

Excerpt from *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*
By Æmelia Lanyer (1569 - 1645)

Now Pontius Pilate is to judge the Cause 745
Of faultlesse Jesus, who before him stands;
Who neither hath offended Prince, nor Lawes,
Although he now be brought in woefull bands:
O noble Governour, make thou yet a pause,
Doe not in innocent blood imbrue thy hands; 750
But heare the words of thy most worthy wife,
Who sends to thee, to beg her Saviours life.

Let barb'rous crueltie farre depart from thee,
And in true Justice take afflictions part;
Open thine eies, that thou the truth mai'st see, 755
Doe not the thing that goes against thy heart,
Condemne not him that must thy Saviour be;
But view his holy Life, his good desert.
Let not us Women glory in Mens fall,
Who had power given to over-rule us all. 760

Till now your indiscretion sets us free, Eves Apologie.
And makes our former fault much lesse appeare;
Our Mother Eve, who tasted of the Tree,
Giving to Adam what shee held most deare,
Was simply good, and had no powre to see, 765
The after-comming harme did not appeare:
The subtile Serpent that our Sex betraide,
Before our fall so sure a plot had laide.

That undiscerning Ignorance perceav'd
No guile, or craft that was by him intended; 770
For had she knowne, of what we were bereav'd,
To his request she had not condescended.
But she (poore soule) by cunning was deceav'd,
No hurt therein her harmelesse Heart intended:
For she alleadg'd Gods word, which he denies, 775
That they should die, but even as Gods, be wise.

But surely Adam can not be excusde,
Her fault though great, yet hee was most too blame;
What Weaknesse offerd, Strength might have refusde,
Being Lord of all, the greater was his shame: 780
Although the Serpents craft had her abusde,
Gods holy word ought all his actions frame,
For he was Lord and King of all the earth,
Before poore Eve had either life or breath.

Who being fram'd by Gods eternall hand, 785
The perfect'st man that ever breath'd on earth;
And from Gods mouth receiv'd that strait command,
The breach whereof he knew was present death:

Yea having powre to rule both Sea and Land,
Yet with one Apple wonne to loose that breath 790
 Which God had breathed in his beauteous face,
 Bringing us all in danger and disgrace.

And then to lay the fault on Patience backe,
That we (poore women) must endure it all;
We know right well he did discretion lacke, 795
Beeing not perswaded thereunto at all;
If Eve did erre, it was for knowledge sake,
The fruit beeing faire perswaded him to fall:
 No subtill Serpents falshood did betray him,
 If he would eate it, who had powre to stay him? 800

Not Eve, whose fault was onely too much love,
Which made her give this present to her Deare,
That what shee tasted, he likewise might prove,
Whereby his knowledge might become more cleare;
He never sought her weakenesse to reprove, 805
With those sharpe words, which he of God did heare:
 Yet Men will boast of Knowledge, which he tooke
 From Eves faire hand, as from a learned Booke.

If any Evill did in her remaine,
Beeing made of him, he was the ground of all; 810
If one of many Worlds could lay a staine
Upon our Sexe, and worke so great a fall
To wretched Man, by Satans subtill traine;
What will so fowle a fault amongst you all?
 Her weakenesse did the Serpents words obay; 815
 But you in malice Gods deare Sonne betray.

Whom, if unjustly you condemne to die,
Her sinne was small, to what you doe commit;
All mortall sinnes that doe for vengeance crie,
Are not to be compared unto it: 820
If many worlds would altogether trie,
By all their sinnes the wrath of God to get;
 This sinne of yours, surmounts them all as farre
 As doth the Sunne, another little starre.

Then let us have our Libertie againe, 825
And challenge to your selves no Sov'raigtie;
You came not in the world without our paine,
Make that a barre against your crueltie;
Your fault beeing greater, why should you disdaine
Our beeing your equals, free from tyranny? 830
 If one weake woman simply did offend,
 This sinne of yours, hath no excuse, nor end.

To which (poore soules) we never gave consent,
Witnesse thy wife (O Pilate) speakes for all;
Who did but dreame, and yet a message sent, 835

That thou should'st have nothing to doe at all
With that just man; which, if thy heart relent,
Why wilt thou be a reprobate with Saul?
 To seeke the death of him that is so good,
 For thy soules health to shed his dearest blood. 840

Yea, so thou mai'st these sinful people please,
Thou art content against all truth and right,
To seale this act, that may procure thine ease
With blood, and wrong, with tyrannie, and might;
The multitude thou seekest to appease, 845
By base dejection of this heavenly Light:
 Demanding which of these that thou should'st loose,
 Whether the Thiefe, or Christ King of the Jewes.

Base Barrabas the Thiefe, they all desire,
And thou more base than he, perform'st their will; 850
Yet when thy thoughts backe to themselves retire,
Thou art unwilling to commit this ill:
Oh that thou couldst unto such grace aspire,
That thy polluted lips might never kill
 That Honour, which right Judgement ever graceth, 855
 To purchase shame, which all true worth defaceth.

Art thou a Judge, and asketh what to do
With one, in whom no fault there can be found?
The death of Christ wilt thou consent unto,
Finding no cause, no reason, nor no ground? 860
Shall he be scourg'd, and crucified too?
And must his miseries by thy meanes abound?
 Yet not asham'd to aske what he hath done,
 When thine owne conscience seeks this sinne
 to shunne.

Three times thou ask'st, What evill hath he done? 865
And saist, thou find'st in him no cause of death,
Yet wilt thou chasten Gods beloved Sonne,
Although to thee no word of ill he saith:
For Wrath must end, what Malice hath begunne,
And thou must yield to stop his guiltlesse breath. 870
 This rude tumultuous rowt doth presse so sore,
 That thou condemnest him thou shouldst adore.

Yet Pilate, this can yeeld thee no content,
To exercise thine owne authoritie,
But unto Herod he must needes be sent, 875
To reconcile thy selfe by tyrannie:
Was this the greatest good in Justice meant,
When thou perceiv'st no fault in him to be?
 If thou must make thy peace by Virtues fall,
 Much better 'twere not to be friends at all. 880