

PAROUSIA

Parousia Christian Poetry Chapbook

Light Eternal

Robert Funderburk

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Correspondence Address: 1, OSS Ltd, Rufai Olayiwola Complex, Benjamin Bus Stop, Eleyele, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Phone No: +2347030874764, +2348128406752,

Email: publishing@parousiareads.com

Website: www.parousiareads.com

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Blurb

“As any experienced writer knows, poetry is the most difficult to pull off. It takes serious skill and hard work. I’ve enjoyed Bobby Funderburk over the years as a gifted and successful novelist. That alone is an incredible accomplishment. In *Light Eternal*, Bobby reveals his dexterity as a word craftsman through poetry. The poems he weaves not only pull on your heartstrings, but contain the ‘It’ factor of the Holy Spirit. Enjoy them as they speak to your soul.” – Max Davis, *best-selling author of over thirty-five books that have been featured in USA Today, Publisher’s Weekly, Bible Gateway, on The Today Show and The 700 Club. He holds degrees in journalism and biblical studies. In addition to his own works, he’s done a variety of collaboration projects with highly notable leaders.*

Light Eternal

Isaiah 60:19

The shadows in my room
Move toward evening
To the slow, inexorable
Cadence of the sun
As all mankind moves
Toward that final failing
Of the light

Darkness covers that wide, wide gate
And drifts toward the narrow
Too late now to choose your fate
As the rich man begs for water

For those who chose that narrow road
And lived by faith, not sight
Are greeted by the Lamb of God
Who is their sun and moon and starlight



Beyond Seasons

The leaves of autumn's
frosty winds,
red and gold and rust,
draw more beauty
from death
than sunlight
and gentle rain
on summer trees
could ever offer.

And this solitary pilgrim,
captured by autumn's
blaze of color, when
he takes his final
woodland walk,
what then?
He lifts from this
tabernacle of
of earthly shadow,
this life of vapor
and dust, to live
beyond the stars
and shine in the endless
fields of Heaven.



Some of You

“That’s it. I’ve had enough.” Job stood up, rolling fields and forests behind him. “We’re gonna get on with this.”

Peter, his massive body clothed in a simple tan robe, walked over to Job, the crowd giving way. “Had enough of what?”

“I’ll tell you what. Do you know that they’re putting people in jail for using plastic straws and paying people to murder babies?”

“We all know, Job.” Peter folded his arms across his chest. “You’re gonna get on with what?”

Job glanced at several men in the small crowd, then gazed at a tall Angel wearing a white robe, shimmering in the constant light. “Michael over there’s got his sword so sharp you can just look at it and bleed.

“Settle down, now.” Peter placed his calloused and scarred hands on Job’s shoulders. “You have permission for this of course?”

Job shoved Peter’s hands away. “Not yet, but we’re headed to the Throne for that right now, and to get any tactical instructions we may need.”

Suddenly the air filled with the unmistakable fragrance of Love: pure, gentle, unfailing and comfort to the soul and spirit. Tears spilled down every cheek. Jesus walked toward the gathering in the glade. He wore a plain robe of coarse material. Children leaped and danced along with him like lambs, their laughter spilling out as cleansing water.

Peter gave Job a knowing smile and backed away. “Seems as though the Throne has come to you, Job.

Job scowled at Peter, then held his hands behind his back.

Jesus walked over to where Job stood, head bowed, face reddening. “Greetings, Job. You giving these good people lessons in patience and good will?”

“I’m...I’m. Just...”. Job looked up. “They’re doing terrible things down there. Sins so vile...they’re not even satisfied with murdering your babies, now they’re selling their body parts like cast offs at a yard sale.”

Jesus gazed serenely at Job. “I know.” His calm, gentle eyes bright with unshed tears, he knelt down and took a child in each arm. Without looking up, he said softly, “And such were some of you.”

Paul, sitting beneath a flowering tree, his students gathered about him, looked up from his

parchments. He remembered well these words and smiled.
The gathering exchanged a few looks, then left.

