

A SONG TO DAVID

BY

CHRISTOPHER SMART

Freeditorial 

*O THOU, that sitt'st upon a throne,
With harp of high, majestic tone·
To praise the King of kings:
And voice of heaven, ascending, swell,
Which, while its deeper notes excel,
Clear as a clarion rings:*

*To bless each valley, grove, and coast,
And charm the cherubs to the post
Of gratitude in throngs;
To keep the days on Zion's Mount,
And send the year to his account,
With dances and with songs:*

*O servant of God's holiest charge·
The minister of praise at large,
Which thou mayst now receive;
From thy blest mansion hail and hear,
From topmost eminence appear
To this the wreath I weave·*

*Great, valiant, pious, good, and clean,
Sublime, contemplative, serene,
Strong, constant, pleasant, wise!
Bright effluence of exceeding grace;
Best man! the swiftness and the race,
The peril and the prize!*

Great -- from the lustre of his crown·
From Samuel's horn, and God's renown,
Which is the people's voice;
For all the host, from rear to van,
Applauded and embraced the man --
The man of God's own choice·

Valiant -- the word, and up he rose;
The fight -- he triumphed o'er the foes
Whom God's just laws abhor;
And, armed in gallant faith, he took
Against the boaster, from the brook,
The weapons of the war·

Pious -- magnificent and grand,
'Twas he the famous temple plann'd,
(The seraph in his soul:)
Foremost to give the Lord his dues,
Foremost to bless the welcome news,
And foremost to condole·

Good -- from Jehudah's genuine vein,
From God's best nature, good in grain,
His aspect and his heart:
To pity, to forgive, to save,
Witness En-gedi's conscious cave,
And Shimei's blunted dart·

Clean -- if perpetual prayer be pure,

And love, which could itself inure
To fasting and to fear --
Clean in his gestures, hands, and feet,
To smite the lyre, the dance complete,
To play the sword and spear.

Sublime -- invention ever young,
Of vast conception, towering tongue,
To God the eternal theme;
Notes from yon exaltations caught,
Unrivalled royalty of thought,
O'er meaner strains supreme.

Contemplative -- on God to fix
His musings, and above the six
The Sabbath-day he blessed;
'Twas then his thoughts self-conquest pruned,
And heavenly melancholy tuned,
To bless and bear the rest.

Serene -- to sow the seeds of peace,
Remembering, when he watched the fleece,
How sweetly Kidron purred --
To further knowledge, silence vice,
And plant perpetual paradise,
When God had calmed the world.

Strong -- in the Lord, who could defy
Satan, and all his powers that lie

*In sempiternal night;
And hell, and horror, and despair
Were as the lion and the bear
To his undaunted might.*

*Constant -- in love to God, the Truth,
Age, manhood, infancy, and youth:
To Jonathan his friend
Constant, beyond the verge of death;
And Ziba, and Mephibosheth,
His endless fame attend.*

*Pleasant -- and various as the year;
Man, soul, and angel without peer,
Priest, champion, sage, and boy;
In armour or in ephod clad,
His pomp, his piety was glad;
Majestic was his joy.*

*Wise -- in recovery from his fall,
Whence rose his eminence o'er all,
Of all the most reviled;
The light of Israel in his ways,
Wise are his precepts, prayer, and praise,
And counsel to his child.*

*His muse, bright angel of his verse,
Gives balm for all the thorns that pierce,
For all the pangs that rage;*

*Blest light, still gaining on the gloom,
The more than Michal of his bloom,
The Abishag of his age.*

*He sang of God -- the mighty source
Of all things -- the stupendous force
On which all strength depends;
From Whose right arm, beneath Whose eyes,
All period, power, and enterprise
Commences, reigns, and ends.*

*Angels -- their ministry and meed,
Which to and fro with blessings speed,
Or with their citterns wait;
Where Michael, with his millions, bows,
Where dwells the seraph and his spouse,
The cherub and her mate.*

*Of man -- the semblance and effect
Of God and love -- the saint elect
For infinite applause --
To rule the land, and briny broad,
To be laborious in his laud,
And heroes in his cause.*

*The world -- the clustering spheres He made,
The glorious light, the soothing shade,
Dale, champaign, grove, and hill;
The multitudinous abyss,*

