

# Passage Into Spirit

**Walt Whitman**

*(excerpted from "Leaves of Grass"  
with some slight paraphrasing)*

## *Prologue*

Come, said the Muse,  
Sing me a song no poet has yet chanted,  
Sing me the Universal.

In this broad earth of ours  
Amid the measureless grossness and slag,  
Enclosed and safe within its central heart,  
Nestles the seed perfection.

By every life a share or more or less,  
None born but it is born,  
Conceal'd or unconceal'd the seed is waiting.

– from *Birds of Passage*

## I.

O take my hand Walt Whitman!

(What do you hear? What do you see?)

Such gliding wonders! Such sights and sounds!  
Such joined unending links, each hook'd to the next,  
Each answering all, each sharing the earth with all.

Who are they who salute, and that one after another salute you?

O vast Rondure, swimming in space  
Cover'd all over with visible power and beauty,  
Alternate light and day and the teeming spiritual darkness,  
Unspeakable high processions of sun and moon and countless stars above,  
Below, the manifold grass and waters, winds, mountains, trees,  
With inscrutable purpose, some hidden prophetic intention,  
Now first it seems my thought begins to span thee.

You vapors, I think I have risen with you, moved away to distant continents,  
and fallen down there, for reasons,  
I think I have blown with you, winds;  
You waters I have finger'd every shore with you,  
I have run through what any river or strait of the globe has run through,  
I have taken my stand on the bases of peninsulas  
and on the high embedded rocks, to cry thence:

Salut au monde!

What cities the light or warmth penetrates I penetrate those cities myself,  
All islands to which birds wing their way I wind my way myself.

Toward you all, in America's name,  
I raise high the perpendicular had, I make the signal,  
To remain after me in sight forever,  
For all the haunts and homes of men.

– from *Salut au Monde* and  
*Passage to India*

## *II.*

Hark, some wild trumpeter, some strange musician,  
Hovering unseen in air, vibrates capricious tones to-night.

I hear thee, trumpeter, listening alert I catch thy notes,  
Now pouring, whirling like a tempest round me,  
Now low, subdued, now in the distance lost.

Blow again, trumpeter – conjure war's alarums.

And I saw askant the armies,  
I saw in noiseless dreams hundreds of battle-flags,  
Borne through the smoke of the battles and pierced with missiles I saw them,  
And carried hither and yon through the smoke, and torn and bloody,  
And at last but a few shreds left on the staffs (and all in silence,)  
And the staffs splinter'd and broken.

Away with the themes of war! Away with war itself!  
Hence from my shuddering sight to never more return.

Over the carnage rose prophetic a voice,  
Be not dishearten'd, affection shall solve the problems of freedom yet,  
Those who love each other shall become invincible,  
They shall yet make Columbia victorious.

O soul, repressless, I with thee and thou with me,  
Thy circumnavigation of the world begin,  
Of man, the voyage of his mind's return,  
To reason's early paradise,  
Back, back to wisdom's birth, to innocent intuitions,  
Again with fair creation.

– from *The Mystic Trumpeter*,  
*When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd*,  
*Over the Carnage Rose Prophetic a Voice* and  
*Passage to India*

### *III.*

Strains musical flowing through ages, now reaching hither,  
I take to your reckless and composite chords, add to them,  
and cheerfully pass them forward.

All, all for immortality,  
Love like the light silently wrapping all,  
Nature's amelioration blessing all,  
The blossoms, the fruits of ages, orchards divine and certain,  
Forms, objects, growths, humanities, to spiritual images ripening.

Give me O God to sing that thought,  
Give me, give him or her I love this quenchless faith,  
I Thy ensemble, whatever else withheld withhold not from us,  
Believe in plan of Thee enclosed in Time and Space,  
Health, peace, salvation universal.

Each of us inevitable,  
Each of us limitless – each of us with his or her right upon the earth,  
Each of us allow'd the eternal purports of the earth,  
Each of us here as divinely as any is here.

Thoughts, silent thoughts, of Time and Space and Death, like waters flowing,  
Bear me indeed as through the regions infinite,  
Whose air I breathe, whose ripples hear, lave me all over,  
Bathe me O God in Thee, mounting to Thee,  
I and my soul to range in range of Thee.

– from *Starting from Paumanok,*  
*Birds of Passage* and  
*Salut au Monde*

## *Epilogue*

Is it a dream?  
Nay but the lack of it a dream,  
And failing it life's lore and wealth a dream,  
And all the world a dream.

