**Robert Southwell (1561-1595)**

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|  **Saint Peters Complaynte**  ***How can I live that have my life deny’de*** ***What can I hope that lost my hope in fear*** ***What trust to one that trewth it self defyde*** ***What good in him that hath his god forsweare*** ***O synne of synnes of evells the very worst*** ***O synfull wretch of sinners most accurste.***  **Saint Peter’s Complaint**  How can I live that have my life denied?What can I hope that lost my hope in fear?What trust to one that truth itself defied?What good in him that hath his god forswear?O sin of sins, of evils the very worst,O sinful wretch, of sinners most accursed.I vaunted erst, though all his friends had failed,Alone with Christ all fortunes to have tried,And lo I craven first of all was quailedExcelling none but in untruth and pride.Such distance is between high words and deeds:In proof the greatest vaunter seldom speeds.If tyrants’ bloody threats had me dismayed,Or smart of cruel torments made me yield,There had been some pretence to be afraid,I should have fought before I lost the field.But o infamous foil: a maiden’s breathDid blow me down and blast my soul to death.Was I to stay the Church a Chosen rockThat with so soft a gale was overthrown?Was I chief pastor of the faithful flockTo guide their souls that murdered thus my own? A rock of ruin, not a rest to stay, A pastor not to feed but to betray.Could servile fear of rendering nature’s due,Which growth in years was shortly like to claim,So thrall my love that I should thus eschewA vowed death and miss so fair an aim.Die, die disloyal wretch, thy life detest:For saving thine, thou hast forsworn the best.  /…/ With mercy, Jesu, measure my offence,Let deep remorse thy due revenge abate.Let tears appease when trespass doth incense,Let mildness temper thy deserved hate.Let grace forgive, let love forget my fall:With fear I crave, with hope I humbly call. |  **Decease Release (1587)** *Dum morior orior*The pounded spice both taste and scent doth please,In fading smoke the force doth incense show.The perished kernel springeth with increase,The lopped tree doth best and soonest grow.God’s spice I was, and pounding was my due,In fading breath my incense savoured best.Death was the means my kernel to renew,By lopping shot I up to heavenly rest.Some things more perfect are in their decay,Like spark that, going out, gives clearest light. Such was my hap whose doleful dying dayBegan my joy and termed fortune’s spite.Alive a Queen, now dead I am a Saint,Once Mary called, my name now Martyr is.From earthly reign debarred by restraintIn lieu whereof I reign in heavenly bliss.My life my grief, my death hath wrought my joy,My friends my foil, my foes my Weal procured.My speedy death hath shortened long annoy,And loss of life an endless life assured.My Scaffold was the bed where ease I found,The block – a pillow of Eternal rest.My headman cast me in a blissful swound,His axe cut off my cares from combred breast.Rue not my death, rejoice at my repose,It was no death to me but to my woe.The bud was opened to let out the Rose,The chains unloosed to let the captive go.A prince by birth, a prisoner by mishap,From Crown to cross, from throne to thrall I fell.My right – my ruth, my titles wrought my trap,My weal – my woe, my worldly heaven – my hell.By death from prisoner to a prince enhanced,From Cross to Crown, from thrall to throne again.My ruth – my right, my trap my style advancedFrom woe to weal, from hell to heavenly reign. |