

LET ME GET HOME BEFORE DARK

by J. Robertson McQuilkin

It's sundown, Lord.
The shadows of my life stretch back
into the dimness of the years long spent.
I fear not death, for that grim foe betrays himself at last,
thrusting me forever into life:
Life with you, unsoiled and free.

But I do fear.
I fear the Dark Spectre may come too soon -
or do I mean, too late?
That I should end before I finish or
finish, but not well.
That I should stain your honor, shame your name,
grieve your loving heart.
Few, they tell me, finish well...
Lord, let me get home before dark.

The darkness of a spirit
grown mean and small, fruit shriveled on the vine,
bitter to the taste of my companions,
burden to be borne by those brave few who love me still.
No, Lord. Let the fruit grow lush and sweet,
A joy to all who taste:
Spirit-sign of God at work,
stronger, fuller, brighter at the end.
Lord let me get home before dark.

The darkness of tattered gifts,
rust-locked, half-spent or ill-spent.
A life that once was used of God
now set aside.
Grief for glories gone or
Fretting for a task God never gave.
Mourning in the hollow chambers of memory.
Gazing on the faded banners of victories long gone.
Cannot I run well unto the end?
Lord, let me get home before dark.

The outer me decays -
I do not fret or ask reprieve.
The ebbing strength but weans me from mother earth
and grows me up for heaven.
I do not cling to shadows cast by immortality.
I do not patch the scaffold lent to build the real, eternal me.
I do not clutch about me my cocoon,
vainly struggling to hold hostage
a free spirit pressing to be born.

But will I reach the gate
in lingering pain, body distorted, grotesque?
Or will it be a mind
wandering untethered among light phantasies or
grim terrors?
Of your grace, Father, I humbly ask...
Let me get home before dark.

-as printed in the Spring, 1989 Columbia Bible College & Seminary
Quarterly