight, rich, poor,
 whatever race, male and female, young, old
 (let those alone especially) adore
 the god who only with one’s love is told.

Inflate, ignite, Each Page, with your turning;
 inflame the god within who brings all burning.

Al-Fatiha (The Opening) is the name of the opening sura (chapter) in the Holy Qur’an. Used in daily devotions, its place in Muslim practice can be compared with Christians’ The Lord’s Prayer, The [1979] Book of Common Prayer, p364. The EPIGRAPH is from the first of the *Carmina* by Catullus, “To whom do I send this fresh, elegant little book . . . ?” **Yearning:** a hadith has God saying, “I was a hidden treasure and I yearned to be known. Then I created creatures in order to be known by them.” The sonnet also alludes to John 1:1: “In the beginning was the **Word**, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” But words are not the Word; Rumi → «The Sun» wrote that God wants not fine phrases but rather “**burning**” — a contrast with Buddhism’s nirvana, which means, in effect, “no burning.” In *Fihī maffī*, Baldock, p49, he wrote, “Words are useful because they stimulate you and set you searching, but what you are searching for cannot be attained through words” → «The Sun». **God:** ¶ § Introduction ¶ 5, → «Content». **Open** means candid, beginning, inviting, accessible. **Instruction** means direction, lesson. This first sonnet is paired with the last in this volume. **Pure and fleshy passions:** See Oxford theologian Graham Ward, 2000/2001 *Cities of God*, p151: “If the Church is to speak in and to the present *Zeitgeist*, then it must recover its deliberations of desire and articulate again its theology of eros.”



Any questions?
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INTROIT

2. *Don't Ask*

DON'T ask why those old folks made cairns from stones,
or temples grew to urge epiphanies,
why precincts of the dead were sacred zones,
or why Lascaux predicted every frieze.

Don't ask why Sumer told of Gilgamesh,
or Homer showed why proud Achilles mourned,
or Shakespeare's sonnets fathomed more than flesh,
why Jonathan's desire was never scorned.

Don't ask me why these lines crawl forth in praise
for sacred gifts of love and thews and time,
why troubled histories become a phrase
and tumbled mysteries convert in rime.

This is no realm of reasonable things.
By mortals God is killed, but still Bach sings.

Don't ask alludes to the “Don't ask, don't tell” policy preventing declared homosexuals from serving in the US military, 1993-2011, and also to a phrase in an 1894 poem by Lord Alfred Douglas, cited in an indecency trial of Oscar Wilde. *Todos hecho, nada dicho*, “everything done, nothing said,” refers to the practice in many cultures of approving while denying widespread same-sex behavior. *Cairns* are piles of stones erected to mark a powerful spiritual experience, as, for example, Genesis 28:18-22, when Jacob consecrates a stone with oil to mark “this awesome place,” which he calls Bethel, the House of God. An *epiphany* is a manifestation of the divine. *Lascaux*, in southwestern France, is the site of Paleolithic cave paintings. A *frieze* is an extended painted or carved decoration, usually above the eye, often on the entablature of classical structures. *Sumer* was a city in ancient Mesopotamia; it produced the *Epic of Gilgamesh* which tells the story of a friendship between the king *Gilgamesh* and his partner Enkidu. Homer's *Iliad* includes an account of the warrior *Achilles* grieving when his companion Patroclus was killed. Most of *Shakespeare's sonnets* of love were written to a fair young man. In the Biblical story (1 Samuel) *Jonathan*, the son of King Saul, became David's covenanted friend. (See Chapter 5 of Gary David Comstock's 1993 *Gay Theology Without Apology*.) When Jonathan was killed, David lamented, “your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women” (2 Samuel 1:26) → «Relaxed». *By mortals God is killed* is an allusion to the Christian story of the crucified God-Man Jesus as well as to Nietzsche's famous statement in *The Gay Science* (1882), “God is dead. . . . And we have killed him. Yet his shadow still looms. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers?” In his 1957/1959 *The Sacred and the Profane*, p208, Eliade writes that the secular person “will not be truly free until he has killed the last god.” The great church composer Johann Sebastian *Bach* (1685–1750) wrote works such as *Christ lag in Todes Banden* (*Christ Lay in Death's Bonds*), *St Matthew Passion*, *St John Passion*, and the *Mass in B Minor*.



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KYRIE

11. *Kitchen Cockroach*

When thou art scorching in thy flames,
when thou art howling in thy torments,
then God shall laugh, and His saints shall sing and rejoice,
that His power and wrath are thus made known to thee.

They burn it with fire like rubbish

THIS all-consuming fire — once pointed hot,
now spread throughout the galaxies and in
my blood, and in my stove-top in the shot
of gas that joins you like the desert jinn —
your form perplexes as you briefly flare.
Your life, repulsive, I incinerate.
Of this, in any terms, are you aware
of your own dodge, then doom? Is this fire hate
or love? or simply energy that burns
and purifies its own mistakes and goes
to ravage through all hopes as it returns
unto the martyred Source of kiss and blows?