O the blest eyes, the happy hearts,  
That see, that know the guiding thread so fine,  
Along the mighty labyrinth.

Sail forth – steer for the deep waters only,  
Reckless, O soul, exploring, I with Thee, and Thou with me,  
For we are bound where Mariner has not yet dared to go,  
And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.

– from *Passage to India* and  
*Birds of Passage*

### ***Narration 5:***

*Holy God of grace and glory,  
In the beginning, you created the universe  
And all that dwells within it;  
In the course of human history, you called into being a  
Covenant people, the people of Abraham and Sarah, of  
Moses and the prophets, of Ruth and Naomi, of David  
And his lineage;  
In the fullness of time, fulfilling your promise, you sent your  
Son, you birthed our Savior, you gave us the Christ,  
And in the wake of his dying and rising and ascension into  
Heaven, your Spirit moved again on Pentecost to create a  
new community. Your church was born to bear his name  
and to spread the gospel throughout the world.*

*We, dear God, are heirs of your providence, followers of Jesus, members of the body of Christ. In our own time and place, we seek to be faithful. We know we cannot do this on our*

*own. So, guide us, feed us, heal us, lead us. Grant us wisdom, grant us courage. On Thy people pour Thy power.”*

## **V. Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah / God of Grace and God of Glory**

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak but though art mighty; hold me with Thy powerful hand.  
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more, . . .

Open now the crystal fountain whence the healing stream doth flow;  
Let the fire and cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through;  
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer, be thou still my strength and shield, . . .

God of grace and God of Glory, on Thy people pour Thy power;  
Crown Thine ancient church's story; bring its bud to glorious flower.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the facing of this hour, . . .

Lo! The hosts of evil 'round us scorn Thy Christ, assail Thy ways.  
From the fears that long have bound us, free our hearts to faith and praise.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the living of these days, . . .

Set our feet on lofty places; gird our lives that they may be  
armored with all Christian graces, pledged to set all captives free.  
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, that we fail not them nor thee.

## ***Narration 6:***

*In Christ there is no east or west,  
In him no north or south;  
But one great fellowship of love  
Throughout the whole wide earth. (John Oxenham, "In Christ There Is No East or West")*

*The breadth of God's love, which in Christ has been shown to be so vast as to have no boundaries, is given to us as a love to share.*

*We are called – each one of us, and all of us together – to be messengers of mercy, ambassadors of grace, repairers of the broken places, healers of the sick and hurting. Marked by Christ as his disciples, we are sent by him to spread good news, to plant seeds of new life, to raise up the downtrodden, to restore justice, and to make peace among all peoples and nations.*

*By Christ's command and through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are to be palpable signs and instruments of God's will and hope for the world. We are to be God's hands and feet. Through who we are and by what we do, all the world should feel the very arms of God wrapped 'round them in love and grace.*

## **VI. We All Are One in Mission**

We all are one in mission, we all are one in call,  
Our varied gifts united by Christ the Lord of all.

A single, great commission compels us from above  
To plan and work together that all may know Christ's love.

We all are called for service to witness in God's name;  
Our ministries are different, our purpose is the same;

To touch the lives of others by God's surprising grace  
So every folk and nation may feel God's warm embrace.

Now let us live united and let our song be heard.  
Now let us be a vessel for God's redeeming word.

We all are one in mission, we all are one in call,  
Our varied gifts united by Christ the Lord of all.

***Narration 7:***

*“Our God, our help in ages past,” you are indeed “our hope in years to come.” Before there was anything, you were there. After there is everything, you will still be there.*

*We live our lives in hope,  
because you lead us and sustain us.  
We live our lives in joy,  
because we taste your goodness even now.  
We live our lives in confidence,  
because we rest in you.*

*“Our God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Be Thou our guard while life shall last,  
And our eternal home.”*

## **VII. Our God, Our Help in Ages Past**

Our God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home.

Before the hills in order stood, or Earth received its frame,  
From everlasting Thou art God, through endless years the same.

A thousand ages in Thy sight are like an evening gone;  
Short as the watch that ends the night before the rising sun.

Time like an ever rolling stream, soon bears us all away;  
We fly forgotten as a dream dies at the opening day.

Our God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,  
Be Thou our guard while life shall last, and our eternal home.

Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Amen.