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### **The Works Of Alexander Pope Esq.**

In Nine Volumes Complete. With His Last Corrections, Additions, And Improvements; As they were delivered to the Editor a little before his Death

Containing His Juvenile Poems - with his last corrections, additions, and improvements, as they were delivered to the editor a little before his death

**Pope, Alexander**

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Messiah, a Sacred Eclogue in Imitation of Virgil's Pollio

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M E S S I A H.

A

Sacred Eclogue,

In Imitation of

VIRGIL'S POLLIO.

## Advertisement.

**I**N reading several passages of the Prophet Ifaiah, which foretell the coming of Christ and the felicities attending it, I could not but observe a remarkable parity between many of the thoughts, and those in the Pollio of Virgil. This will not seem surprizing, when we reflect, that the Eclogue was taken from a Sibylline prophecy on the same subject. One may judge that Virgil did not copy it line by line, but selected such ideas as best agreed with the nature of pastoral poetry, and disposed them in that manner which served most to beautify his piece. I have endeavoured the same in this imitation of him, though without admitting any thing of my own; since it was written with this particular view, that the reader, by comparing the several thoughts, might see how far the images and descriptions of the Prophet are superior to those of the Poet. But as I fear I have prejudiced them by my management, I shall subjoin the passages of Ifaiah, and those of Virgil, under the same disadvantage of a literal translation. P.

# M E S S I A H.

A

## SACRED ECLOGUE,

In Imitation of VIRGIL'S POLLIO.

**Y**E Nymphs of Solyma! begin the song:  
To heav'nly themes sublimer strains belong.

The mossy fountains, and the sylvan shades,  
The dreams of Pindus and th'Aonian maids,  
Delight no more—O thou my voice inspire 5  
Who touch'd Isaiah's hallow'd lips with fire!

Rapt into future times, the Bard begun:  
A Virgin shall conceive, a Virgin bear a Son!

### IMITATIONS.

VER. 8. *A Virgin shall conceive—All crimes shall cease, etc.]*  
VIRG. E. iv. v. 6.

Jam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna;  
Jam nova progenies cælo demittitur alto.  
Te duce, si qua manent sceleris vestigia nostri,  
Irrita perpetua solvent formidine terras —  
Pacatumque reget patriis virtutibus orbem.

*Now the Virgin returns, now the kingdom of Saturn returns,  
now a new Progeny is sent down from high heaven. By means of  
thee, whatever reliques of our crimes remain, shall be wiped away,  
and free the world from perpetual fears. He shall govern the  
earth in peace, with the virtues of his Father.*

ISAIAH, Ch. vii. v. 14. *Behold a Virgin shall conceive and  
bear a Son. — Ch. ix. v. 6, 7. Unto us a Child is born, unto us  
a Son is given; the Prince of Peace: of the increase of his govern-*

† F

From <sup>a</sup> Jesse's root behold a branch arise,  
 Whose sacred flow'r with fragrance fills the skies:  
 Th' Æthereal spirit o'er its leaves shall move, 11  
 And on its top descends the mystic Dove.  
 Ye <sup>b</sup> Heav'ns! from high the dewy nectar pour,  
 And in soft silence shed the kindly show'r!  
 The <sup>c</sup> sick and weak the healing plant shall aid,  
 From storms a shelter, and from heat a shade.  
 All crimes shall cease, and ancient fraud shall fail;  
 Returning <sup>d</sup> Justice lift aloft her scale;

## IMITATIONS.

*ment, and of his peace, there shall be no end: Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order and to stablish it, with judgment, and with justice, for ever and ever. P.*

## REMARKS.

VER. 13. *Ye Heav'ns! from high the dewy nectar pour, And in soft silence shed the kindly show'r!*] His Original says, *Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together.*—This is a very noble description of divine grace shed abroad in the hearts of the faithful under the Gospel dispensation. And the poet understood all its force, as appears from the two lines preceding these, — *Th' Æthereal Spirit, etc.* The prophet describes this under the image of rain, which chiefly fits the *first age* of the Gospel: The poet, under the idea of dew, which extends it to *every age*. And it was his purpose it should be so understood, as appears from his expression of *soft silence*, which agrees with the *common* not the *extraordinary* effusions of the Holy Spirit. The term of *dewy nectar*, for divine grace, is wonderfully happy. For he who would moralize the ancient Mythology in the manner of Bacon, must say, that by the poetical *nectar*, can be meant only theological grace.

VER. 17. *ancient fraud*] i. e. the fraud of the Serpent.

<sup>a</sup> Isai. xi. v. 1. <sup>b</sup> Ch. xlv. v. 8. <sup>c</sup> Ch. xxv. v. 4. <sup>d</sup> Ch. ix. v. 7.