Is your pain lesser than Saint Lawrence felt?
Am I like you or God to see you melt?

The first EPIGRAPH is from Christopher Love's 1650? *Hell's Torments*. The second is from Psalm 80:15, The [1979] Book of Common Prayer, p703. The first line refers to the initial compression of the universe into a single point from which the Big Bang of creation exploded. In Arab legends *jinn* are creatures from smokeless fire who can shift shape in human or animal form and who can aid or hurt humans. **St Lawrence** was a Third Century martyr who was burned alive on a gridiron. His offense was to present the poor when he was asked to display the treasures of the church which had been committed to him. Girolamo Da Santacroce (1485?-1556?) painted "The Martyrdom of St. Lawrence," now in the collection of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, MO.



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GLORIA

45. *Husam — A Rumi Quartet*

‘I was a hidden treasure and I desired to be known.’
 With beauty’s children only can we live

OUR God created all of raw desire —
 or some slight primal shake as time began
 quick quarks into a measured cosmic choir
 to reach affinity, without a plan.
 This accidental love among the stars,
 within the atoms, grows from molecules
 to strands of DNA, then repertoires
 of genius, culture, peace and war, and fools;
 and governments, and arts, and law, and schools;
 and acts spontaneous and those with rules.

When flesh inhales, becoming spirit,
 then longing fully to be known and know,
 an unexpected thrust may steer it,
 faithful, into mystic vertigo.
 Such beauty in the body called your soul
 proves Evolution fancies hints to Whole.

The first EPIGRAPH is from *Rumi*, p113 → «The Sun». After Saladin died, *Husam* became Rumi’s companion and Friend. The hadith Rumi quotes is discussed in the § Introduction to this book, ¶ 4, and in the note to the first sonnet. The second is from a poem by Moses Ibn Ezra (1060?-1138), quoted in David Biale’s 1992 *Eros and the Jews*, p88. “Without toil [God] *shakes* all things by the thought of his mind.” —Xenophanes. A *measure* is a unit of time in music. *Quarks* are the elementary particles from which such as neutrons and protons are composed, which in turn are constituents of *atoms*. *DNA*, deoxyribonucleic acid, is the giant double-helix *molecule* which encodes the directions for all living things (excepting some viruses) to grow and to pass on hereditary information. *Inhales* is in world-play with *spirit*: «Poetic Failure». Rumi seems to have anticipated Darwin (1809-1882) and Père Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), the Jesuit paleontologist who saw *Evolution* as a spiritual process in a sense moving from *hints to Whole*. *Beauty/body/soul*: “Beauty is momentary in the mind — / The fitful tracing of a portal; / but in the flesh it is immortal.” —Wallace Stevens, “Peter Quince at the Clavier,” section IV. This is a 16-line sonnet, such as those in George Meredith, 1862 *Modern Love*.



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CREDO

84. *Postmodern Faith: What is Truth?*

MY God, is this a dagger that I see?
 Am I observing actors in a play?
 Is this a dream or film of tragedy?
 or just computer games where I'm to slay
 with it? Perhaps I'm high on LSD
 or wearing VR glasses that display
 an archetype if not a snickernee.
 Is this *getik*, *menok*, or Judgment Day?
 Oh no, no dagger but Christ's cross, that tree
 which bares illusions in one Truth, one *Yea!*
 It tears and it repairs reality
 and wakes us to attend and watch and pray.
 I know the Gospel is a pious tale,
 but who cares facts when worship cannot fail?

Pilate put the question in the title to Jesus; John 18:38. Perhaps anticipated by the ancient Jain teaching of *anekantavada*, the doctrine of multiple viewpoints, Jean-François Lyotard described **Postmodernism** as “incredulity toward meta-narratives” such as theological systems or myths regarded as descriptions of all reality. But in the 1957 *Opus Posthumous: Poems, Plays, Prose*, p 163, Wallace Stevens wrote of incredulity, “The final belief is to believe in a fiction, which you know to be a fiction, there being nothing else. The exquisite truth is to know that it is a fiction, and that you believe it willingly.” Or in a Pragmatic vein, W H Auden wrote, “It is as meaningless to ask whether one believes or disbelieves in Aphrodite or Ares as to ask whether one believes in a character in a novel; one can only say that one finds them true or untrue to life. To believe in Aphrodite and Ares merely means that one believes that the poetic myths about them do justice to the forces of sex and aggression as human beings experience them in nature and in their own lives.” Indeed, the client following a therapist's suggestion to “place your deceased father in this chair and tell him how you feel” may be in practice little different from the person of faith who prays. Religion is more about commitment than certainty. The first line derives from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, 2, 1, “Is this a dagger which I see before me?” An exquisite example of the problem of distinguishing **dream** from reality is portrayed in the *Illustration to the Second Prose Poem on the Red Cliff* by Qiao Zhongchang (Northern Song Dynasty, 960-1127) at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, MO. **LSD** is a psychedelic or entheogenic drug. **VR** is an abbreviation for Virtual Reality. **Getik** (the ordinary world) and **menok** (a heavenly realm, perhaps akin to Plato's realm of ideals or forms, or similar to some understandings of archetypes) are key terms in the epistemology of Suhrawardi (1155-1191), called Sheikh al-Ishraq, the Master of Illumination. **Judgment Day** → «Love Locket». The **Gospel** is the Christian story including the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, a figure with many parallels in other religious traditions. A **snickersnee** is a large knife that can be used for fighting. **Tree**: → «Barren Golgotha». This sonnet uses only three end-rimes.



