

## CANT ESPIRITUAL' AUSIÀS MARCH

### English version (Robert Archer)

1. Since we may reach you only by your will,  
give me your hand, else wrench me by the hair;  
if up to yours I fail to stretch my hand,  
drag me to you; take, if I resist, no heed.  
There I want to go where you await me;  
I don't know why I can't do what I wish:  
that I possess free will I do not doubt;  
something obstructs it; what, I do not know.

I pull myself up, but every time sink down  
under the weight of my terrible sins.  
Lord, before my case by death's forever closed,  
accept me as your own, who long for you;  
send your blood to melt my hardened heart:  
many it has cured of the same disease.  
But your delay alone proclaims your ire;  
in me your mercy falls on stony ground.

2. Less I have sinned with my understanding  
than my will, which I have with guilt weighed down.  
Help me, my God! But foolish is my plea,  
for you help only those who help themselves;  
yet, who come unto you, they shall not want,  
and ever held out to us are your arms.  
But what of me, who drag my feet, and know  
I've nothing done that could deserve your help?

Forgive me if folly is all I say;  
the passions force out every word I speak:  
I live in fear of Hell, but there direct  
my steps; I would turn back, and yet can not.  
But that you saved the thief I don't forget:  
to our eyes, more than his works deserved.  
Wheresoever it wills your spirit breathes;  
when it breathes, or why, none of us can tell.

Though a bad Christian, as my works proclaim,  
anger or resentment I bear you none.  
I have firm faith that all you do is good,  
and that you do good both when life you give  
or take; all is one that comes from your might.  
Only a fool would be angry with you;  
love of evil and ignorance of good -  
if men don't know you, there's the reason why.

3. All I ask is that you strengthen my heart,  
so with your will my desires become fused;  
the world, I know, cannot profit me at all:  
give me strength to reject it completely;  
fire me with some small spark of that delight  
a good man feels when he thinks of you,  
and then my greatly rebellious flesh  
will be appeased, and give me some respite.

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Help me, Lord, for I cannot take a step  
without you, paralysed my limbs, or worse.  
Old habits are so deep ingrained in me  
that virtue's taken on a bitter taste.  
Lord, have mercy, and my nature reverse,  
made evil with the heavy weight of sin.  
And if my sins can be redeemed by death,  
then this sweet penitence I'll gladly make.

My fear of you is greater than my love;  
this heavy sin before you I confess.  
My hope is all confounded; within me  
I feel a dreadful battle raging on:  
I see that you are merciful and just,  
that, heedless of merits, your will grace bestows;  
as you choose, the gift you grant or you deny.  
Shall I not tremble, when even good men fear?

If fear of God weighed upon righteous Job,  
what then of me, floundering in sin  
I think of Hell, where time has no meaning,  
and feel as much terror as man can know.  
The soul, predestined to contemplate our God,  
rebels against him with blasphemous thoughts;  
none can imagine the torments of Hell.  
How should he feel who walks along that road?

4. I beg you, to my life, Lord, put an end,  
before even worse I have time to do.  
I groan in pain at my perversity,  
and fear eternal death beyond this life.  
Here only pain, and there pain without end  
awaits me. Take me when I'm at my best;  
it nothing serves to put that moment off.  
The journey awaits; there is no time to rest.

I grieve that as I should I do not grieve,  
knowing eternally I may be damned;  
the pain I fear is not in nature found;  
man cannot guess at it, nor much less feel.  
This is some excuse, but, I think, a weak one,  
if my fear far short of my peril falls;  
I ask for Heaven, yet little prize it;  
fear it is that fails me, no less than hope.

5. Whenever angry you seem to us to be,  
this only is our ignorance at fault;  
your will shows clemency in all it does;  
what we think bad is ineffable good.  
Forgive me, Lord, if ever I accused you,  
for I confess myself the guilty one;  
I have judged all you do with eyes of flesh.  
Only give light to the eyes of my soul!

All I do is contrary to your will,  
my own false friend, enemy to myself.  
Help me, Lord, since you see me in these straits!  
That you'll my merits judge brings me to despair;  
I loathe each passing day my life goes on,  
and yet I dread its coming to an end.  
I live in anguish, with no firm intent:  
even now in me I sense a change of will.

6. You are the end in which all ends must meet,  
there is no end that does not lead to you.  
You are the good by which all good is gauged,  
and none is good unless he is like you.  
Whomever you please you turn into a god,  
in your likeness raised to man's highest rung;  
it follows, then: who keeps the Devil pleased

will take the name of he whose ways he chose.

