

Jesus Pretty in Me

(With Translation)

Poem

Mi neva know seh Jesus coulda pretty in me
A' talk fi mi talk
A' spree fi mi spree
Dis Christ in me, dis hope a' Glory!

When wi firs' did come to dis Caribbee
What a speechless place
What a misery
No language between wi captors an' we
Couldn't hear Christ in him
Him nuh si Christ in me.

Well as time guh by likkle lingo plot
Else a' Tower a' Babel woulda be fi wi lot
Dem establish di slave society
Likkle lingua franca `tween Backra an' we:

Him seh, "Yours di field and di great house fi me;
My children are babies, yours a pick-a -ninnies;
Yours di labour, mine di wage."
Dat deh language neva suit nuh righteous page.

Well time an' season slowly pass'
An' di lingo of slavery was done at las'
But den come Miss Queen an' 'ar crown colony
So wi drop curtsy an' try talk like she

We try on, we put off
We put on, we show off
Twis' an tun we tongue 'til it nearly fork.
Shet up God Image like a bokkle wid a cork.

Translation

I never thought it possible that Jesus could be revealed in Beauty in who I am
Speaking with my voice, in my heart language,
Released, animating me in freedom,
This Christ in me, this hope of Glory!

When we were originally brought to the Caribbean lands
No means of heart communication was allowed
Such misery
Our captors hearts and ours were as far apart as could possible be
I discerned nothing of Christ in his speech
He saw nothing of Christ's image worthy of addressing in me

As time passed we had to develop some sort of speech allowing functional exchange
Otherwise chaos akin to the Tower of Babel would have been the result
This allowed the development of the slave society
The established status quo between our slave masters (Backra) and ourselves:

He dictated, "The plantation fields are your place and the plantation great house is mine;
My children are fully human babies, yours, not quite, so we will call them 'pickaninnies';
The labor of slavery, yours, the income from it, mine."
Surely that arrangement was not the one communicated by God in His Holy Word.

Well, time & seasons passed, too slowly,
But the slavery status quo ended at last,
But then came Mrs. Queen (Elizabeth) and her Crown Colony
So we payed homage, 'dropping curtsy' and trying to assume communication that reflected submission to her rule.

We (put on, tried on) – pretended, assumed and (put off, postured) dispensed with all sorts of societal and cultural norms not our own
Twisted & turned our tongues 'til they almost split.
(Contorting our self-expressions almost to the point of schizophrenia)

A' so we float on down di ribba of life
Meet independence, politricks an' labour strife
How we tired an' long fi reach t'idda side
Long fi hangle life at the brunt a di tide

Wanti-wanti rise 'til we dis fi bus'
Language come out, but a so-so cus'
'Cause di cork still in place an' di heat a-rise
We want run di race we want win di prize

"LORD, HAN' WI DI MIRROR
GI WI COURAGE FI LOOK
PUSH PASS DI KURRO-KURRO
PRESS INTO YUH BOOK
Mek di Cool Clean Water wash wi soul
Clean out we eye mek we see wissel whole.

Design' an' plan' mek by Yuh owna Han'."
Mi only jus' now a-start fi understand
What a t'ing a beauty Yuh mek mi fi bi
Perfec' fi reflec' di God-kind a beauty.

A Holy Aesthetic a tek over mi min'
As mi start relate to a Divine Plumblin:
Every tribe an' tongue, every nation an' race
One day goin' flow to one gathering place

To one Holy Mountain in time an' space
Perfec' to reflec' di Father's Face
An' choppin' one talk - "Amazing Grace."

- Denise Stair-Armstrong
@ 7 Feb 1999

Concealing God's unique image through us, as in a tightly corked bottle.

This is the way we floated on down the river of life,
Acquiring national independence, employing the machinations of politics and labor laws, to our advantage and disadvantage,
Through all this striving, never really seeming to get anywhere (to the other side)
We yearned to handle (experience) life at the brunt of the tide of opportunity (success always seeming just out of our reach).

Frustrated, our longing intensified to the point of rupture (riots &, social unrest)
Some sort of expression comes out but it sounds more like curses (expletives) than anything else.
We are pressed by limitations we cannot change, pushed to our extremity, strangled by our sense of powerlessness;
All we want is to taste the fruit of our labor!

"LORD HAND US THE MIRROR
GIVE US COURAGE TO LOOK,
TO PUSH PAST ALL THIS SINFUL BUILD-UP,
DELVING INTO YOUR BOOK.
Let Its cool, clean water wash our souls,
Purify our sight, cause us to have a vision of ourselves, whole (in You).

We were designed and made by Your own Hand";
I think I am beginning to understand
What a thing of beauty You have made me to be,
Being perfected to reflect the God-kind of beauty.

A holy aesthetic is taking over my mind,
I'm beginning to relate to a Divine Plumblin:
Every tribe and tongue, every nation and race
Will one day flow to one gathering place,

To one Holy Mountain in time and space
Perfected to reflect the Father's face
And communicating like never before in a perfect unified language, that of "Amazing Grace".

Denise Stair-Armstrong
@ 10 Dec 2016

Scriptures references that informed this piece:-
Col.1:25b-27
Acts17:24-28

John 4:4-6
Isaiah 2:1-5