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CONFITEOR

88. *Love Locket*

Omnia vincit amor; et nos cedamus amori.

Idem homo et saluatur ex parte et condemnatur ex parte . . .

THIS loud and too large love I have for you
 I now reduce to this small, silent space,
 and set it in a locket, safe from view,
 and wear it to confine you to a place.
 You overran my life and skinned my soul;
 my strong physique became a bag of woe;
 your gravity made me a damn black hole;
 you made my moil a comic video.

When rapture judges with the trumpet’s blare,
 and when Maitreya stirs within my breast,
 when Emperors will bow to South, aware,
 or when Messiah comes and gives us rest,
 this locket forged on anvil from pure ire
 will melt from love within, and God’s desire.

The EPIGRAPH, “Love conquers all; and we must surrender to love,” is from Book X of the Eclogues by Virgil (70 BCE-19 BCE). The second is from *Commentary on Psalm 118*, 20, 58 by Ambrose of Milan (340?-397): the same person is at the same time both saved and condemned. A **black hole** is often described as a space-time region so dense that gravity prevents anything, including light, from escaping, although recent theories suggest that information can be recovered. **Moil**: drudgery, trouble. Some fundamentalist Christian eschatology posits a **rapture** in which when the “dead in Christ” and those “who are alive and remain” are “caught up in the clouds” (1 Thessalonians 4:17) to be eternally united with Christ in his kingdom. In ancient Confucian thought, society would be set right by imitating the reverence of the **emperor** honoring the gods by bowing to the South where they reside. In some Buddhist eschatology, the bodhisattva **Maitreya** is regarded as the future Buddha. At the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, MO, is a nearly life-size Maitreya Gandharan phyllite sculpture (3d Century). In some Jewish eschatology, a **Messiah** will establish the rule of Israel to bring peace to the world. **Judges**: Judgment Day → «Postmodern Faith» is the time when the soul’s deeds are measured for reward or punishment in some religions, including Judaism (Rosh Hashanah yearly, or at the end of time), Christianity (the Last Judgment), and Islam (the Day of Reckoning). The third quatrain can be compared and contrasted with Shakespeare’s Sonnet 55 which concludes, “So, till the judgment that yourself arise, / you live in this, and dwell in lover’s eyes.” **Desire**: →Collect for Purity, p49. “It is I who teach you to desire. It is I who am the reward of all true desiring. All shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.” —Julian of Norwich (1342-1416), *Revelations of Divine Love*, 14th.



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SANCTUS

136. *The Purpose of Sex*

Quia igitur in te coincidit amabile cum amante et amari cum amare,
 tunc nexus coincidentiae est nexus essentialis;
 nihil enim in te est, quod nonsit ipsa essentia tua.

FROM yearning God conceived and teemed the world
 to know and to be known in fullness; so
 in his own image he made us, unfurled
 his cosmic longing in our loins, and lo!
 Where passion is, God finds his silvered glass,
 presenting what is lost in our found eyes,
 uncovered in raw wonder, lad or lass,
 re-formed in seeking him in strange disguise.

As from us he wants all of nothing, all,
 but to behold us clear as we see him,
 so I love you in every rise and fall,
 in mounting cadence swelling Shlomo’s hymn.
 Blow thrust gaze mask ride shimmer shade stop flow:
 In intercourse His work we come to know.