The Word

Let the words flow
From the pages into the hands
That hold the book,
Up the arms into the body
To warm the heart
And bring joy and light
To desolate regions
Of the soul
Like a visit
With your closest friend.



KIA Minus One

Short-timer; Pungi stick survivor
Feces covered, piercing boot and foot
Infection held me 2 weeks. Limped some

In leaf-filtered dimness, a specter, black hair
Black pajamas; M-16 jammed; hurled it at the
Thin, startled face and charged before his

AK settled on my chest, my K-Bar finding
His heart; eyes wide and round and full of
Death. Only a boy, never made a sound

Three days left; walked past a Major, no salute
He attacked with unkind words. Told him, "I'm
Too short. Ain't got time to be salutin' no Major."

Could hear him bellowing behind me all the way
To the chow hall. Grabbed some coffee, grinning
Hollow-faced buddies hiding envy with insults and

The sky blazed and thundered
Filled with the sound of jets
I hurtled from the earth

Darkness, deeper than a wound
Pain, flashing through a distant prism
Adrift beyond the windless stars

I became one with time
Zipped within a vinyl womb
I saw my Father in the sun

Reaching toward me, his smile
Of Peace, warm as breathing
Never feeling the femoral artery

Cut, giving back my life
With faint, visible pulsing
Of the blood



Road of Shadows

There is a road
On the south side of this wilderness
And light falls through the trees
And settles upon it
In pools of burnt gold
Crossed by shadows
At the far end
You can see that pure light
An eternal brightness and comfort

I stand now and gaze
Toward that far end
Of this old, old road
My grandfather who preached
A pure gospel long ago
And was ridiculed for it
And his wife
My quilt stitched by her arthritic hands
Her stories drifting back from my childhood

Stands next to him
In summer blaze
Or winter's hard and unforgiving cold
My father and I worked together, building
He smiles down at my mother
Who rarely spoke an unkind word
Against anyone she ever knew

Their smiles are as pure as that eternal light
As they turn toward me
My soul longs to be with them

But my granddaughter's laughter
Is a silver cord, pulling me
And there is work to be done

That day has not yet come
For me



Work

When I think of you after these
thirty-three years of absence,
it brings to mind the faces of
childhood friends and playing
outdoors the games we built
rather than bought, until darkness
and our mothers called us home.
Play married in memory to work;
all those years of shrieking
Skil Saws, sawdust blizzards
and hammered thumbs; both
calling forth a smile as well as
a stab of sorrow because
they are no more.

With nightly suppers around
the chrome and Formica table,
hunting and fishing and family
reunions that ended when your
generation, who fired Hitler from
his job as Der Fuhrer, lay down
to rest a final time, strange

that most often I remember:
staking out a foundation beneath

a blistering July sun with a sixteen
pound maul you called *John Henry*;
or sheeting a roof side-by-side in a
cold and damp December wind and
sitting together on the tailgate of a
pickup after a long day.

When I've cast my final shadow, you're
the second carpenter
I'll look for.



The Last Song

For the first time
another voice
sang you to sleep
to a longer night
than we have known.

For the first time
other arms
lifted you from sleep
to banish night
with endless dawn.



