

*Bound  
Verse*



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Carl Martin Cole



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## *Introduction*

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MOST OF THE poems in this little volume were never intended for publication. I wrote them merely as a means of expressing my own deepest feelings, beliefs, questions, and ideas—usually when there was no one around I felt I could talk to. I have never sought (or even desired) fame or fortune as a poet; and it is highly unlikely that I will ever find any! That's quite alright with me. That being said, however, I will not deny that, now that some friends have succeeded in convincing me that I should try to have some of my poems published, I am a bit concerned about how they will be received by readers. I am, after all, only human—and I have a natural human desire to have my work appreciated. Also, though I read very little modern poetry, I have recently read enough of it to be made aware of the fact that the kind of unstructured, image-oriented, 'free verse' poetry which seems to be in vogue nowadays bears virtually no resemblance to the kind of rhymed, metered, conceptual, value-driven poetry I generally prefer to write. If that makes my own work unpopular (which it might) or unmarketable (which it probably will), so be it. My poetry is mine, not somebody else's; and I have to write it honestly and in accordance with my own true feelings, beliefs, and stylistic preferences, else I would see no purpose in writing it at all.

Since the poems in this volume were written over quite a long period of time (nearly twenty-five years), and in all kinds of different moods and life circumstances, they naturally exhibit quite

a bit of diversity, especially in terms of content: Some are sappily sentimental, others almost purely abstract and intellectual; some are deeply negative and depressing, others were intended to be humorous or inspirational. Also, as will become readily apparent to any attentive reader, it is not only the content and mood of the poems but the quality of the writing itself that varies to a considerable degree over time. This is inevitable. No one can realistically be expected to *always* perform at their highest possible potential, or even close to it. We all have our ups and downs—our moments of brilliance, and our moments of foolishness or incompetence. Such is life. And since poetry is a reflection or expression of real life, such is poetry as well.

Since these poems are an expression or reflection of life, and of my own life in particular, I have chosen not to extensively rewrite or revise them, and to leave them arranged chronologically, more or less in the order in which they were written. Extensive rewriting and revision might make my poems appear more polished, sophisticated, and refined—just as heavy makeup might make some women appear more physically attractive than they actually are—but since the poems are intended not to conceal but to reveal things (my own flaws and weaknesses included), I prefer to adopt a more honest and natural approach in creating and presenting them.

And, in accordance with such an ‘honest and natural’ approach, I must confess that I have another more personal and practical reason for leaving my poems pretty much the way I originally found them while looking through my old journals: Being a perfectionist by temperament, I cannot afford the luxury of giving my persistent urge to improve things free rein. Were I to do so, the rewriting and revision of my poems would become quite literally an *endless* process, or at least a lifelong one—and nothing of mine would ever be published.

I am aware of the old maxim that says, “If you can’t do something right, don’t do it at all!” but such advice might be

construed as establishing an impossibly high standard, and thereby discouraging all kinds of potentially fruitful activities. On the other hand, whoever it was that said, "Small deeds done are better than great deeds planned!" was surely adopting a much more positive and practical approach to life. At any rate, it is in the spirit of this latter advice that I would like to offer up to readers this small work of mine, however imperfect or incomplete it may yet appear to be.

I do have the very real consolation of knowing that if even a few readers derive some pleasure, knowledge, or inspiration from any of my poems, that is certainly more than would do so were I to allow some fear of criticism or embarrassment to prevent me from publishing any of them in the first place!

One final note to those who may be unaccustomed to reading much poetry (and they are many in this day and age!):

In order to be fully appreciated, poetry, like any other art form, must be approached with an open mind and an open heart. Even the most seemingly simplistic poem may express sentiments, ideas, or experiences that we have never known before, never fully explored, or never viewed in quite the same light as the poet does. If so, and if we have the willingness and the courage to become personally involved in the poet's work, we may derive benefits from the reading of it that we never even imagined possible before. On the other hand, if we allow ourselves to view things on a merely superficial level or to remain blinded by our own prejudices or presuppositions, even the most brilliant words of the most inspired poets will leave us unmoved, unchanged, uninspired, and uninstructed.

To give a concrete example of the kind of thing I am talking about here: Suppose someone were to come to my own work with the preconceived notion that poetry ought to be written in a very different way than I choose to write it, or with the attitude that all Christians (such as myself) must be naïve, misguided religious fanatics. I would suggest to such a person that he rethink

his position with regard to poetry, and in regard to the Christian religion. If he remained unwilling to do either of those things he would also remain, *by his own choosing*, incapable of understanding or appreciating much of what my poetry book has to say. A similar breakdown in communication could easily arise as a result of some other poet's work. This is the kind of thing I am cautioning the reader against. I do not for a moment mean to suggest that the reader must already *be* a Christian (or an admirer of unusual poetry!) in order to understand or appreciate my work, merely to point out that it is in the reader's own best interest (if he or she wants to truly appreciate any work of poetry) to try, as I suggested earlier, to keep 'an open mind and an open heart'.

