

Anne Bradstreet

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The Flesh and the Spirit

In secret place where once I stood
Close by the Banks of Lacrim flood,
I heard two sisters reason on
Things that are past and things to come.
One Flesh was call'd, who had her eye
On worldly wealth and vanity;
The other Spirit, who did rear
Her thoughts unto a higher sphere.
"Sister," quoth Flesh, "what liv'st thou on
Nothing but Meditation?
Doth Contemplation feed thee so
Regardlessly to let earth go?
Can Speculation satisfy
Notion without Reality?
Dost dream of things beyond the Moon
And dost thou hope to dwell there soon?
Hast treasures there laid up in store
That all in th' world thou count'st but poor?
Art fancy-sick or turn'd a Sot
To catch at shadows which are not?
Come, come. I'll show unto thy sense,
Industry hath its recompence.
What canst desire, but thou maist see
True substance in variety?
Dost honour like? Acquire the same,
As some to their immortal fame;
And trophies to thy name erect
Which wearing time shall ne'er deject.
For riches dost thou long full sore?
Behold enough of precious store.
Earth hath more silver, pearls, and gold
Than eyes can see or hands can hold.
Affects thou pleasure? Take thy fill.
Earth hath enough of what you will.
Then let not go what thou maist find
For things unknown only in mind."

Spirit.

"Be still, thou unregenerate part,
Disturb no more my settled heart,
For I have vow'd (and so will do)
Thee as a foe still to pursue,
And combat with thee will and must
Until I see thee laid in th' dust.
Sister we are, yea twins we be,
Yet deadly feud 'twixt thee and me,
For from one father are we not.
Thou by old Adam wast begot,

But my arise is from above,
Whence my dear father I do love.
Thou speak'st me fair but hat'st me sore.
Thy flatt'ring shews I'll trust no more.
How oft thy slave hast thou me made
When I believ'd what thou hast said
And never had more cause of woe
Than when I did what thou bad'st do.
I'll stop mine ears at these thy charms
And count them for my deadly harms.
Thy sinful pleasures I do hate,
Thy riches are to me no bait.
Thine honours do, nor will I love,
For my ambition lies above.
My greatest honour it shall be
When I am victor over thee,
And Triumph shall, with laurel head,
When thou my Captive shalt be led.
How I do live, thou need'st not scoff,
For I have meat thou know'st not of.
The hidden MAnnea I do eat;
The word of life, it is my meat.
My thoughts do yield me more content
Than can thy hours in pleasure spent.
Nor are they shadows which I catch,
Nor fancies vain at which I snatch
But reach at things that are so high,
Beyond thy dull Capacity.
Eternal substance I do see
With which inriched I would be.
Mine eye doth pierce the heav'ns and see
What is Invisible to thee.
My garments are not silk nor gold,
Nor such like trash which Earth doth hold,
But Royal Robes I shall have on,
More glorious than the glist'ring Sun.
My Crown not Diamonds, Pearls, and gold,
But such as Angels' heads infold.
The City where I hope to dwell,
There's none on Earth can parallel.
The stately Walls both high and trong
Are made of precious Jasper stone,
The Gates of Pearl, both rich and clear,
And Angels are for Porters there.
The Streets thereof transparent gold
Such as no Eye did e're behold.
A Crystal River there doth run
Which doth proceed from the Lamb's Throne.
Of Life, there are the waters sure
Which shall remain forever pure.
Nor Sun nor Moon they have no need
For glory doth from God proceed.
No Candle there, nor yet Torch light,
For there shall be no darksome night.
From sickness and infirmity
Forevermore they shall be free.
Nor withering age shall e're come there,
But beauty shall be bright and clear.
This City pure is not for thee,
For things unclean there shall not be.
If I of Heav'n may have my fill,
Take thou the world, and all that will."

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Last modified: October 22, 2002