This life has its wordly ends to offer,  
and none of them true, that lead man to bliss;  
where the world's good ends, there true good begins,  
as far as men can such things understand.  
Some philosophers claim this world contains  
true good, but each the other contradicts,  
a sign infallible it holds no truth;  
that's why such good cannot make man content.

In itself the Law of Moses held no good  
(Paradise could not be entered by that route),  
but it was the beginning of our own,  
so one might say that these two form one Law.  
Just so, that end which human will desires  
leaves restless appetite to go unchecked,  
yet none without it reach that other end:  
Saint John was sent to prophesize our Lord.

Whoever other than the true end seeks  
can never have respite: elsewhere our will  
cannot rest – this much knows each simple fool -  
but man's desires in you can find an end.  
Just as all rivers rush down to the sea,  
so every end must finally meet in you.  
7. Since I know what you are, to love of you  
compel me; make love vanquish all my fear.

But if I fail to love as I would wish,  
heap up my fear, and so let dread hold sin  
at bay; then, free of sin, shall I shrug off  
those habits that have barred the way to love.  
May Death strike those who from you estranged me,  
stifled all life, and left me almost dead!  
Lord God, oh yet a while please let me live:  
Even now I feel that to you I draw near .

8. How will I excuse myself before you  
when my disordered reckoning I make?  
From birth you disposed me to be upright,  
but the straight rule I've bent into a scythe;  
I would set it true again, but your aid  
I need. Oh, help me, Lord, for I languish.  
Let me learn in what way I'm predestined,  
your divine present, but my future fate.

Lord, I do not ask for bodily health,  
nor of nature or of fortune some good,  
but only that I may love you alone;  
from such love derives the highest good.  
And so must it be that heavenly joy  
I cannot feel since such I was created;  
yet with understanding a fool will see  
the highest good brings joy above all else.

9. When will be the day I'll lose my fear of death?  
It will be when with love of you I burn;  
but in contempt I must first hold my life  
and must for your sake only feel such scorn.  
Then shall I crush beneath my feet those things  
that weigh – this heavy burden - on my back;  
he who has no dread of the lion's fierce claws  
will laugh off the sting of the tiny wasp.

Lord, I beg that you deaden my senses  
and from certain pleasures turn me for good,  
not just foul delights that most offend you  
but also those which lead to venial sins.  
Thus will all my thoughts be only of you,  
and I'll take that road leading where you are.  
Only do this, Lord, and if I turn back,  
may your ears to me stay deaf for ever.

10. I grieve to see my life draw near its end;  
yet, for all my grief, I cannot love you -  
not as I would: habit is against me,  
and I am burdened with such weight of guilt.  
Many did not serve you, yet you have done  
for them no less than what I ask for me;  
I beg you, Lord, to come into my heart,  
since some you entered more vile still than mine.

Christian I am, and yet the warmth of faith  
can never melt my senses' lingering chill,  
and these I follow in everything I do;  
my faith's in Heaven, which reason confirms.  
My spirit's in readiness; but I must drag  
the body where my other part awaits.  
Send, Lord, the fire of faith to succour me,  
and let it scorch the part that's set in ice.

11. You created me that I might save my soul,  
yet you may know the contrary fate is mine.  
If this is so, then why was I created,  
since your omniscience embraces all?  
Return, I beg, to nothingness my being:  
sooner this than eternal dungeon dark.  
I believe in you who of Judas said  
better had it been that man had not been born.

If only, baptised into salvation,  
to the arms of life I hadn't been returned,  
but there and then I'd paid my due to death,  
I wouldn't know this present life of fear.  
Men more quickly grasp the torments of Hell,  
than ever can imagine Heaven's bliss;  
the pain we feel's a copy of that other,  
but we must guess at Paradise, unfelt.

12. Give me strength revenge to take upon myself;  
your will I've offended with my great sins.  
But if I fail, wreak vengeance on my flesh,  
my soul unharmed, that's in your likeness made.  
Faith, above all, unwavering must be,  
and hope must never tremble; charity  
then will not fail me, if these two are firm.  
Turn a deaf ear to my pleas for the flesh.

13. Oh when shall I be able to feel sweet  
tears of repentance coursing down my cheeks?  
Contrition is the fount from which these flow,  
the key that opens Heaven's bolted door.  
I weep from attrition these bitter tears  
since they spring more from fear of you than love;  
yet even these in abundance send me,  
to those other tears the path and then the road.