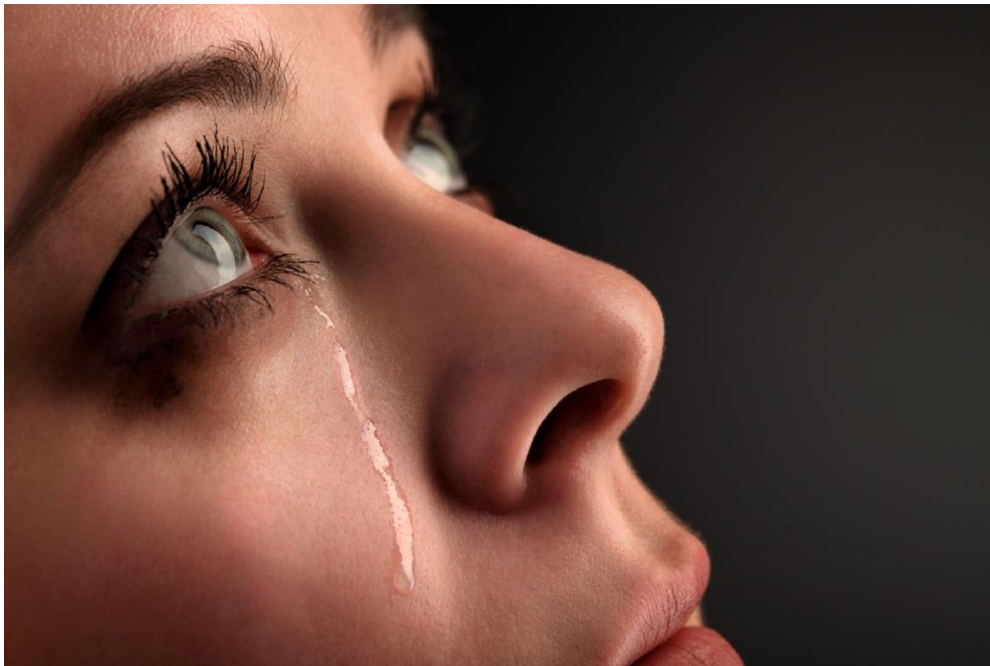
Intercession

She who would never cry
Nor show her soul outside
Wept like a lost child
In the farthest, darkest pew
For no reason that she knew

Her tears were cruel and bitter
She could not stop their flow
From the broken heart of someone
She had yet to know

And God kept a silence
For his weeping, chosen child
And used her tears for healing
In His unfailing love
And thought them beautiful
And thought them beautiful

“Put my tears in your bottle.
Are they not in your book?”
Psalm 56:8



By the Rivers of Babylon

A human form slouched beside a stream.
Beneath a fur cap, a young, quickly aging
and unwashed face showed nothing of the soul
inside. Nondescript boots and a long heavy
coat, tattered and stained by pine sap, food
and blood, loosely covered his lean frame.
Pale blue eyes stared beyond the dark water,
flowing slowly around three large boulders.

“You gonna stay out here all night?” Grimy
and grey, the tall man wore identical clothes
as the boy, only patched beyond unpatchable.
“Maybe.”
“Same thing every night, out here on this creek.
Keep this up, you gonna freeze to death.
The boy picked up a rock and bounced it lazily
off one of the boulders. “Tha’d be all right.”
“Listen, we’re all rowing this same sinking
boat so you might as well get used to it.”
“I wish it’d just go ahead and sink then.”

“Oh it will awright.” The man looked back
at the sod-roofed, stone and rough lumber
shack that stood with dozens of others beneath
the glare of a bone-white moon. “Soon as they
suck ever dang drop of work out of us.”
Glancing over his shoulder, the boy’s face grew
pale, clear tears against pale blue. “What?”
“You think they gonna work us a year or two, then
send us home on a first class ticket?”

The boy wiped his face with both hands, took
a deep breath, folding his arms over his chest
as though to protect himself against lethal words.
“Home.” Barely audible.
The man shook his head slowly. “Home’s
a long way from here, son.”
“If we’d only done something sooner, they’d
never have taken us down.”
“But we didn’t and they did. You better come along before
a patrol hauls you off.”

Silence from the boy. Nothing moved in the endless
nothing.

The man began his short walk across the road,
then stopped, listening to the soft, sad voice.
“’Tis grace has brought me safe thus far
And grace will lead me home.”



Minnie Lee

Drunk, wearing a rumpled and vomit-stained suit,
a blade thin man wobbled down the gravel drive
to the white frame house; banged on the door
for several minutes before the porch light came on.
Thirty seconds later the door opened. Standing in
the darkened house, stood a wisp of a woman in a
long robe, greying hair pinned up on her head. A
girl in her mid-teens stood to her left; a shotgun
stock rested on the floor to her right.

