

## The Sermons of Francis de Sales

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Dom Mackey divides the sermons of St. Francis de Sales into manuscripts (*Works*, tomes VII and VIII) and collected sermons (tomes IX and X). After the publication of the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, the manuscripts no longer consisted of quick notes or outlines jotted down on loose sheets of paper in preparation for a sermon, but of "extensive and clearly divided summaries written in a firm and steady hand on large folio sheets."<sup>1</sup> Dom Mackey explains that St. Francis kept his sermons with the intention of using them for later works. Thus he lost nothing of the long hours of research and oratorical preparations. Although they were not completely written out, the well organized and well developed sermons were preserved through the preliminary notes, outlines, and summaries. Dom Mackey is also of the opinion that 80% of the original manuscripts have disappeared.

From 1610 on, St. Francis frequently preached in the chapel of his "daughters," the Visitation nuns. Two religious, Agnès Jolly de la Roche and Marguerite Michel, recorded 63 sermons. The personal touch of each of these nuns marks their work, the one being more attentive to ideas, the other to anecdotes and practical applications. In addition there are seven other recordings, two instructions given at Belley and Bourges, and five at Lyons.<sup>2</sup> Undoubtedly the religious selected these sermons with the intention of sending them to the various houses of the order. In 1624 Mother de Chantal wrote to the superior at Orleans: "You will receive these sermons as soon as they are transcribed."<sup>3</sup> It seems superfluous to mention that the 70 collected sermons represent but a small segment of the total number St. Francis addressed to his daughters.

ED. NOTE: Translated from the French by Thérèse Belanger.

<sup>1</sup> *Works* (8:x).

<sup>2</sup> *Works* (9:viii-x).

<sup>3</sup> *Works of St. Jane de Chantal* II, p. 385.

Even though the Latin manuscripts provide valuable information, they cannot give us an idea of St. Francis' oratorical style. They consist of notes that do not always appear to be very organized, simple signs, sometimes even single words that St. Francis alone could understand because they pointed to earlier research.

The collected sermons reveal how St. Francis made use of these notes. He made a choice, and among those notes which he selected only a few were thoroughly used. These sermons have all the more value because, even though they always addressed the Visitation nuns, some imply the presence of a larger audience invited for certain special ceremonies. The form then becomes more solemn; the divisions are better indicated.

Undoubtedly the collected sermons were not selected by St. Francis himself. The choice depended on the inclination or preference of the religious in charge of taking notes. They reveal his characteristic style: a casual pace and numerous digressions.

Doctrinal and controversial expositions are more numerous in the Latin summaries, although they can also be found in the preliminary notes as well as in the fully developed sermons. Of course, the doctrinal applications which St. Francis presented to his congregation were not the same as in his discourses to the nuns. Their instructions were mostly spiritual and the applications referred to the religious life itself. Even so, they include numerous digressions on worldly affairs as well as satires on the vices and eccentricities of the nuns. In fact St. Francis seems to dwell on these with a certain insistence and preference. Yet allowing for the difference in audiences, the same tendencies and the same oratorical style appear in all his preaching. Thus, the sermons addressed to the Visitation nuns show more familiar casualness in both outline and elocution, more mystical spirituality and appropriate applications. The general tone is that of a simple, direct, and intimate conversation. Even in Paris the noblemen and their ladies were initially surprised at the simplicity of the Savoyard\* bishop. Later they admired him.

The numerous notes in the Latin manuscripts, the many scriptural passages, the careful research of certain subjects, the precision of subject matter and outline as stated in the introduction to the collected sermons, as well as the very development of the sermons leave no doubt as to the extensive preparations which St. Francis made before preaching. Even so, the sermons include unexpected and happy improvisations. After completing his research and meditation, and writing the necessary notes, St. Francis felt free to improvise upon the form, even the outline, which he sometimes changed while preaching. He enjoyed this manner of proceeding and the simplicity which it implied.

\* The word 'Savoyard' sometimes has overtones of 'rude or unmannerly' (translator's note).



