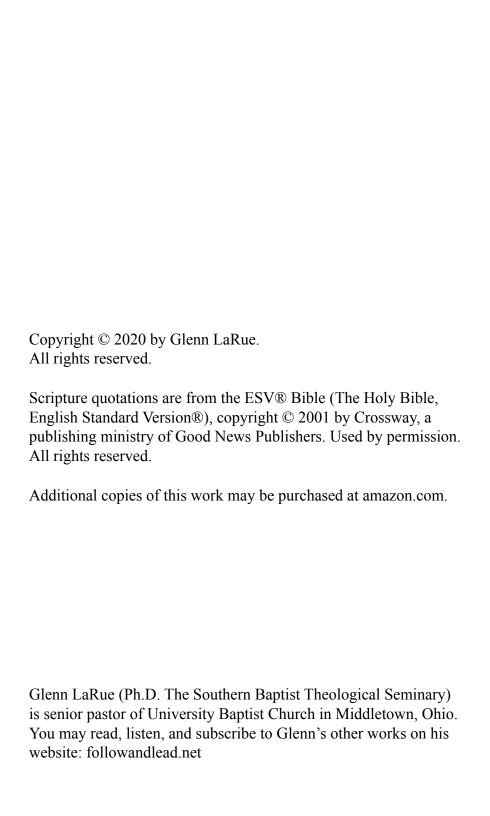
TWENTY

Glenn LaRue



For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:6

Twenty Twenty¹

Act 1²

You, the Beginning,³ poured into action,
Beautiful Source unleashed bountiful brush,
Yet when first begun, no beauty was made,⁴
The cosmos was first in chaos arrayed.⁵
Deep darkness yet hid the face of the deep.
And also the depths of your hidden face,
Spirit hovered over gloomy pallet,
Made from nothing and still looking as such,
Space, time, matter, energy⁶—raw substance
In need. Just created, yet void, yet dark.

10

No good? No order? No pleasing design?
No beauty ordered from the Master Mind?⁷
What is the design then of this first act?
Is chaos to be all natural fact?
Was I wrong to claim a Beautiful Source?
Or is this Fountain impure, mirky Spring?
Does the Almighty's nature yield bleak gray?
In warped domain for hazy Ghost to play?
Of warmth, of love, is there nothing to say?
Who are you, dark God of the overflow?⁸

20

Then rang the brightest, the sweetest of songs,
Your effectual call: "Let there be light!"
And in the night, radiant streams burst forth!
Pure Beauty emanating pure beauty!
Brightness from Goodness revealing glory!
Not from heavenly stars but Heaven's Star.
Starring in the grand scene by dawn's first morn,
Bringing down the house before first house born.
Shining your greatness in that which is good,
Spilling your glory throughout all nature!

30

As you sang, each verse brought standing response,¹¹
Each measure a melody of True Force,
Separating first the light from darkness,
Showing such separation is from you.
From that clarity, filling all with love,
Filling days with good below and above.
Water and sky-creatures that swim and fly,
Earth and heaven-bodies that walk and shine.
By the seventh dawn, creation adorned,
With two that walk and shine-a house newborn!

40

But beginning act two, chaos ensues!

Stars falling! Off script! Music stops! Lights out!

Treason committed by audacious dust—

Rebels interring life, incurring wrath. 12

This fall from Most High starts more stunning state,

Than when all began and was yet unfilled,

Because now it's willed; souls chilled; spirits killed;

Hearts illed; serpent thrilled; blood spilled; sin instilled.

Energy this time misused to sever,

The matter closed: Space from you forever. 50

How could you let this horror show happen?¹³
How could Loving Father let tempter call?
Are there shadows in your heart after all?
You seemed briefly good, but did you just fall?
To allow sin? To ordain disorder?
How could you permit chaotic order?
The start—some tease planned only to murder?
Now long since they fell, millennia lost?¹⁴
Thousands of years, losing millions of lives?
History's dirge—theater of madness?