“I’m lost.”

“Don’t doubt it. But this ain’t the time or place
to git saved.”

“Huh?”

“You better head on down the street,” the shotgun
now cradled in her arms.

He jerked the screen door, popping the latch. “I
reckon I’ll come in and visit a spell.”

As his foot touched the door sill, the shotgun barrel
swung upward, the muzzle six inches from his face.

The drunk heard the hammer cock, blinked, mouth
open, eyes staring at the lethal hole just beyond his
nose. Easing slowly backward, he mumbled, “Maybe
I’ll jist ease on down the road.”

Silence from within the house, the dark barrel steady
on his face.

He fell backward off the porch, managed to right himself
and headed for the road in a stumbling run.

Introduction to my grandmother, the preacher’s wife,
daughter of a moonshiner, as gentle a soul as lived in
the 48 states. Unless you were the wolf to her family
of lambs.



The Gift

At your birth
You were so fresh
From Heaven
You showered us
With His radiance

I gathered
Those drops of Glory
And stored them
Like Fireflies
In a jar.

Their shining never fails
To light my way
When the Path
Grows dark



Louisiana 2016

Clouds hovered in the August air
A vast amorphous dirigible
Dark, moored and unmoving
Above rolling creeks and rivers and bayous
Of southeast Louisiana

The shores of waterways vanished
As land became lake
Toys floated aimlessly
In silent nurseries of churches
Thousands of pristine vehicles
Revealed only windows and shiny rooftops
In lots and showrooms of dealerships

Men and women
Faces aged by fatigue
Carrying pajama-clad children
Trudged chest-deep across their lawns
Toward waiting boats of the Cajun Navy
That would carry them
Toward an uncertain future

Sharing the thick darkness
And debris-filled waters
Driven from their homes
Deer and coyote and bobcat
Struggled for life

Atop the plastic roof of a child's sandbox
Lay a six-foot cottonmouth
It's elliptical eyes burning
With an ancient hatred



A Mist in the Wind

The Love of God is my hope, my sanctuary
His tender mercies blot out all my sin
In God alone is my trust, for He does carry
My fears without and all the doubts within

This world is a place of deepest darkness
But there's a land that is brightened by the Lamb
His angels will guide me on my journey
To my Father, My King the Great I AM

Be not in love with this world, it's fairest treasures
Will pass away as a mist in the wind
Just keep your eyes on the face of our sweet Jesus
Until that day from the clouds He'll descend



Year of Jubilee

What did we expect after 2000 years?

Angelic choirs with Mozart
at the piano, Elvis singing lead?
Waiting for hours on stone steps
Worn smooth by Roman sandals
Stained by Jewish blood,
We could almost see beyond
The Judean Wilderness,
Moses, his staff outstretched,
The sea parting.

What our jaded eyes saw

Across the span of the Temple Mount
A company of priests,
Robed and phylactyred,
Rushing back and forth
In front of the Western Wall
Blowing shofars, sounding not at all
Like the Trump of God
But rather the squawk-tooting
Of a grade school Kazoo band.
Not one scruffy dove
Landed on anyone's shoulder.

What God saw

Jesus in the Garden,
Sweating drops of blood,
As he prayed for the flesh
That encased the Messiah
And for the souls of all mankind.
Most brutal of deaths, the tomb
The rising again of the Nazarene,
Titus' destruction of Jerusalem
In crumbled stone, fire and blood.
The Jewish nation over the centuries
In diaspora, ridicule, inquisition
Death camps and crematoriums,
Through it all, keeping Covenant with God
"Next year in Jerusalem,"
Who brought them together

Once again as a nation
Keeping Covenant with Israel

What God expects.

Keep blood Covenant
With my Son,
The Covenant of Calvary
And the empty tomb.