"erected on Mount Calvary where the solemn betrothal of Christ to our souls is celebrated. . . The consummation of our eternal marriage will not take place until we are in heaven and in the possession of the beatific vision." The day of the passion was truly a day of nuptial joy. As proof St. Francis refers to the bride's invitation (in the Cantic of Canticles) to the daughters of Jerusalem to contemplate her beloved "in the crown with which his mother has crowned him on the day of his betrothal, on the day of the joy of his heart." This refers to the crown of thorns placed on the head of Christ in the synagogue. The day of his death was truly a day of joy for him: "it brought forth the sweet fruit of salvation for men of hope" through the merits acquired by the Savior. It was a day of joy also for the Father, for "it was then that God rendered the fruit of his justice, of his charity and of his mercy towards man." And finally, it was a day of joy for men and angels since the Savior revealed "the great love he has for us." "The assistance we need to attain glory" consists of "the delicious food" prepared for us at this divine banquet. And the nuptial garment required in order to be admitted "is the sacred virtue of charity."<sup>9</sup>

#### THE TEACHING OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

On the firm and varied basis provided by Sacred Scripture, St. Francis has erected an original and vast doctrinal structure which is dogmatic, moral, and spiritual. It is not original because of its doctrine, which is that of the Gospels, but because of its perceptions, its practical applications, and the manner in which it presents and renews traditional teaching. To St. Francis the great mysteries of the Christian faith, the events of the Gospel, and the liturgy of Advent and Lent were all occasions, first, to present a theological point to lay Christians or religious, next, to convert souls or to advance them on the road to perfection.

A small number of virtues are mentioned quite frequently. They are simple virtues: humility, obedience, modesty, mercy, gentleness, resignation, to which it is imperative to add the practice of faith, hope, and charity. Undoubtedly when St. Francis explained the Christian truths to laymen, he was not satisfied with merely reproaching them for their faults and vices, but frequently wandered into the field of moral virtues even though this had not been planned in the Latin outline. He knew that in these matters he could depend on the inspiration of the moment and on improvisation. No preacher, unless he is the slave of a text, will doubt this. These "lesser" virtues were truly present in the mind of the author of the *Lettres* and the *Introduction*. One might say that he preferred the passive virtues to the active virtues. Regardless of the value of this distinction, we

<sup>9</sup> Ser 2:24 (9:208-214).

must not forget the importance attributed to the virtue of charity, which brings "all virtues" into the souls where it reigns, and to the inspiration of God in the hearts of men. Under the rule of charity the most simple souls are capable of the greatest actions.

For instance the sermons contain many references to the acts of the contemplative life, prayer, meditation and its different degrees.<sup>10</sup> Undoubtedly St. Francis discussed the different degrees of prayer primarily for the benefit of the Visitation nuns, but not exclusively, for several pious persons including his spiritual daughters attended certain instructions. His doctrine was in no way esoteric: its general character made it understandable to a lay person as well as to a religious. This is how he wanted it to be. At the conclusion of a sermon in which he explained the different degrees of mental prayer, he became specific: "And thus we are taught that everyone, no matter his state in life, must pray and meditate, for this is when the divine Master will speak to him. I do not say that all must engage in mental prayer to the same degree for it would not be appropriate for a very active person to meditate as long as a religious."<sup>11</sup>

In Salesian theology with its great emphasis on charity, the heart, which popularly means the organ and the symbol of love, is of fundamental importance. It is therefore not surprising that it gave birth to the devotion to the Sacred Heart. In this St. Francis was a precursor. He wondered why Christ after his death wanted his "side opened" and found several reasons: "First, because he wanted us to see the thoughts of his heart, which were thoughts of love and affection towards us . . . in order that we would be able to see how much he desired to give us graces and blessings, and even his heart." St. Francis explained as follows St. Catherine of Siena's prayer: "Lord, I recommend your heart to you." She prayed that "the heart of God be her heart."<sup>12</sup> "This source, his sacred breast, is inexhaustible. New graces and new consolations flow unceasingly from it for those who have recourse to it, similar to the breast where a small child nurses and can always find satisfaction."<sup>13</sup>

This heart calls and attracts sinners. "This Sacred Heart, afire with love, is the precious treasure room of the divinity." When the Apostle Thomas, at first unbelieving, had touched it with his hand, "he felt a great and divine warmth."<sup>14</sup> Let us simply note that many elements of the Catholic doctrine of the Sacred Heart can be found in germ in the preceding passages.

<sup>10</sup> Ser 2:4 (9:27-31); Ser 2:7 (9:46-50); Ser 2:8 (9:51-56), etc.

<sup>11</sup> Ser 2:4 (9:27-31).

<sup>12</sup> Ser 2:11 (9:80).

<sup>13</sup> Ser 2:13 (9:465).

<sup>14</sup> Ser 2:18 (10:409-410).



