

## Poems by Lok Sang Ho

### 1. Jesus of Nazareth vs Men<sup>1</sup> of the Earth (August 6, 2002)

Jesus says he is the son of man.  
We say he is the only Son of God.

Jesus says peacemakers shall be called “sons of God.”<sup>1</sup>  
We say we shall remain the sons of man.

Jesus asks us to believe him.  
We want to believe in him.

Jesus teaches us to love our neighbors.  
We fight our neighbors in his name.

Jesus wants us to have the hearts of a child.  
We keep becoming more and more sophisticated.

Jesus would have us forgive our enemies.  
We want to annihilate our enemies.

Jesus tells us blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.  
We tell people we are full of righteousness.

What is he?  
What are we?

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<sup>1</sup> Forget the construed gender bias, which is not meant here.

## 2           **Day Dream**

(July 28, 2002, revised August 11, 2002)

One day I did see a mother nursing her baby dear  
Gazing at her infantile face, holding her near.  
Her eyes glowing with Mother's Love,  
Praying for blessings from above.

Believe, and thou shall gain salvation,  
She had been taught as others in the nation.  
Have faith, demanded the banknotes inside her purse:  
Trust that God will always protect against the worst.

In the farther ends of the earth  
My mind's eyes saw mothers in different costumes their babies nurse,  
Tenderly loving, with hope  
That with no misfortune will their little ones ever need to cope.

Truthfully in love are all these mothers, yet  
Differently committed are their worships, till they are dead!  
Common are their emotions;  
Similar are their devotions.

On the advent of the twenty-first century, amid strife  
Hear the call of our common roots, that of Life  
To humanity, loud and clear,  
Wake up, dear!

### 3      **The Swans of Vltava**

(August 4, 2002)

A tall swan greets the morning sun,  
Flapping its wings in excitement  
Standing in the shallow waters  
Of River Vltava.

T'is the arrival of a fresh day,  
Another day of peace and praise,  
Another day for celebration,  
Another day of wonder and jubilation.

Further down the river is Charles Bridge  
Alongside which  
Rise the shadows of angels and saints  
Against a sky where a fading moon wanes.

Hear the voice of the river.  
Hear the leaves of shadowy trees shiver.  
Touch the earth fair.  
Smell the sweet air.

What great fortune it is, to greet each day with excitement  
With a fresh mind and equal temperament,  
Says the River of the Swans  
Glittering in its daily dance.

#### **4 Butterfly**

(August 11, 2002)

Butterflies fill the sky  
Dancing feverishly  
Up and down,  
Dazzling to the eyes  
Yet without a sound.

Soon their fallen splendor  
Pile up profusely  
In heaps upon heaps  
Scurrying with the wind  
Ready for the restless ants to reap.

Golden wings and shrunken leaves  
Mingle randomly  
To the left and to the right,  
Turning into dust  
In the dimming sunlight.

The big bright butterflies shall return  
Dancing feverishly  
Up and down,  
Ignoring the watch  
Of human eyes around.

**5            Zhen zhong**

(May 11, 2002, revised July 28, 2002)

If there are two words  
I have to tell anyone,  
They would be zhen zhong.  
Zhen is to treasure Life like the rarest treasure.  
Zhong is to take Life like the most important thing ever known.

Treasure Life,  
For Life works wonders  
Beyond the wildest imagination:  
Art, music, drama, and the web!  
The door will open up, to whoever knocks!

Take Life like the most important thing ever known,  
For that is really what we only have.  
Can we rely on anything  
Other than Life itself  
To achieve our dreams?

So zhen zhong my friend,  
Bon voyage my friend.  
Let the tears run,  
The tears of loss, the tears of love,  
Never in vain.

## **6. Peace—a Tribute to Those Who Have Died in the Palestine-Israel Conflict**

(July 28, 2002, Amended August 2, 2002)

We are apt  
To mourn the death of our loved ones.

Have our lost ones found peace?  
May they rest in peace!

Peace O Peace,  
How the world craves for Peace!

War O War,  
How the world is at War!

Suicide bombs, crushing tanks,  
Killing antagonism, killing sanctions!

To the loved ones who had lived in peace and died in peace,  
Congratulations, not mournings, are due!

To the loved ones who had lived in war and died in war:  
Let a prayer of love, hope, and peace--  
A gentle flower from the heart  
Bless them  
Forever.

## **7. Free to Love**

(August 11, 2002; amended August 18, 2002)

Couples in love often tell each other:

I cannot live without you

And I love only you.

How I wish this weren't true!

Free to love.

This is truly Life's gift.

Ironic it would be, if love should bring rift

When it grows beyond a couple in love.

Love must be the Love for Life--

A lifelong yearning that the best

May befall all those we have learnt to love, as if by behest.

Why, we are born to love!

Love lies deep in our nature.

Too often it is confused with lust.

The respect for life is a must

For those who know love is not a set of cuffs.