*Where Secrecy remains in bliss,
And Wisdom hides her skill.*

*Trees, plants, and flowers -- of virtuous root;
Gem yielding blossom, yielding fruit,
Choice gums and precious balm;
Bless ye the nosegay in the vale,
And with the sweetness of the gale
Enrich the thankful psalm.*

*Of fowl -- even every beak and wing
Which cheer the winter, hail the spring,
That live in peace or prey;
They that make music, or that mock,
The quail, the brave domestic cock,
The raven, swan, and jay.*

*Of fishes -- every size and shape,
Which nature frames of light escape,
Devouring man to shun:
The shells are in the wealthy deep,
The shoals upon the surface leap,
And love the glancing sun.*

*Of beasts -- the beaver plods his task;
While the sleek tigers roll and bask,
Nor yet the shades arouse;
Her cave the mining coney scoops;
Where o'er the mead the mountain stoops,*

The kids exult and browse·

*Of gems -- their virtue and their price,
Which, hid in earth from man's device,
Their darts of lustre sheath;
The jasper of the master's stamp,
The topaz blazing like a lamp,
Among the mines beneath·*

*Blest was the tenderness he felt,
When to his graceful harp he knelt,
And did for audience call;
When Satan with his hand he quelled,
And in serene suspense he held
The frantic throes of Saul·*

*His furious foes no more malign'd
As he such melody divined,
And sense and soul detained;
Now striking strong, now soothing soft,
He sent the godly sounds aloft,
Or in delight refrained·*

*When up to heaven his thoughts he piled,
From fervent lips fair Michal smiled,
As blush to blush she stood;
And chose herself the queen, and gave
Her utmost from her heart -- 'so brave,
And plays his hymns so good·'*

*The pillars of the Lord are seven,
Which stand from earth to topmost heaven;
His Wisdom drew the plan;
His Word accomplished the design,
From brightest gem to deepest mine,
From CHRIST enthroned to Man.*

*Alpha, the cause of causes, first
In station, fountain, whence the burst
Of light and blaze of day;
Whence bold attempt, and brave advance,
Have motion, life, and ordinance,
And heaven itself its stay.*

*Gamma supports the glorious arch
On which angelic legions march,
And is with sapphires paved;
Thence the fleet clouds are sent adrift,
And thence the painted folds that lift
The crimson veil, are waved.*

*Eta with living sculpture breathes,
With verdant carvings, flowery wreathes,
Of never-wasting bloom;
In strong relief his goodly base
All instruments of labour grace,
The trowel, spade, and loom.*

Next *Theta* stands to the supreme --
Who formed in number, sign, and scheme,
The illustrious lights that are;
And one addressed his saffron robe,
And one, clad in a silver globe,
Held rule with every star.

Iota's tuned to choral hymns
Of those that fly, while he that swims
In thankful safety lurks;
And foot, and chapter, and niche,
The various histories enrich
Of God's recorded works.

Sigma presents the social droves
With him that solitary roves,
And man of all the chief;
Fair on whose face, and stately frame,
Did God impress His hallowed name,
For ocular belief.

Omega! greatest and the best,
Stands sacred to the day of rest,
For gratitude and thought;
Which blessed the world upon his pole,
And gave the universe his goal,
And closed the infernal draught.

O David, scholar of the Lord!

*Such is thy science, whence reward,
And infinite degree;
O strength, O sweetness, lasting ripe!
God's harp thy symbol, and thy type
The lion and the bee!*

*There is but One who ne'er rebelled,
But One by passion unimpelled,
By pleasures unentic'd;
He from himself hath semblance sent,
Grand object of his own content,
And saw the God in Christ.*

*Tell them, I AM, Jehovah said
To Moses; while earth heard in dread,
And, smitten to the heart,
At once above, beneath, around,
All Nature, without voice or sound,
Replied, 'O Lord, THOU ART.'*

*Thou art -- to give and to confirm,
For each his talent and his term;
All flesh thy bounties share:
Thou shalt not call thy brother fool:
The porches of the Christian school
Are meekness, peace, and prayer.*

*Open and naked of offence,
Man's made of mercy, soul, and sense:*

God armed the snail and wilk;
Be good to him that pulls thy plough;
Due food and care, due rest allow
For her that yields thee milk.

Rise up before the hoary head,
And God's benign commandment dread,
Which says thou shalt not die:
'Not as I will, but as Thou wilt,'
Prayed He, whose conscience knew no guilt;
With Whose blessed pattern vie.