Famous for his doctrine of the coincidence of opposites and *De Docta Ignorantia* (Of Learned Ignorance) as well as his church politics and astronomy, Nicolaus Cusanus (1401-1464) wrote mysticism in *De visione Dei* (The Vision of God). The EPIGRAPH is from chapter 17, in which he presents a Trinitarian understanding of love: “Since, therefore, these components which appear to me to be three, namely, the lover, the beloved, and the bond (between them), are your own absolute and most simple essence.” Similar triadic conceptions of love can be found in Christian discussions at least as far back as Augustine. **Image:** “We say God and the imagination are one” —1954 *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, “Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour,” p524. **Lost in our found eyes:** “Love alone can unite living beings so as to complete and fulfill them, for it alone takes them and joins them by what is deepest in themselves. . . . At what moment do lovers come into the most complete possession of themselves if not when they say they are lost in each other?” —1959/1961/1965 *The Phenomenon of Man*, p265, by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), tr. Bernard Wall from *Le Phénomène Humain* (1955). **Eyes** is, of course, a pun. **Sholmo** is Solomon in Hebrew; The Song of Solomon (also called The Song of Songs, *Canticum Canticorum* in the Vulgate) is a short erotic poem in Jewish and Christian scripture. The **yearning** refers to the Muslim hadith qudsi, “I was a hidden treasure; I wanted to be known. Hence I created the world so that I might be known.” → «Wound Wick».



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ANGVS DEI

142. *Tinnitus*

And curious are to hear, what happ'ns new

Here, the intersection of the timeless moment

WHO'S there? please tell; don't wait, your voice is soft
and hard for me to hear; I'm old, I feint:
round edges of your discourse fades. I coughed
and lost my grip on what your stripped vowels paint.
Each day the noise my fraught ears carry grows
and I, though weary, cannot set it down.
I read (when I would kiss) your lips, and woes
aye echo this tin barrel called my crown.

So speak; be clear. And yet timeless way
appears for me to hear identity,
infinity's close silence, when you lay
your head on mine in muted euphony.
Lo! Incarnation is a word for quirks.
So let me know your flesh; my skin still works.

The EPIGRAPH is from John Milton's 1671 poem, *Paradise Regained*, Book 1:333-334. The second is from TS Eliot's Four Quartets, Little Gidding, the penultimate line in the first section. The word *aye* has three meanings: first, an affirmation such as yes; second, an expression of surprise; third, the sense of ever, always, or still. *Incarnation . . . quirks*: in his 1995 *Sexuality and Catholicism*, p251, Thomas C Fox quotes from Richard Rohr, 1994 *Quest for the Grail*, p162: "Of all the world's religions, Christianity has the biggest bias against the body. This is a disastrous theology. If I were Satan, and if I wanted to destroy Christianity, I would work overtime to tempt Christians to hate the flesh. . . . The incarnation means that God moved from spirit to word to flesh. Jesus took on a body. He had genitals. He sweated. He defecated. . . ." The ubiquity and omnipresence of Incarnation is a theme in many poems. Concerning Eliot's: "It seems to me that Eliot's overarching theme in Four Quartets is the divine (Incarnation) in art, music, literature, and spirituality can be experienced in our everyday existence. . . . [The] intersection is always there; we just need to be looking." —Tom Brous, 2011 *Timeless Journey*, last page. *Skin*: See Aristotle, *De Anima*, 2: 11 in which he notes that "in the perception of objects of touch we are affected not by but with *along with* the medium . . . of flesh," and that touch is our most fundamental mode of perception.



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[DISMISSAL]
 NVNC
 DIMITTIS

154. *Closing Instruction*

Committed to the future — even if that only means
 “se préparer à bien mourir.”

Yet even at the grave we make our song: Alleluia

ANGEL OF DEATH, who each instant strikes, kills
 some blood in my only body, and cells
 of other sorts as well, but still gives thrills
 which, while I charge and wait, whole death repels:
 the world entire becomes Beloved Friend;
 let me make love deep to each animal,
 vegetable, mineral; and comprehend,
 embrace spiritual and mechanical.

COMPANION, late I am to search for you.
 Who most I want I yield — and make this gift:
 these songs, surviving, my shaped residue.

READER, learn your union from your rift.
 From yours and others’ ecstasy and pain
 draw close to whom you love, and close remain.

The first EPIGRAPH is from Dag Hammarskjöld’s *Markings* (English, 1964). The French can be translated “one is preparing to die well.” The second is from *The Book* [1979] of Common Prayer, p499. The three categories of *animal, vegetable, and mineral* (three kingdoms, *mawalid*) were developed by Muslim scientists and utilized by Rumi in his mystic poetry about the Friend → «Intimate Commitment». My short definition of *spiritual* is breathing with a sense of the sacred; see the chart in the appendix on “The Crises of Our Time.” *Union*: “Reality is paradoxical and complementary. Non-dual thinking is the highest level of consciousness. Divine union, not private perfection, is the goal of all religion.” —Richard Rohr, 2013 *Yes, and . . . : Daily Meditations*, p355. In Kabbalistic Jewish mysticism, the process of creation involved *Shevirah*, the shattering of the vessels of the divine; our joyful duty is to mend the rift; the Hebrew phrase *Tikkun olam* means repairing the world. *Sought*: → «The Grail». This sonnet is paired with the first in this book.



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