

Sends ane to heaven, and ten to hell —  
 A' for Thy glory,  
 And no for ony guid or ill  
 They've done afore Thee.

What was I, or my generation,  
 That I should get sic exaltation,  
 I wha deserve sic just damnation,  
 For broken laws,  
 Five thousand years 'fore my creation,  
 Thro' Adam's cause !

When frae my mither's womb I fell,  
 Thou might hae plunged me into hell,  
 To gnash my gums, to weep and wail,  
 In burning lake,  
 Where damnèd devils roar and yell,  
 Chain'd to a stake.

Such lines as these, such tart irony, might well have made a veritable devil blush for shame !

There is a transparent sincerity pervading all the prose and poetry of Burns. Critics have been candid about his faults, but no critic has been as candid as the poet himself. "I acknowledge," he says, "I am too frequently the sport of caprice, whim, and passion." In another epistle he declares : "God knows I am no saint. I have a whole host of follies and sins to answer for, but if I could,—and I believe I do as far as I can— I would wipe away all tears from all eyes."

Linked with this honest integrity was a spirit of indignant fury against those who gave rein to selfish follies and hid them under the fair clouds of religion :

God knows I'm no' the thing I *should* be,  
 Nor am I e'en the thing I *could* be,  
 But twenty times I rayther *would* be  
 An atheist clean,  
 Than under gospel colors hid be,  
 Jist for a screen.

The Scottish Presbyterian Church, strong now in her tremendous organization, stronger then than we can now imagine, was no paltry antagonist before whom to throw the gauntlet of defiance. The religious tyranny had not yet died that made her disfavor more feared in earlier times than was the Roman ban of excommunication. Her terrible anathema oftentimes brought the wolf of poverty to the door and paralyzed with terror even the ministering angel of pity.

I own 'twas rash, an' rather hardy,  
 That I, a simple countra bardie,