The freedom to love,

The courage to live:

The world may fall apart, and the earth may shift.

These shall never change, I hear a voice from above.

**8. Sea Turtles**  
(August 16, 2002)

Thousands of little eyes look up  
To the starry sky in the quiet of the night.  
The air is calm,  
And the moon is bright.

There comes a faint lapping sound,  
The first sound that these tiny turtles ever hear:  
A sound from the ocean vast,  
The call of an awaiting home that seems so near.

It is with such courage that they begin  
Their dangerous and uncertain life journeys:  
Pushing the earth back, hurling themselves ahead,  
They capered and staggered in earnest.

Paddle, paddle, and paddle;  
Exhaustion is a forgotten word.  
Knowing only the call of home,  
They work their way forward.

Come the waves battering the beach.  
Come the hunting birds from above.  
There is no time to think.  
Never mind that life can be rough.

## **9. Banyan Tree**

(August 18, 2002)

At the top of the hill is a big banyan tree.  
It is there for everyone to see.  
Its leaves seem forever green.  
Its long air roots hang low and lean.

It was under this ancient tree  
That children of many generations had played with glee.  
It was under the same tree  
That great grandfather once tumbled and hurt his knee.

The tree had seen so many variations in seasons;  
It had given shade to so many people before they could even reason.  
It had been there long before the wars.  
In it had nested many birds of call.

Generations of people grow up.  
Generations of people grow old.  
The banyan tree stands silent and still,  
Oblivious to joys and sorrows untold.

## **10. Economist**

(August 18, 2002)

There is a profession known as economist.  
It is for people who want to see in the mist.  
Can they really see through the mist?  
See how many times their forecasts have missed!

I am known as an economist.  
But I am not just an economist.  
I am one with a heart.  
Question is: can you tell me apart?

## **11. Originality**

(August 20, 2002)

Originality is the scholar's dream,  
However elusive though it seems.  
Was Newton original?  
By consensus was he so deemed.

But what if Newton never discovered gravity?  
What if Laozi never spoke of the natural law?  
Would humanity have been different?  
Would the stars have changed their course?

Much music is attributed to Mozart,  
And da Vinci is known for his arts.  
Prodigy and genius as they are called,  
They couldn't stop the energy that came from their hearts.

So Life is really the true source of originality,  
This observation does seem to have generality.  
Mortals can never claim to be original,  
Lest they succumb to their own vanity.

### **13. Faces and Eyes**

(August 24, 2002)

Behind an innocent human face  
In the deep well of eyes,  
A mind is calculating losses and gains,  
Amid heys and sighs.

How can I beat others,  
How can I get ahead,  
I should at least get even,  
Lest my eyes turn red.

I must not be cheated;  
Better if I cheat others.  
Never mind how others fare;  
Don't tell me we are all brothers.

At dawn as at dusk,  
Awake as asleep,  
The calculating mind is at work;  
Nice if the world is mine to keep.

Behind an innocent human face  
In the deep well of eyes,  
A mind is mindful,  
What if the body dies.

How can I help others,  
How can I do my share,  
I should at least do my part.  
This much do I care.

#### **14. United in the Quest for Peace**

(February 16, 2003)

A day in 2003.  
Seas of humanity do I see,  
Wave upon wave of humanity,  
United in a peace call.

February 15, a day in spring,  
Men, women, and children fill the world's cities in huge gatherings  
United in one voice:  
No War!

T'is a historical day—  
Truly historical I say.  
For now the world is united  
As never before.

The sight made my eyes glitter in tears  
As I bring to mind images that will not permit cheers:  
Images of homes devastated, and  
Families shattered by war.



## **15. Salvation**

(August 24, 2002)

Once upon a time  
The Lord did say,  
My life is the vehicle with which I saw the Truth;  
My life is the vehicle with which I discovered the Way.

So follow my example my friend.  
Live your life truthfully each day.  
Only so will you see the face of Eternity,  
Be one with Life and avoid death's bay.

This was clear enough.  
Only some disciples never understood what he had to say.  
Instead they attributed to him the following message:  
I am the Truth, the Life, and the only Way.

What makes life eternal?  
What takes one astray?  
Just rediscover the truthful mind,  
And transcend time and space.

## **16. A Miracle of Life**

(August 26, 2003)

At the age of zero,  
The world awaits. Behold,  
How sweetly the infant sleeps,  
And what a secret life keeps.

At the age of five,  
The world is all new to the boy's eyes:  
Equally amazing are birds in the sky,  
And the spiders that catch flies.

At the age of ten,  
The world begins to make sense.  
Even as the boy wonders why,  
The caterpillar turns into a butterfly.

At the age of fifteen, he discovers one day  
He is already a master in many ways.  
Still the world awaits,  
The revelation of more hidden treasures and traits.