Carl Martin Cole  
Oak Park, Illinois



*To my late mother*  
*Lillian Ione Krafft (1927-1998)*  
*and grandmother*  
*Ruth Ferrenburg (1904-1969)*  
*who taught me to always ask questions,*  
*to be my own man,*  
*and, above all,*  
*to be honest with myself*  
*and with others*

and  
*To C.S. Lewis*  
*scholar, poet, author, critic,*  
*and Christian apologist*  
*whose works*  
*(all of them)*  
*inspired me*  
*and taught me the value*  
*of commonsense*  
*and of Christian charity*



## *Acknowledgments*

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ON A MORE immediate and practical level I would like to thank my wife Deborah, without whose financial and emotional support (and printing and computer skills!) this book might never have been produced. I would also like to thank the singer/songwriter “Mighty Joe” Beatty for his continued support and encouragement. Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to Reuben R. Donnelley, whose generous financial support of my (formal) education enabled me to devote more time and attention to my writing.



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*No syllogistic reasonings  
contain those wondrous seasonings  
(unmeasured, though of Heaven's worth)  
God sent to salt the tasteless earth!*



# *Part One*

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# Autumn

---

Falling fire, rust and gold  
fiery summer now grown old

Crystal sky of deepest blue  
aging flora changes hue

Bountiful gift of God unmasked  
cooling breezes...summer's past

Full of grace the year grows old  
fraught with beauty to unfold

Empty eyes are filled with love  
blessed gift from God above

Sparing not the poorest one  
God would give to everyone

Love so great man cannot see  
all He gives for you and me

(A *fraction* of His splendor shown  
is yet enough to make Him known!)

## Prayer

My eyes of faith have been opened once again  
Fear and doubt, the weapons of sin, would have them closed  
forever.

Through vision in faith God's truth will remain  
forever before me.

...Yet doubt assails me now,  
and strength eludes me...

God hold my soul firm within Thy grasp;  
Let Thy strength save me from my past.

...May this seed of hope You have planted within my heart  
grow strong and bear the fruit of righteousness  
in abundance before Your face.

May Your eyes see it  
and be well pleased.

Amen

## Approach

The dreaded hope  
draws nigh the trembling heart  
Whence light dispels  
the easy growing dark  
(True comfort comes,  
false comfort must depart)



## *If Known*

If choice begetting known effect  
precedes creative will  
How may we then, in vain regret,  
lament ensuing ill?

## *Follow*

Will for the right  
Walk by the light  
Of that which is True

Know without fear  
Wisdom is near  
Follow Him through

Hope till the end  
Time will defend  
That which is Best

Trust in the Good  
Do as you should  
He will give rest

Give it some time  
And you shall find;  
Great is His Love

## 4 · *Bound Verse*

We must desire  
He shall not tire  
It is enough

Beauty is real  
Do not conceal  
That you possess

Seek Him and find  
Lose not the time  
In vain distress

Wrong will abound  
Hold what you've found  
Life is a test

Pride will deceive  
All of us grieve  
Give and be blessed

Man is not well  
We must rebel  
Respond to His call

Do not withhold  
We must be bold  
Lest brothers fall

## *Trinity*

One is one and three  
Who was and is to be  
Full of power  
over ours  
through eternity

## *The Search*

I won't be what you want me to  
I won't do as you say  
For I must act on what is True  
and find a better Way

To question is a noble art  
to Wonder, higher still  
—And he who seeks with honesty  
will have his dreams fulfilled

But when a mind is set on flesh  
and worldly ways deceive  
That mind will never find the Best  
nor of His truth receive

I have found out for myself  
through pain and sad despair  
That seeking truth without His help  
is like the blind man's stare

## *Glory*

Glory surpassing all creation  
bright shining through eternity  
Sing to Him in exultation  
worship Him on bended knee

Greater now in celebration  
of His mighty victory  
Come the voices of each nation  
ringing down through history

Raging now in desperation  
Satan thrashes wildly  
Failing now is all deception  
face to face with Honesty

Now the sleeping shall awaken  
veil is rent and all shall see  
Power of the darkness shaken  
comes the sweet Reality

Many lost and some are taken  
great is human misery  
I shall never be forsaken  
if to Him I always cleave

*Free*

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What is 'free'?  
The right to choose  
what I should be?  
Unlimited ability  
to act exactly as I please?  
—To see just what I wish to see  
that everything may always be  
arranged to fill my every need?

Surely this can't freedom be  
but merely all-consuming greed—

to have my own reality,  
no limit to the power of me?

Ah, but if I had this dream  
(it's often called insanity!)  
how very lonely it would seem—  
No one there to disagree,  
No action independently,  
Nothing there, in fact, but me!

*Futility*

Broken and limp I fell into the firm arms  
    of Him who holds all things together  
Later, half-rising in foolish despair,  
    I sought again that freedom  
whose life means death to man

—Bright the sick illusion of power  
thrusting trusted vision  
    upon my weary mind!

Living Water  
    spilling  
        falling  
with my hope's demise!

...How sad the feeble truth portrayed  
    by weakness in disguise!  
        Half dead with lying life I strayed  
in search of truer lies

With valiant fear in hopeless hope  
    of wisdom I've denied  
I blindly grope through darkness  
    born of selfishness and pride

## *Days Long Gone*

Smiling faces, happy places

long ago...I used to know

Sadder days have come and gone

...have come and stayed...

won't go away

Now I wish I could have kept

the days we prayed, the nights we wept

...so far away...

there's nothing left

## *A Narrow Window*

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No more delay  
or more to say  
I must now speak  
today must seek  
time races past  
the day goes fast  
the silent fear  
is drawing near  
the dreadful chance  
doth now advance  
strike out  
the doubt  
delay  
dismay  
too late  
my fate  
is sealed