But then, again you sang your brilliant song,
To ages of sadness: "Let there be light!" ¹⁵
And there was Light ¹⁶ in the Bethlehem night,
Sent into our plight, but barely in sight,
For Heaven's Star shot as mere tender shoot, ¹⁷
Humbly born Hero of humble bearer, ¹⁸
With no majesty that we should notice,
Yet with a majesty that we should note.
Infinity's King in infancy came.
Carpenter-Actor, here to build his house. ¹⁹

70

And finally at his hour to shine,
He brought the house down, with sign upon sign.
Each work and word an invasion of truth,
Separating the light from the darkness,
The Cloud of Glory, Pillar of Fire,²⁰
The Living Temple replacing the old,²¹
Filling all with love's mighty energy.
Your Face in our space, full of grace and truth,²²
Time after time, astounding multitudes,
While only the applause of One mattered.

80

What! This act just took impossible course!

Wrath overflowing from Source upon Source!²³

His body of truth²⁴ meets crucified end!

His freshly pierced side leaves our hearts pierced grim!

Blood and water flow as the skies grow dim!²⁵

A lightless tomb now contains Heaven's Light!

Filled grave fills grave hearts with emptiness—night!²⁶

Darkness and sin enveloping again,

Deeper, darker now than ever before!

The void somehow engulfing Love's Glory!

90

How in heaven and on earth can this be?
How could you allow your Bright Star to fade?
How could you this time re-darken our space?
What matters with his energy erased?
Love would have the Sun of Righteousness set?²⁷
And the Just Son pay unjustified debt?
Can the Son of Love be the Son of Wrath?²⁸
And are we indeed lost on our sad path?
Not sons—just sinners in damnable gloom?
And what about you, Source of this chaos?

100

But then you sang it again! Your forte!
In resounding forte: "Let there be light!"²⁹
And a tomb became the most holy place!
But briefly, for quickly, he left it void,
So the morning could bask in his glory,
And the mourning revive in his story,
The story of Beauty lighting chaos,
Of Life with life in store for the lifeless,
Heavenly redemption for the ages,
Heaven's Light separated from darkness!

110

But first the Word³⁰ to his first disciples,
So that evening, he dawned, ready to mend,
The Sun! Risen with healing in its wings,³¹
The Son! Risen with healing in his wounds,³²
Holding forth pierced hands and predicted words,
Opening minds to foretold sufferings,³³
All dawning in a tidal wave of light.
Then commanding his house's commission,³⁴
He soared to reign in heavenly session,³⁵
Lord over the cosmos yet in chaos!

120

I, onto the scene, arrived lately born,

Stillborn in fact,³⁶ playing my breathless role.

With a stone heart³⁷ sealing an empty tomb,

And fleshly mind darkened³⁸—masked to glory.³⁹

Heaven's Light to me shone dark as new moon,

For men born blind don't squint even at noon.

My virus: My sin.⁴⁰ My story: My pride.

My nature: Filled with rebellion inside.

My time, my energy: Spaced from your side.

My matter: This God whom chaos supplied.⁴¹

Who that loves good withholds beauty or light?
Withdraws in deep shadows, 42 desires night?
Does confusion's reign not betray the throne?
This session of sadness? Not his who's flown?
Can goodness stream from heaven's so-called Star?
If heaven's stars are aligned ill and cruel? 43
Can a too-rough draft be loving design? 44
Perhaps of designs, I'll just follow mine?
And of desires, why love One who's slack?
Why drink from a Source that gushes in black?

Selah

140

But you, Divine Singer, drew near my void,
And whispered your refrain: "Let there be light."⁴⁵
And there was light! Radiant! Brilliant! Bright!
Pure Beauty emanating Pure Beauty!
Invading the chaos to claim your space,
Changing a grave to a new holy place!⁴⁶
Heaven's Star shot again at humbler mark,
Born in a sinner, your manger my heart.⁴⁷
Effectual Caller showed newborn eyes,
The glory of God in the face of Christ!⁴⁸

150

Now I sing along, following your lead,
Shouting the chorus of heaven's new house!⁴⁹
I have seen–I witness–the Dawning Man,
With eye-witness joy from holding his hand:⁵⁰
"Hear this! His power displays over sin!
Bleak becomes beauty when he enters in!
Do you hear his song? Can you sense his light?
His refulgent voice speaks resplendent sight!⁵¹
May this shout of truth in your heart find room,
'The Lord over chaos makes homes of tombs!'"⁵²

160

For now, the action still plays out in gloom,
Futile subjection marking this age doomed.⁵³
The world, now profoundly formless and void,
Still concealing your smiling face and heart.⁵⁴
A mask still covers the eyes of the minds,
Whom the god of this world enfolded blind.⁵⁵
And I confess, I too still squint and strain,⁵⁶
As through a glass dimly⁵⁷ and blurred by rain.
Even unmasked faces with opened eyes,
Fight to see clearly through gray, groaning skies.