Use all thy passions! love is thine,
And joy and jealousy divine;
Thine hope's eternal fort,
And care thy leisure to disturb,
With fear concupiscence to curb,
And rapture to transport.

Act simply, as occasion asks;
Put mellow wine in seasoned casks;
Till not with ass and bull:
Remember thy baptismal bond;
Keep thy commixtures foul and fond,
Nor work thy flax with wool.

Distribute; pay the Lord His tithe,
And make the widow's heart-strings blithe;
Resort with those that weep:

*As you from all and each expect,
For all and each thy love direct,
And render as you reap.*

*The slander and its bearer spurn,
And propagating praise sojourn
To make thy welcome last;
Turn from old Adam to the New:
By hope futurity pursue:
Look upwards to the past.*

*Control thine eye, salute success,
Honour the wiser, happier bless,
And for their neighbour feel;
Grutch not of mammon and his leaven,
Work emulation up to heaven
By knowledge and by zeal.*

*O David, highest in the list
Of worthies, on God's ways insist,
The genuine word repeat!
Vain are the documents of men,
And vain the flourish of the pen
That keeps the fool's conceit.*

*Praise above all -- for praise prevails;
Heap up the measure, load the scales,
And good to goodness add:
The generous soul her Saviour aids,*

*But peevish obloquy degrades;
The Lord is great and glad.*

*For Adoration all the ranks
Of Angels yield eternal thanks,
And David in the midst:
With God's good poor, which, last and least
In man's esteem, Thou to Thy feast,
O Blessed Bridegroom, bidst.*

*For Adoration seasons change,
And order, truth, and beauty range,
Adjust, attract, and fill:
The grass the polyanthus checks;
And polished porphyry reflects,
By the descending rill.*

*Rich almonds colour to the prime
For Adoration; tendrils climb,
And fruit-trees pledge their gems;
And Ivis, with her gorgeous vest,
Builds for her eggs her cunning nest,
And bell-flowers bow their stems.*

*With vinous syrup cedars spout;
From rocks pure honey gushing out,
For Adoration springs:
All scenes of painting crowd the map
Of nature; to the mermaid's pap*

The scaled infant clings.

*The spotted ounce and playsome cubs
Run rustling 'mong the flowering shrubs.
And lizards feed the moss;
For Adoration beasts embark,
While waves upholding halcyon's ark
No longer roar and toss.*

*While Israel sits beneath his fig,
With coral root and amber sprig
The weaned adventurer sports;
Where to the palm the jasmine cleaves,
For Adoration 'mong the leaves
The gale his peace reports.*

*Increasing days their reign exalt,
Nor in the pink and mottled vault
The opposing spirits tilt;
And by the coasting reader spied,
The silverlings and crusions glide
For Adoration gilt.*

*For Adoration ripening canes,
And cocoa's purest milk detains
The western pilgrim's staff;
Where rain in clasping boughs enclosed,
And vines with oranges disposed,
Embower the social laugh.*

Now labour his reward receives,
For Adoration counts his sheaves,
To peace, her bounteous prince;
The nect'rine his strong tint imbibes·
And apples of ten thousand tribes,
And quick peculiar quince·

The wealthy crops of whitening rice
'Mongst thyrine woods and groves of spice
For Adoration grow;
And, marshalled in the fenced land,
The peaches and pomegranates stand,
Where wild carnations blow·

The laurels with the winter strive;
The crocus burnishes alive
Upon the snow-clad earth;
For Adoration myrtles stay
To keep the garden from dismay,
And bless the sight from dearth·

The pheasant shows his pompous neck;
And ermine, jealous of a speck,
With fear eludes offence:
The sable, with his glossy pride,
For Adoration is described,
Where frosts the waves condense·

*The cheerful holly, pensive yew,
And holy thorn, their trim renew;
The squirrel hoards his nuts;
All creatures batten o'er their stores,
And careful nature all her doors
For Adoration shuts.*

*For Adoration, David's Psalms,
Lift up the heart to deeds of alms;
And he, who kneels and chants,
Prevails his passions to control,
Finds meat and medicine to the soul,
Which for translation pants.*

*For Adoration, beyond match,
The scholar bullfinch aims to catch
The soft flute's ivory touch:
And, careless, on the hazel spray
The daring redbreast keeps at bay
The damsel's greedy clutch.*