Peace o'er the world her olive wand extend,  
 And white-rob'd Innocence from heav'n descend.  
 Swift fly the years, and rise th' expected morn! 21  
 Oh spring to light, auspicious Babe, be born!  
 See Nature hastes her earliest wreaths to bring,  
 With all the incense of the breathing spring:  
 See <sup>e</sup> lofty Lebanon his head advance, 25  
 See nodding forests on the mountains dance:  
 See spicy clouds from lowly Saron rise,  
 And Carmel's flow'ry top perfumes the skies!  
 Hark! a glad voice the lonely desert hears;  
 Prepare the <sup>f</sup> way! a God, a God appears: 30

## IMITATIONS.

VER. 23. *See Nature hastes, etc]*

VIRG. E. iv. v. 18.

At tibi prima, puer, nullo munuscula cultu,  
 Errantes hederas passim cum baccare tellus,  
 Mixtaque ridenti colocasia fundet acantho —  
 Ipsa tibi blandos fundent cunabula flores.

*For thee, O Child, shall the earth, without being tilled, produce her early offerings; winding ivy, mixed with Baccar, and Colocasia with smiling Acanthus. Thy cradle shall pour forth pleasing flowers about thee.*

ISAIAH, Ch. xxxv. v. 1. *The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.*  
 Ch. lx. v. 13. *The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of thy sanctuary.* P.

VER. 29. *Hark, a glad Voice, etc.]*

VIRG. E. iv. v. 46.

Aggredere ô magnos, aderit jam tempus, honores,  
 Cara deum soboles, magnum Jovis incrementum —

<sup>e</sup> Ch. xxxv. v. 2.

<sup>f</sup> Ch. xl. v. 3, 4.

† F 2

A God, a God! the vocal hills reply,  
 The rocks proclaim th' approaching Deity.  
 Lo, earth receives him from the bending skies!  
 Sink down ye mountains, and ye valleys rise,  
 With heads declin'd, ye cedars homage pay; 35  
 Be smooth ye rocks, ye rapid floods give way!  
 The Saviour comes! by ancient bards foretold:  
 Hear <sup>h</sup> him, ye deaf, and all ye blind, behold!  
 He from thick films shall purge the visual ray,  
 And on the sightless eye-ball pour the day: 40

## IMITATIONS.

*Ipsi lætitia voces ad sydera jactant*

*Intonsi montes, ipsæ jam carmina rupes,*

*Ipsa sonant arbuſta, Deus, deus ille Menalca! E. v. y 62.*

*Oh come and receive the mighty honours: the time draws nigh, O beloved offspring of the Gods, O great encrease of Jove! The uncultivated mountains send shouts of joy to the stars, the very rocks sing in verse, the very shrubs cry out, A God, a God!*

*ISAIAH, Ch. xl. y 3, 4. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord! make strait in the desert a high way for our God! Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made strait, and the rough places plain. Ch. iv. ver. 23. Break forth into singing, ye mountains! O forest, and every tree therein! for the Lord hath redeemed Israel. P.*

## REMARKS.

*VER. 39. He from thick films shall purge the visual ray,]* The sense and language shew, that, by *visual ray*, the poet meant the *sight*, or, as Milton calls it, *the visual nerve*. And no critic would quarrel with the figure which calls the *instrument* of vision by the name of the *cause*. But tho' this term be just, nay noble, and even sublime, yet the expression of *thick films* is faulty; and he fell into it by a common neglect of the following rule of good writing, "That

<sup>h</sup> Ch. xlii. y 18. Ch. xxxv. y 5, 6.

'Tis he th' obstructed paths of sound shall clear,  
 And bid new music charm th' unfolding ear :  
 The dumb shall sing, the lame his crutch forego,  
 And leap exulting like the bounding roe.  
 No sigh, no murmur the wide world shall hear, 45  
 From ev'ry face he wipes off ev'ry tear.  
 In <sup>h</sup> adamantine chains shall Death be bound,  
 And Hell's grim Tyrant feel th' eternal wound.  
 As the good <sup>i</sup> shepherd tends his fleecy care,  
 Seeks freshest pasture and the purest air, 50  
 Explores the lost, the wand'ring sheep directs,  
 By day o'ersees them, and by night protects,  
 The tender lambs he raises in his arms,  
 Feeds from his hand, and in his bosom warms ;  
 Thus shall mankind his guardian care engage, 55  
 The promis'd <sup>k</sup> father of the future age.  
 No more shall <sup>l</sup> nation against nation rise,  
 Nor ardent warriors meet with hateful eyes,  
 Nor fields with gleaming steel be cover'd o'er,  
 The brazen trumpets kindle rage no more; 60

## REMARKS.

“ when a figurative term is used, whatsoever is predicated of  
 “ it ought not only to agree to the thing to which the figure  
 “ is applied, but likewise to that from which the figure is taken.”  
*Thick films* agree only with the thing to which it is applied, name-  
 ly to the *sight* or eye; and not to that from which it is taken,  
 namely a *ray of light* coming to the eye. He should have said  
*thick clouds*, which would have agreed with both. But these inac-  
 curacies are not to be found in his later poems.