170

180

Should misery's moon still eclipse the Sun?
With no silver crescent even begun?
And corona's lining unseen, unsung?⁵⁸
Your crown still missing? This bleak scene not done?
Isn't yesterday's dead enough of loss?
Yesterday's sadness, a sufficient cost?
If you lit the grave, should its shadow cast?
Over all who fall, succumbing at last?
Will this deadly contagion ever end?
God, when will you cure? Eradicate sin?

But I know your glory anthem by heart.

Once more, your song will roar: "Let there be light!"

And it shall be for those who fear your name,
The Sun of Righteousness will rise with life!

Descending with glory! Making men leap!

Like calves from the stall! While singing along:
"The Son of God returns! Let there be light!

We sons of God revealed, In clear, plain sight!
The breaking morning shatters all shadows!

The day that downs all our doubting now dawns!"62

Come dwell, Lord! Come shine! Come rule for all time!⁶³
We welcome you, Chaos-Magnified King!⁶⁴
Whose bright voice energizes formless void!
Using darkness to amplify your light!⁶⁵
And suspense and space to contrast your face!
To make stark the glory of your choice place!
You settle the earth!⁶⁶ And the matter too:
Pure beauty pours from the Source who is true!
Lord, with your household, clearly understood,
In love you're shining! In Jesus you're good!⁶⁷

Selah

200

End Notes

1. The title has several layers of meaning.

First, the title points to the main theme of the poem: The struggle to see God clearly with 20/20 vision. According to the Bible, this issue exists because of several reasons that are all indicated in the poem: the external reality of darkness and disorder, the inner darkness of fallen mankind, and the blinding influence of Satan. All three barriers to seeing God rightly are overcome by God in the gospel on account of the work of Jesus. God gives a person spiritual sight (correcting the fallen perspective), dwells within him (overcoming the power of Satan), and eventually brings him into his kingdom (fixing the broken created order). The final outcome will be that God is clearly seen by his people in all his goodness and glory.

Second, this poem is written late in the year 2020 which, by all accounts, has been a year of chaos. A big purpose of this poem is to declare that every crazy thing that unfolds in history, including 2020, is part of the grand drama that reveals the glory of God. The more chaotic or ugly a scene seems, the more perfectly it sets the stage for God's goodness to shine. 2020 fits into this poem chronologically in the first two stanzas of Act 5, so the heaviest allusions are there, but there are allusions throughout the poemmost notably in the imagery of chaos, sickness, being masked, breathlessness, and healing.

Third, the title points to the poem's structure. There are 2,020 syllables in the poem (200 lines of iambic pentameter plus 10 instances of "Selah"). Also, over the course of the poem's five acts, it has 20 stanzas with every 20 lines resulting in a shift in perspective for the reader.

Fourth, there are 20 names/titles for God and 20 names/titles for Jesus (God the Son) throughout the poem. The reader is tipped off to the names by capitalization. Two things show whether a name refers to God or to Jesus: context and person. The poem generally speaks to God in second person and about Jesus in third person. A handful of names/titles occur with reference to both but in different instances ("Pure Beauty," "Source," "Heavens Star," "Lord," and "King"). For further help, see endnotes 3 and 16.