## THE COMPOSITION OF THE SERMONS

From the point of view of arrangement and plan, the sermons have two outstanding qualities: variety and flexibility. The sermon of March 19, 1612,<sup>15</sup> for the feast of St. Joseph draws an ingenious parallel between the Joseph of *Genesis* and the foster father of the child Jesus. Other sermons such as the sermon preached on April 6, 1612,<sup>16</sup> for the Friday after the fourth Sunday of Lent follow a progressive movement. These sermons follow a simple development: in some, one idea calls forth another; in others, there are successive explanations of the different parts of a catechetical definition. Other sermons are based on a prolonged antithesis such as Eve and Mary, or Christ's concern with his coming passion and the ambition of the mother of the sons of Zebedee.<sup>17</sup> Still other sermons are based on an analogy. On one occasion,<sup>18</sup> after a long commentary on the word 'horn' from the line "and has raised a horn of salvation," the horns of the temple evoked in St. Francis' mind the thought of the preaching of St. John the Baptist and of penitence. Other sermons proceed by description and enumeration. Sometimes St. Francis chooses certain aspects of a parable, other times he differentiates each point according to the classical manner. The above examples have been taken from the manuscripts. Other examples can be found in the collected sermons, but in these the development itself accentuates the qualities and the defects.

St. Francis felt quite free to change his planned and announced outline. This resulted from his constant preoccupation with practical applications, his improvisation of form, and, as we have seen, from a spirit and desire for simplicity which led him to converse familiarly with the audience. Hence the long exordiums, which are developed nearly out of proportion to the subject they introduce. For instance, on Christmas Eve, 1613, there is a long introduction on the purpose of the vigil.<sup>19</sup> The same reasons underlie the digressions and the stories told for their own sake. On November 21, 1620, in a discussion on the Presentation of the Virgin, he announces three points inspired by the brass vessel in the temple and the mirrors which adorn it. But only two of these points are developed: the first and the third, for the mirrors led him to talk about the Virgin for more than half of the sermon.<sup>20</sup>

But we must hasten to add that the composition of the sermons usually follows a more deliberate plan. When St. Francis mounted the pulpit he

<sup>15</sup> *Ser* 1:35 (8:86).

<sup>16</sup> *Ser* 1:37 (8:96).

<sup>17</sup> *Ser* 1:130 (8:291-295).

<sup>18</sup> *Ser* 1:116 (8:211), Dec. 5, 1616.

<sup>19</sup> *Ser* 1:95 (8:124-129).

<sup>20</sup> *Ser* 2:37 (9:380-397).

knew perfectly what he was going to say. He planned precise divisions which he indicated at the end of the exordium and which he recalled during the sermon if he feared that the audience was lost. Whenever he moved to a new point he would call attention to this. He even informed his audience whenever he was not going to discuss or was going to abbreviate a section which he had previously announced.

## ELOCUTION

A study of the eloquence of St. Francis should be based primarily on the collected sermons. With the exception of a few passages written in French, the Latin manuscript notes can offer only general ideas and suggestions as to what this eloquence was probably like. The collected sermons, selected and recorded by the religious in what amounted to a form of shorthand, were spoken texts. We can nearly hear St. Francis improvise and relax into familiar speech. The beauty and strength of these sermons derive less from their style, remarkable though it often is, as from the ideas, sentiments, and personal convictions which they express. St. Francis had the power that attracts souls, the diversity which commands attention, the simplicity, sometimes the smile, which persuades. He also had strength and spirit, both essential qualities of a good speaker. He raised himself by the very nature of the ideas which he interpreted. But taste and simplicity allowed him to remain noble without becoming pompous. He freely used antithesis. He admired "this art of nature which through a form of opposition clarifies opposites by opposites."<sup>21</sup>

St. Francis liked enumerations and descriptions, and sometimes gave his presentation a dramatic twist by engaging the characters in dialogue. Fairly often he would become lyrical under the influence of personal feelings or memories. ✓

The following passage is taken from the French fragment of the sermon for Ash Wednesday, 1612.<sup>22</sup>

When Gideon undertook the celebrated battle described in chapter seven of the *Book of Judges*, he ordered the three hundred soldiers, whom he had taken as companions of such a worthy enterprise, not to use any arms other than the sound of the trumpets and the light of the burning torches which each carried in his hand. Arms, which to tell the truth, were little suited to their purpose if we consider it in its first and external meaning; but arms which in fact were excellent and through which the entire Medianite army was led to confusion, to flight and ultimately to the edge of the sword. For after the sound of the trumpets had given a horrid alarm to the ears, the fire which surrounded the camp in the middle of the night brought dread as of a frightful specter to the troops of the enemy. The sound of the trumpets awakened the Medianites who looked in the direction from where the sound

<sup>21</sup> *Ser* 1:91 (8:112).