<sup>h</sup> Ch. xxv. v. 8.    <sup>i</sup> Ch. xl. v. 11.    <sup>k</sup> Ch. ix. v. 6.    <sup>l</sup> Ch. ii. v. 4.  
 + F 3



But useles lances into scythes shall bend,  
 And the broad faulchion in a plow-share end.  
 Then palaces shall rise; the joyful<sup>m</sup> Son  
 Shall finish what his short-liv'd Sire begun;  
 Their vines a shadow to their race shall yield, 65  
 And the same hand that sow'd, shall reap the field.  
 The swain in barren<sup>n</sup> desarts with surprize  
 See lillies spring, and sudder verdure rise;  
 And starts, amidst the thirsty wilds to hear  
 New falls of water murm'ring in his ear. 70  
 On rifted rocks, the dragon's late abodes,  
 The green reed trembles, and the bulrush nods,  
 Waste sandy<sup>o</sup> valleys, once perplex'd with thorn,  
 The spiry fir and shapely box adorn:  
 To leafless shrubs the flow'ring palms succeed, 75  
 And od'rous myrtle to the noisom weed.

## IMITATIONS.

VER. 67. *The swain in barren desarts*] Virg. E. iv. § 28.

Molli paulatim flavescet campus arista,  
 Incultisque rubens pendebit sentibus uva,  
 Et duræ quercus sudabunt roscida mella.

*The fields shall grow yellow with ripen'd ears, and the red grape shall hang upon the wild brambles, and the hard oaks shall distill honey like dew.*

ISAIAH, Ch. xxxv. § 7. *The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: In the habitations where dragons lay, shall be grass, and reeds, and rushes.* Ch. lv. § 13. *Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree.* P.

<sup>m</sup> Ch. lxv. § 21, 22. <sup>n</sup> Ch. xxxv. § 1, 7. <sup>o</sup> Ch. xii. § 19, and Ch. lv. § 13.

The<sup>p</sup> lambs with wolves shall graze the verdant mead,  
 And boys in flow'ry bands the tyger lead ;  
 The steer and lion at one crib shall meet,  
 And harmless <sup>q</sup> serpents lick the pilgrim's feet. 80  
 The smiling infant in his hand shall take  
 The crested basilisk and speckled snake,  
 Pleas'd the green lustre of the scales survey,  
 And with their forky tongue shall innocently play.  
 Rise, crown'd with light, imperial <sup>r</sup> Salem, rise! 85  
 Exalt thy tow'ry head, and lift thy eyes!

IMITATIONS.

VER. 77. *The lambs with wolves etc*] Virg. E. iv. v. 21.

Ipsæ lacte domum referent distenta capellæ

Ubera, nec magnos metuent armenta leones —

Occidet et serpens, et fallax herba veneni

Occidet. —

*The goats shall bear to the fold their udders distended with milk: nor shall the herds be afraid of the greatest lions. The serpent shall die, and the herb that conceals poison shall die.*

ISAIAH, Ch. xi. v. 16, etc. *The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together: and a little child shall lead them. — And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the den of the cockatrice. P.*

VER. 85. *Rise, crown'd with light, imperial Salem, rise!* }  
 The thoughts of Isaiah, which compose the latter part of the poem, are wonderfully elevated, and much above those general exclamations of Virgil, which make the loftiest parts of his *Pollio*.

Magnus ab integro sæclorum nascitur ordo!

— toto surget gens aurea mundo!

— incipient magni procedere menses!

Aspice, venturo lætentur ut omnia sæclo! etc.

The reader needs only to turn to the passages of Isaiah, here cited. P.

<sup>p</sup> Ch. xi. v. 6, 7, 8.

<sup>q</sup> Ch. lxxv. v. 25.

<sup>r</sup> Ch. lx. v. 1.

See, a long <sup>s</sup> race thy spacious courts adorn ;  
 See future fons, and daughters yet unborn,  
 In crouding ranks on ev'ry side arise,  
 Demanding life, impatient for the skies! 90  
 See barb'rous <sup>t</sup> nations at thy gates attend,  
 Walk in thy light, and in thy temple bend ;  
 See thy bright altars throng'd with prostrate kings  
 And heap'd with products of <sup>v</sup> Sabæan springs !  
 For thee Idume's spicy forests blow, 95  
 And seeds of gold in Ophyr's mountains glow.  
 See heav'n its sparkling portals wide display,  
 And break upon thee in a flood of day!  
 No more the rising <sup>w</sup> Sun shall gild the morn,  
 Nor ev'ning Cynthia fill her silver horn ; 100  
 But lost, dissolv'd in thy superior rays,  
 One tide of glory, one unclouded blaze  
 O'erflow thy courts: the Light himself shall shine  
 Reveal'd, and God's eternal day be thine !  
 The <sup>x</sup> seas shall waste, the skies in smoke decay, 105  
 Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away ;  
 But fix'd his word, his saving pow'r remains ;  
 Thy realm for ever lasts, thy own MESSIAH reigns !

<sup>s</sup> Ch. lx. v 4.    <sup>t</sup> Ch. lx. v 3.    <sup>v</sup> Ch. lx. v 6.    <sup>w</sup> Ch. lx.  
 v 19, 20.    <sup>x</sup> Ch. li. v 6. and Ch. liv. v 10.