Oh, yes. The tough one,
“Become as little children.”



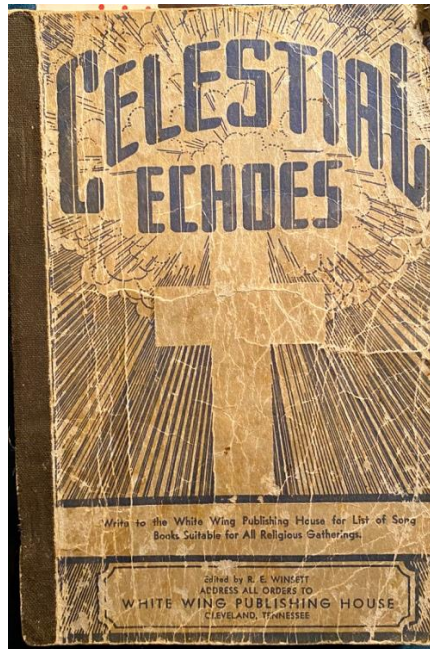
Sing

Oh sing for the long night is over
Sing for the day has begun
Let darkness and doubt
Give way to a shout
Oh shout to the Lord everyone

Oh Praise God all battles are over
Give Him praise for the end of all wars
We've soldiered all night
His dawn gives us light
For our road home beyond all the stars

Oh sing for the long night is over
The towers of Heaven I see
No sorrow death or hate
Shall pass through the gate
He's waiting for you and for me

Oh Praise God this old earth has ended
The Heavens rolled back as a scroll
All evil has died
As Jesus testified
We're walking those streets made of gold



The Overseer's Grandson

Memories of a child of three
or four flow in and out of focus.
More akin to dreams than actual
events, but supplemented by
family stories, I can testify that
the following words are mostly true.

With my infantry rifleman dad
overseas fighting the dreaded Hun,
my mother and I stayed with his
parents who lived in the parsonage
where the State Tabernacle was
located, home of the Mississippi
State Convention; a combination
of camp meeting and carnival, Holy
Ghost Revival and family reunion.

I remember most the preachers. In
addition to God's anointing, all were
united in their sermons by two other
required commodities: long and loud.
Questionable they had even a nodding
acquaintance with timepieces and back
home were assuredly champion hog callers.

Late nights I sat with my mother or one
of my aunts, listening to them proclaim
the Gospel of Peace with fighting words.
They made Satan as real as the bottles
of Orange Crush, Grapette and Nehi
I drank from the lunch stand located on
the tabernacle grounds, but with fire rather
than ice. Then their voices would lower in pitch
and volume, become soft as a young mother's,
soothing her child. Jesus came to life not only
as Lord, but as a protective older brother
or best friend.

Salvation was for everyone. Only believe in
Jesus, unspeakable gift of the Father.

I could see joy and peace and love on the faces
of these farmers, housewives, mechanics, dime
store clerks and carpenters, and also in the way

they lived. Looking back through the clutter of of the years, I have come to believe that these humble followers of Christ were the poorest and happiest people I have ever known.



Generations

Azalea Street, blazing
red petals in the noonday
sun, keeping covenant
with its namesake.
Honey bees browsed
the lavender blossoms
in the park across the street.

A young couple, tanned
and barefoot, sat on their
brick patio drinking tall glasses
of sweet tea. Children played
beneath the park's ancient
live oaks, their squeals and
shrieks of laughter floating
in the sun-drenched air
like Christmas memories.

Then the weather
turned around.

A cooling wind blew
in from the southwest,
scattering thistledown
clouds, blue sky rapidly
becoming slate.

Rain began a slow
plinking on the tin roof
of a back porch next door,
changing slowly to a deep
murmur as a white-haired
man wearing a Viet Nam Vet
cap, lay down on an army cot,
drifting into sleep to the sound
of his childhood.