<sup>22</sup> *Ser* 1:84 (8:74-75).



came and suddenly saw three hundred burning torches coming out of the cut pieces of that many broken jars. The sound of the trumpets frightened them because it happened in the middle of the night when they were sound asleep; the light of the torches terrified them because they saw it appear of a sudden in the midst of broken jars. Thus the glowing torches coming out of broken jars was a mystical sign that soon the glory of Israel and the triumph of victory would come from the dead and fallen bodies of the Medianites as was being announced by the trumpets.

The second passage that I shall quote is an elevation of the love of God which Job revealed in his suffering and humiliation.<sup>23</sup>

Now then, since Job was a great lover of God, all the words which he pronounced on his dunghill were certainly loving words for the flame which enkindled his heart led him to exaggerations. But the Lord who understood him to the bottom of his heart saw clearly that it was neither boredom nor impatience which made him talk like that, but the love with which he was animated. For our dear Master knows well what it is to love and understands well the language of love, and therefore decided that Job had not sinned through his words. It was necessary that he realize how much the saint loved him since he had chosen him to offer to posterity as a prodigy of patience. Also, I believe that God made Job understand why he was being treated in this manner as an example of sanctity to the whole world, and that the afflictions which he sent him and the state to which he had been reduced proceeded from his love toward him: this the holy man understood very clearly.

The gift of poetry, the facility to grasp reality and transform it into images, comparisons, and symbols, which distinguishes the spirit of St. Francis, found numerous occasions to exercise itself as well as an abundant and varied subject matter in the sermons. He enjoyed picturesque words: they clarified his thought and helped him to define his ideas through the intangibles which images add to pure thought. The images used by St. Francis are predominantly visual. They interpret forms, color, motion. "Men who wallow in the mire and mud of a thousand sins."<sup>24</sup> "To scrape off all that is superfluous with the knife of circumcision."<sup>25</sup> "It seems that they will never finish devouring the crucifix."<sup>26</sup> St. Peter, "nevertheless, denied him at the slightest snuffle of a chambermaid."<sup>27</sup> "Truly, the sacred womb of Mary is a mystical hive in which the Holy Spirit has kneaded this cake of honey with her own pure blood."<sup>28</sup>

As we can see, St. Francis used strong images. This was remarkable in a prelate who was usually considered soft-spoken and who delighted in the simplicity of the flowergirl Glycera. We must also mention images of a powerful realism: "Men who are threatened by apoplexy think they are

<sup>23</sup> Ser 2:62 (10:321).

<sup>24</sup> Ser 2:52 (10:151).

<sup>25</sup> Ser 2:52 (10:153).

<sup>26</sup> Ser 2:55 (10:203-204).

<sup>27</sup> Ser 2:65 (10:375).

<sup>28</sup> Ser 2:69 (10:415).

in excellent health, even though they have death at their throat."<sup>29</sup> The worldly-minded "when they want to enter some of their children into the religious life consider it normal to enter the most ugly, useless, and deformed. They regard the religious life as excrement, as the sweepings and peelings of apples."<sup>30</sup> St. Francis compared the marriage of Cana with the marriages of today:

which are full of lewdness and stuffed with falsehood. For, how many lies aren't told when one wants to marry a girl? She is this, she is that, she has so much inheritance; and the young man fulfills every condition and qualification. And on this basis a marriage is contracted; afterwards they discover that everything that was said is not true. Then come the regrets and reproaches from one side and the other, but it is too late, for it has happened.<sup>31</sup>

St. Francis does not hesitate before any expression, no matter how violent, so long as it is true and helps to drive the doctrines into the souls of his listeners. "As long as men shall live, crawl and drag on this earth. . . ."<sup>32</sup> Elsewhere he describes the raven as an "infectious and stinking bird."<sup>33</sup> "Mary at the foot of the cross: pierced with a sword of sorrow, but definitely not in a swoon or ready to faint as falsely and irreverently depicted by painters."<sup>34</sup>

