

"Amen! Amen! I needs must say amen!"
 In anguish of bewilderment, the youth
 Cried out, almost with sobs of passionate
 Submission, from rebellion passionate
 Hardly to be distinguished; "yea, to God
 From man, ever amen, only amen,
 No other answer possible to *Him*
 Who is the Potter, in whose hands the clay
 Are we, helpless and choiceless, to be formed
 And fashioned into vessels at His will!"

Paul said: "Helpless, yea, Stephen, but choiceless not.
 We choose; nay, even, we cannot choose but choose—
 The choice our freedom, our necessity;
 Free *how* to choose, we are to choose compelled.
 We choose with God, or else against Him choose.
 Which wilt thou, Stephen? Thou with Him or against?"
 A struggle of submission shuddered down
 To quiet in the bosom of the youth—
 Strange contrast to the unperturbed repose,
 With rapture, of obedience that, meantime,
 And ever, safe within the heart of Paul
 Breathed, as might breathe an infant folded fast
 To slumber in its mother's cradling arms!
 So had Paul learned to let the peace of Christ
 Rule in his heart, a fixed, perpetual calm,
 Like the deep sleep of ocean, at his core
 Of waters, underneath the planes of storm.
 And Stephen answered: "Oh, with God, with God!
 And blessed be His name that thus I choose!"
 "Yea, verily!" Paul said, "for He sole it is
 Who worketh in us, both to will and work
 For the good pleasure of His holy will.
 As thou this fashion of obedience
 Obediently acceptest at His gift,
 So growest thou faithful mirror to reflect,
 Clear to thyself, and just, the thought of God.
 Thus thou mayst hope to learn somewhat of true,
 Of high and deep and broad, concerning Him,
 Him, and His ways inscrutable with us—
 Of thyself emptied, for more room to be
 From God, henceforth, with all His fulness filled!
 This at least learn thou now, how greatly wise
 Was God, by that which was in us the lowest
 To take us and uplift us, higher and higher,
 Until those very passions, hate and wrath,
 Which erst seemed right to us, as they were dear,
 Become to our changed eyes—eyes, though thus changed,
 Nay, *as* thus changed, sore tempted to be proud—
 Become, forsooth, unworthy symbols even
 To shadow God's displeasure against sin!
 To generation generation linked,
 In living long succession from the first,
 To nation nation joined, one fellowship
 Of man, through clime and clime, from sea to sea,
 Thus has by slow degrees, our human kind