- 2. The poem unfolds over a series of five "acts" that each have two parts in which the reader repeatedly alternates between questioning doubt and excited understanding. The first line of every act returns to the stage theme (action, scene, plays), and the poem is full of such imagery along the way (Star, Singer, Hero, applause, theater, etc.). The idea is that world history is a series of acts that gradually reveal God's glory in dramatic ways. Each act is like that of a play in which history is a grand theater for God who is the Star of the show. Also, each act highlights a specific act of God (creation, incarnation, redemption, regeneration, glorification) that moves history toward its culmination: God gloriously dwelling with his people forever.
- 3. "The Beginning" is the first name/title referring to God. The twenty names/titles referring to God are as follows:
 - 1. The Beginning Line 1
 - 2. Source (Beautiful Source) Lines 2, 15, 82, 100, 140, 198
 - 3. Spirit Line 7
 - 4. Master Mind Line 12
 - 5. Fountain Line 16
 - 6. Spring Line 17
 - 7. Almighty Line18
 - 8. Ghost Line 18
 - 9. God Lines 20, 130, 150, 180, 188
 - 10. Pure Beauty Lines 24, 144
 - 11. Goodness Line 25
 - 12. Heaven's Star Line 26
 - 13. True Force Line 32

- 14. Most High Line 45
- 15. Loving Father Line 52
- 16. One Lines 80, 139
- 17. Divine Singer Line 141
- 18. Effectual Caller Line 149
- 19. Lord Lines 191, 199
- 20. Chaos-Magnified King Line 192
- 4. One of the main poetic devices throughout this poem is stitching in which words are repeated—or their roots or sounds—within a stanza to tie it all together. Stitching is not very familiar to people accustomed to English poetry, but it is one of the most prominent features of Hebrew poetry. (Even a read through the Psalms in English demonstrates stitching in abundance though many instances are hidden by translation.) The first two instances of stitching in this poem appear in this line (Beginning/begun, Beautiful/bountiful/beauty). There are several other instances of stitching in this first stanza (first/first, hid/hidden, face/face, yet/yet/yet/yet, deep/deep/depths, darkness/dark).
- 5. Genesis 1:1-2. The poem reflects the understanding that the first verse in the Bible is not simply a header for the chapter but a description of God's first creative act in which the space-time continuum was supplied. Genesis 1:2 therefore describes the presence of this reality in chaotic disarray.
- 6. The primordial materials God had just created. Every act of the poem alludes to "space," "time," "matter," and "energy" in a tightly grouped set of lines. Act 2 does it twice. There are six total instances.
- 7. End rhyme is a utilized feature throughout the poem, but it is not the driving goal of every couplet. No stanza is without rhyming couplets, but no stanza has all rhyming couplets.
- 8. The second stanza of each act consists of a series of questions that express bewilderment and doubt about God's character. These

questions stem from the situation described in the first stanza of each act. While the poem is a rehearsal of redemptive history that is mostly in past tense, the present tense of these questions attempts to put the reader in these disoriented moments.

9. "Selah" is a Hebrew poetic term that appears throughout the book of Psalms. It is a section marker that invokes a moment to pause and take in what has been said. Given that this poem alternates between suspense and peace, such a marker is useful between these transitions. "Selah" is not necessary to read aloud, hence the italics. The precise meaning of the word is not known, but it is speculated that it either comes from a root for "cease/rest" or a root for "lift up/exalt." Perhaps the reader will find this poem more impactful if at every instance of this word, he or she pauses to take in the moment and to recognize that God will be ultimately exalted

10. Genesis 1:3

11. Genesis 1:4-2:3. Note the double meaning of "each verse": of the poetic song and of the first chapter of Genesis.

12 Genesis 3:6-19

- 13. "The problem of evil" is a major wrestling point throughout the poem. How can a good God allow evil to happen? The solution that the poem ultimately offers will only satisfy those who experience what the poem describes.
- 14. Note the move here to cover ages of history impacted by the fall
- 15. John 1:5; 8:12; Isaiah 9:2; Matthew 4:16
- 16. "Light" is the first name/title referring directly to Jesus. The twenty names/titles referring to Jesus are as follows:

- 1. Light (Heaven's Light) Lines 63, 86, 110, 125
- 2. Beauty (Pure Beauty) Lines 107, 144
- 3. Star (Heaven's Star, Your Bright Star) Lines 66, 92, 135, 147
- 4. Hero Line 67
- 5. Infinity's King Line 69
- 6. Carpenter-Actor Line 70
- 7. The Cloud of Glory Line 75
- 8. The Pillar of Fire Line 75
- 9. The Living Temple Line 76
- 10. Your Face Line 77
- 11. Source Line 82
- 12. Love's Glory
- 13. The Sun (The Sun of Righteousness) Lines 95, 113, 184
- 14. The Son (The Just Son, The Son of Love, The Son of Wrath, The Son of God) Lines 96, 97, 98, 114, 187
- 15 Life Line 108
- 16. The Word Line 111
- 17. Lord Lines 120, 160, 191
- 18. Christ Line 150
- 19. The Dawning Man Line 153
- 20. Jesus Line 200
- 17. Isaiah 53:2
- 18. Luke 1:34-38
- 19. Matthew 16:18; Hebrews 3:6; 1 Peter 2:5
- 20. Exodus 13:21-22
- 21. John 1:14; 2:13-22. When he came, Jesus was the true dwelling place of God. The Jewish temple had long been empty of God's presence. In this light, "He brought the house down" earlier in the stanza takes on another meaning.

- 22. John 1:17-18
- 23. Romans 3:25
- 24. A reference to both his physical body and his ministry of preaching and teaching.
- 25. John 19:34
- 26. John 19:41-42
- 27. Malachi 4:2
- 28. Isaiah 53:10
- 29. Acts 2:24; 5:30; 17:31; Romans 1:4
- 30. John 1:1-3
- 31. Malachi 4:2
- 32. John 20:20
- 33. Luke 24:44-48
- 34. Matthew 28:18-20
- 35. Acts 1:9; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3-13
- 36. Ephesians 2:1-3
- 37. Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26
- 38. Romans 8:6-8
- 39. 2 Corinthians 3:14-15

- 40. Mark 2:17; Romans 3:23;
- 41. Hebrews 12:15.
- 42. Isaiah 45:15
- 43. Job 9:7-11
- 44. Job 3:3-10
- 45. 2 Corinthians 4:6; Galatians 1:15; Ephesians 2:4-10
- 46. Acts 2:38-40; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:18-22
- 47. Isaiah 57:15; John 3:3-8. The fullest evidence of God's glorious willingness to stoop down and dwell in humble circumstances is not Jesus' birth in a dirty stable but his birth in a rebellious sinner.
- 48. 2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:6
- 49. Ephesians 5:18-20; 1 Peter 1:8-9; Revelation 5:9-14
- 50. Note how these two lines connect the experience of a new believer today with that of the original disciples who first saw the risen Christ. Though separated by millennia and, more importantly, physical proximity to Jesus, there is a shared sight, fellowship, joy, and confidence due to their identical spiritual experiences.
- 51. 1 Corinthians 1:24
- 52. 2 Corinthians 3:12; 4:5; 5:11-21
- 53. Romans 8:18-25

- 54. The idea that the Lord's "smiling face" is hidden by the present hard condition of the world is inspired by William Cowper's line in "God Moves in a Mysterious Way": "Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, But trust Him for His grace; Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face."
- 55. 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; 2 Corinthians 4:4
- 56. Romans 8:23; 2 Corinthians 5:1-7
- 57 1 Corinthians 13:12
- 58. A fairly obvious allusion to covid-19. The meaning of this line in the flow of the poem is that the world's current chaos does indeed have a silver lining (the coming kingdom of God) that is impossible to see from just looking at the physical state of things. But the allusion also asserts a silver lining to our battle with the pandemic that is equally hard to see.
- 59. Note that the Sun rises when the Son descends.
- 60. Malachi 4:2.
- 61. Romans 8:19
- 62. i.e. The return of Christ will end the pattern of disorientation and doubt that the questions throughout the poem represent.
- 63. Revelation 2:20
- 64. This last stanza can be read from either of two standpoints. It could be from the standpoint of believers on the Day of the Lord ushering the Lord into his kingdom or from the standpoint of believers today anticipating that Day and beckoning the Lord to come again.

- 65. 2 Corinthians 3:9
- 66. Revelation 21:1-2
- 67. 2 Corinthians 1:20. The Bible declares that it is on account of Jesus that every good promise of God will be fulfilled for his people. Therefore, it is through him that we will "utter our Amen to God for his glory."