Inside, the husband paced
before rain-beaded windows,
then turned suddenly toward
his wife, "You feel okay?"
She motioned for him to sit next
to her, lifted her feet onto the couch
and lay her head in her husband's

lap. “I’m just enjoying being a woman.
One who’s simply ecstatic about having
our first child.”

“But, you’re all right...I mean the pain.”

“Oh, hush.” She sighed deeply,
then closed her eyes, at peace in the
certainty of their timeless covenant.



Pilgrim

Pont du Hoc June 6, 1944

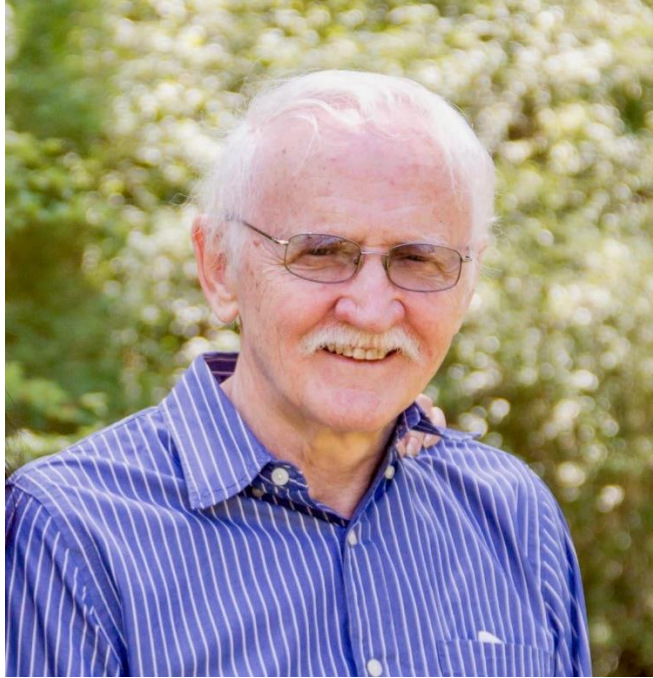
White Cliffs of Heaven, rising from the sea
That's how I saw them from the ship
Before we sloughed through the waves
In the Higgins Boat, rank with the smell
Of vomit and fear; before the gate dropped
And German lead snuffed lives like so many lamps

Before we slogged through rose-colored surf
And up a littered beach to the tenored clanking
Of jacketed rounds playing the tank traps
And before I saw all hope leave that first young face
Bracketed by the iron sights of my Garrand
A disbelief at his own mortality sparked in his eyes
And we became brothers in the fragile brevity of human flesh
As the butt stock thumped against my shoulder
Something cold and seductive brushed against my soul.

The roar of battle was that of some beast from Revelation
Turned loose on the world, spewing smoke and fire
Stumbling forward into madness and up those heights
I found myself amid the carnage and settling calm at the top

I expect the view had once been for lovers in moonlight
Or sunlit children, their laughter ringing against the sound of the sea
Now wreckage and random butchery of war held sway
Landing craft burned and smoldered against the leaden sea
Bodies, once containing the image of God,
Rocked gently in the surf, their uniforms torn and stained
Or lay among tank traps, or closer to those white cliffs
They did not reach.





Biography:

Robert Funderburk was born by coal oil lamplight in a farmhouse near Liberty, MS. He graduated from LSU (1965) and served as a SSgt in the USAFR (1965-1971). He has had seventeen Christian Novels published, 30 poems published in various literary journals and one short story published in Blue Moon Literary and Arts Review. Robert is a retired parole officer living with his wife, Barbara, on fifty acres of wilderness bordering a beautiful non-polluted river in Olive Branch, LA. His grandfather was State Overseer of the Churches of God of Prophecy for the State of Mississippi (1935-1947). He has taught 4 and 5 year olds in Sunday School for the past twenty years. Robert and Barbara have "Jobs of Joy" called grandchildren (Katherine, Kinley, Cassie, Hannah, Olivia and Luke).