It is indeed very unfortunate that some or rather all Christians who are willing to be spiritually circumcised in order to participate in today's feast\* circumcise themselves in the least interested part. And thus they are sunk into sensual voluptuousness and run after brutish pleasures (I would say this example is a little uncouth, until I remember others). Wanting to be spiritually circumcised, they draw money from their purse and give to several charities. . . . Do not circumcise your purse, you pleasure-seekers and carnal men, for it is not that part of you that is the sickest: circumcise your heart. Break away from those discussions and companions, conversations and friendships, curtail your flirtations and similar foolishness. It is there that you must start if you wish to make a good circumcision. But this is not how men proceed: following their boorish inclinations, they attach much importance to almsgiving and believe that they have thereby satisfied everything.<sup>35</sup>

On the other hand St. Francis is an expert narrator: he arranges and graduates each story with skill, sustains the interest, and maintains the spirit and suspense until the end. This aspect of his preaching can be charming or powerful; it is always interesting, sometimes captivating. The following example chosen from among many others will give an idea of his narrative and descriptive skills:

<sup>29</sup> Ser 2:25 (9:218).

<sup>30</sup> Ser 2:25 (9:229).

<sup>31</sup> Ser 2:43 (10:7).

<sup>32</sup> Ser 2:52 (10:154).

<sup>33</sup> Ser 2:61 (10:308).

<sup>34</sup> Ser 2:70 (10:380).

\* Sermon for the Feast of the Circumcision, Jan. 1, 1622 (translator's note).

<sup>35</sup> Ser 2:52 (10:149).



One day Marc Anthony bought two young lads who had been offered to him by a certain horsedealer, for in those days children were still being sold in some countries. Some men stocked them as merchandise and profited from their traffic, as is done today with horses. These two children resembled each other so well and so perfectly that the dealer had made him believe that they were twins. It was inconceivable to find any other reason for such perfect resemblance. In fact when they were separated it was not possible to decide which of the two they were: a rarity which so impressed Marc Anthony that he bought them at great price. But after leading them to his home, he discovered that the two children spoke completely different languages, so different that Pliny tells us that the one came from the nearby area of Dauphiny and the other from Asia, regions which are so distant from each other that it can hardly be described. When Marc Anthony realized this, that they were not twins, in fact were not even from the same country or born under the same king, he was terribly enraged and full of anger against the dealer who had sold them. But after a young knave pointed out that the resemblance of the slaves was all the more astounding because they came from different countries and were in no way related, he remained appeased and from then on became so attached to them that he would have preferred losing all his property rather than these two children because of the unusualness of their resemblance.<sup>36</sup>

The satire of St. Francis is graphic, courageous, and independent. He mocks the important ladies who wash with fresh water and then spend "three full hours in the evening-dew until their faces are congealed,"<sup>37</sup> the worldly ladies of Venice who "wash their hair and then sit on the rooftops for long hours in order to bleach their hair blond," and those who "wear plaster on their faces all week long and only remove it on Sunday hoping to appear pale and pleasing in the eyes of some fools."<sup>38</sup> He laughs at those who make pretense of being brave, "who try to act courageous and go alone somewhere at night, but scream as soon as they hear a small stone drop or a mouse run. Or the others who become very frightened when they go to the fields when they see the shadow of a tree in the distance: they fear that it is someone waiting for them."<sup>39</sup>

St. Francis spares neither the prejudices nor the pretensions of the nobility to which he belongs and among whom he lives. Nor does he draw back in the presence of royalty. Thus he relates:

Louis XI . . . preparing to go to war, had several prayers said in Paris for the preservation of his physical health. One day he assisted at a Mass which was being offered for his intentions in the church of St. Germain. When the celebrant arrived at the prayers in which he recommended the soul and spiritual health of the king, the prince immediately dispatched one of his pages with the request to pray for his physical health, adding that they would think about his soul later. He thus committed a serious imperfection: and we are very tempted to commit similar ones on such occasions.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Ser 2:59 (10:269).

<sup>37</sup> Ser 2:64 (10:26-27).

<sup>38</sup> Ser 2:64 (10:27).

<sup>39</sup> Ser 2:55 (10:203).

<sup>40</sup> Ser 2:60 (10:295).