*For Adoration, in the skies,
The Lord's philosopher espies
The dog, the ram, and rose;
The planets' ring, Orion's sword;
Nor is his greatness less adored
In the vile worm that glows.*

For Adoration, on the strings

*The western breezes work their wings,
The captive ear to soothe --
Hark! 'tis a voice -- how still, and small --
That makes the cataracts to fall,
Or bids the sea be smooth!*

*For Adoration, incense comes
From bezoar, and Arabian gums,
And from the civet's fur:
But as for prayer, or e'er it faints,
Far better is the breath of saints
Than galbanum or myrrh.*

*For Adoration, from the down
Of damsons to the anana's crown,
God sends to tempt the taste;
And while the luscious zest invites
The sense, that in the scene delights,
Commands desire be chaste.*

*For Adoration, all the paths
Of grace are open, all the baths
Of purity refresh;
And all the rays of glory beam
To deck the man of God's esteem,
Who triumphs o'er the flesh.*

*For Adoration, in the dome
Of CHRIST, the sparrows find a home;*

*And on his olives perch:
The swallow also dwells with thee
O Man of GOD'S humility,
Within his Saviour's Church.*

*Sweet is the dew that falls betimes,
And drops upon the leafy limes;
Sweet, Hermon's fragrant air:
Sweet is the lily's silver bell,
And sweet the wakeful tapers' smell
That watch for early prayer.*

*Sweet the young nurse, with love intense,
Which smiles o'er sleeping innocence;
Sweet when the lost arrive:
Sweet the musician's ardour beats,
While his vague mind's in quest of sweets,
The choicest flowers to hive.*

*Sweeter, in all the strains of love,
The language of thy turtle-dove,
Paired to thy swelling chord;
Sweeter, with every grace endued,
The glory of thy gratitude,
Respired unto the Lord.*

*Strong is the horse upon his speed;
Strong in pursuit the rapid glede,
Which makes at once his game:*

*Strong the tall ostrich on the ground;
Strong through the turbulent profound
Shoots Xiphias to his aim.*

*Strong is the lion -- like a coal
His eyeball -- like a bastion's mole
His chest against the foes:
Strong the gier-eagle on his sail,
Strong against tide the enormous whale
Emerges as he goes.*

*But stronger still in earth and air,
And in the sea, the man of prayer,
And far beneath the tide:
And in the seat to faith assigned,
Where ask is have, where seek is find,
Where knock is open wide.*

*Beauteous the fleet before the gale;
Beauteous the multitudes in mail,
Ranked arms, and crested heads;
Beauteous the garden's umbrage mild,
Walk, water, meditated wild,
And all the bloomy beds.*

*Beauteous the moon full on the lawn;
And beauteous when the veil's withdrawn,
The virgin to her spouse:
Beauteous the temple, decked and filled,*

*When to the heaven of heavens they build
Their heart-directed vows.*

*Beauteous, yea beauteous more than these,
The Shepherd King upon his knees,
For his momentous trust;
With wish of infinite conceit,
For man, beast, mute, the small and great,
And prostrate dust to dust.*

*Precious the bounteous widow's mite;
And precious, for extreme delight,
The largess from the churl:
Precious the ruby's blushing blaze,
And alba's blest imperial rays,
And pure cerulean pearl.*

*Precious the penitential tear;
And precious is the sigh sincere;
Acceptable to God:
And precious are the winning flowers,
In gladsome Israel's feast of bowers,
Bound on the hallowed sod.*

*More precious that diviner part
Of David, even the Lord's own heart,
Great, beautiful, and new;
In all things where it was intent,
In all extremes, in each event,*

Proof -- answering true to true·

*Glorious the sun in mid career;
Glorious the assembled fires appear;
Glorious the comet's train:
Glorious the trumpet and alarm;
Glorious the Almighty's stretched-out arm;
Glorious the enraptured main:*

*Glorious the northern lights a-stream;
Glorious the song, when God's the theme;
Glorious the thunder's roar:
Glorious Hosannah from the den;
Glorious the catholic Amen;
Glorious the martyr's gore:*

*Glorious, -- more glorious, -- is the crown
Of Him that brought salvation down,
By meekness called Thy Son;
Thou that stupendous truth believed; --
And now the matchless deed's achieved,
Determined, Dared, and Done·*

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