St. Francis makes fun of the little noblemen who consider themselves to be "of good family," brave horsemen of illustrious house and race. "They recall their families and origin, and research whether or not their grandfather or great-grandfather was a direct descendant of Abraham. What foolishness! Next they deem themselves above others and end up saying: 'I come from such and such a family, while he comes from that family.'" The irony is all the more biting because St. Francis himself was of very authentic lineage.<sup>41</sup>

The sermon for the Thursday after the second Sunday of Lent, 1622, depicts the delicate religious who are overly concerned with their health and the religious who prolong as long as possible their convalescence. "They worry and go out of their way to try different methods of recovery." When they suffer from migraine or colic they tell everyone; at the least hurt they withdraw into the infirmary. All are expected to sympathize with their pretended ills. This picture is true not only of certain religious but also of the ladies of the world. It takes them weeks and months to recuperate from an illness of a few days. "It becomes necessary to shelter them in a special infirmary, to feed them special meats, to coddle and spoil them until they feel completely restored."<sup>42</sup> It is known that St. Francis did not pamper himself, although he did of course want to receive the necessary care, but so much delicacy shocks both reason and virtue. "These people resemble little children who after being stung by a wasp or a bee run and show it to their mother so that she will blow on the finger."<sup>43</sup> St. Bernard allowed his religious to drink only water. It was objected that St. Paul enjoined the use of wine to Timothy. He replied: "Give me a Timothy in these times, and we will allow him wine, in fact we will order him to drink wine, and not only wine but even 'drinkable gold' if need be."<sup>44</sup>

In studying the 70 collected sermons and examining the "manuscript" sermons at the school of Msgr. Levé, we have tried to analyze the preaching of St. Francis de Sales, always aware that we can never recapture the life that he must have put into his words. We should like to conclude with the following points in summary.

- (1) Sacred Scripture is the only and essential basis of the teaching of St. Francis de Sales; it is on the Scriptures that the doctrinal, dogmatic, and spiritual structure has been erected. The saint's originality resides solely in the manner in which the strictly scriptural doctrine has been coined.
- (2) The great freedom of plan evidenced in the sermons arises from his concern for adaptation to his audience and from faithfulness to the in-

<sup>41</sup> Ser 2:39 (9:425); Ser 2:48 (10:92).

<sup>42</sup> Ser 2:60 (10:296).

<sup>43</sup> Ser 2:60 (10:293-294).

<sup>44</sup> Ser 2:60 (10:291-292).



spiration of the moment. Structurally, the sermons are always vigorous, varied, and flexible, as evidenced by his use of parallels, progressive movements, and antitheses.

(3) The sermons are characterized by: (a) a vocabulary that is brisk and penetrating, familiar and lively; (b) a variety of literary genres: enumerations, descriptions, narrations, dramatic recitals, etc.; and (c) a gift of poetry which moves the imagination and feelings, e.g., his rich imagery and the sonority and rhythm of his phrasing.

### *Duty of a Bishop . . .*

I shall say nothing of the preacher's mission or vocation, beyond noting that bishops have not only this mission but likewise its source within their ministry, whereas other preachers have only its rivulets. To preach is their first and their great duty, as is said when they are consecrated. To this effect they receive a special grace at their consecration, and they must render this grace fruitful. In his quality as a bishop St. Paul cries out: "Woe is to me if I do not preach the gospel." The Council of Trent says, "To preach is a bishop's principal duty." Consideration of this fact should encourage us, for in this task God assists us in a special way. It is marvelous what great power a bishop's preaching has in comparison with that of other preachers. Abundant as are the rivulets, men like to drink from the source itself.

FRANCIS DE SALES

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### *Still Wine*

*And we desired to graze the vineyard of the Trinity:  
Where there is silence living pure upon the summit's height,  
The white snow of the Father waits in children's midst,  
Where there is silence filling hearts with Christ's red rain,  
The sweet blood of his head drips from a night-steeped cloud,  
Where there is silence heating souls' cold marrow in the sun,  
The biting fire of the Paraclete flames love in Love:  
And division ceases, and we within the mystic body's light  
adore our God.*

### *I Tie My Shoes*

*I tie my shoes and see a face rise up  
The floor, the wall, the room, the sky, the world:  
Such eyes have never been, nor brow as wise,  
And strange the look of his which clears the air  
To stair my heart with steps of stable stars.  
Infinites of pain wind up this flight  
Within my mortal cage, and sear the flesh  
That caves the rivered beat of bounding life.  
My humble shoes pursue the mystery face  
With dancer's grace—to jump the rounded moon,  
The sun, the glittered space, to fall to earth  
Again and tread a stationed path of stones.  
The lovely way is long, a lonely choice,  
But worth the face I carry in my heart.*

ELISABETH A. EVANS