At the age of twenty,  
The young man looks around his world of plenty.  
Unwittingly he has left many sleeping ones behind,  
Like a rising star, he is about to see for himself,  
                  how life shines.

**17. Israel, O Israel**

(Oct. 21, 2003)

Israel, what an ancient and great nation it is,  
With legends of fearless heroes and wise prophets,  
Renowned for its great achievers,  
But so desperately in need of a Socrates.

Israel, do you suffer from an ancient curse  
Dating back from before the hard days in Egypt?  
Have you angered your God?  
When can you find peace's secret?

Israel, where the Wailing Wall stands,  
Where blood like tears flows,  
Where eyes and teeth beget themselves,  
Where life ends and goes.

Israel, which continues to wait for the Messiah,  
Which continues to see fallen heroes and broken families,  
Which continues to face fate with courage,  
In a legacy of hate and vengeance for enemies.

Israel, can you find haven in love?  
Can you make peace with your brothers?  
Do you still remember Abel and Cain?  
Can you rediscover peace, and love for others?

Israel, O Israel!

**18. Music**  
(November 28, 2003)

Music is a river  
From the unknown--  
Natural as our breath,  
And not at all contrived,  
It flows.

The river gathers force,  
Forms rapids,  
Cuts gorges,  
Then it becomes a massive waterfall  
Thundering down precarious cliffs.

A rainbow is formed in the mist--  
The mist formed in the gigantic collision  
Of massive water hitting protruding rocks,  
Of water particles hitting air particles in motion,  
Under a sun that seems weakened by the pervasive mist.

It becomes ever so gentle,  
Taking leaves fallen from trees on its way,  
Whispering so softly you can almost hear  
The sounds of dragonflies' wings vibrating  
As they hang over the surface of the water.

Life is a journey like music,  
An eternal story without words, beyond logic and thinking.  
Listen to the ups and downs that people encounter,  
Their joys and sorrows, their hopes and longings.  
Picture the beauty and bounty that life can bring.



**19. Wise is He**  
*February 23, 2004*

Wise is he who knows and lives  
A truthful life;  
Who shares this knowledge with others and generously gives.  
And thus is blessed twice.

Happy is he who rejoices  
In being his own master and following the Way!  
Truthful is he who follows the call of his inner voices,  
Faithful to his soul through the end of the day.

Wise is he who knows what he really wants,  
Then goes about achieving his goal.  
Courageously he resists any distraction however it haunts  
So he preserves his soul.

Wise is he who humbles himself without reserve  
That the greatness inside him can shine.  
For it is always a sense of ego through ages preserved  
That turns one blind.



## 20. Starry Night Over Sopot

In the middle of a mid May night in Sopot  
After a warm, festive dinner  
In a restaurant nestled in the woods  
Polish friends talk of their country:

German invasion, Russian destruction,  
A country divided.  
A country in resistance.  
A country re-united.

Then I think of Iraq,  
Of Palestinians, of Israelis,  
Of a world still in trouble  
As we walk the longest pier of the world  
Extending into the Baltic Sea  
Under a sky dotted with stars.

A universe yet so vast,  
A world yet so divided—  
And peace is ever so much treasured  
In Poland as in the Middle East.

And I will never forget:  
The chilling breath of the Baltic Sea,  
The gallantry of peoples who fight for their dreams,  
What dreams.

(21a)不必 (小泉參拜靖國神社有感)

龍的傳人，  
你不必為中國古代發明自豪，  
也不必為中華悠久的文化驕傲。  
有無創意只須看你自己，  
祖宗的餘蔭保證不了你今生的價值!

大和子孫，  
你不必為先人的罪孽開脫，  
也不必因你是他們後人不悅。  
能否頂天立地只須看你自己，  
坦蕩生平全憑你的努力!

古今中外，  
福人雖無數禍人也不少，  
往事如煙去再改變不了。  
你不必因先祖功勳而沾沾自喜，  
你縱與莽夫同族生命又何曾失色!

不必，因為善惡從來不分種族，  
賢愚從來只繫於一念。  
惡行永遠是人類的詛咒拜祭亦不能改變，  
善行卻才是亡靈真正的慰藉：  
古往今來，可曾變易!

何灝生  
寫於立川  
31/7/2005

## **21b. Do Not (Thoughts on Prime Minister Koizumi Visiting the Yasukuni Shrine)**

Descendents of the Dragon,  
Do not take pride in the ancient inventions of China.  
Nor be carried away by China's long traditions even if they were finer.  
Inventive or not really depends on yourself.  
To be wealthy and worthy, accumulate your own wealth.

Sons and daughters of Japan,  
Do not try to pretend away the sins of your forefathers.  
Nor be burdened by what they had done unto others.  
Whether or not you stand truly upright,  
Depends entirely on what how you lead your life.

Ancient times or modern; here, there, and everywhere  
Men who bring blessings live alongside those who bring ill.  
What's done is done do whatever you will.  
Do not intoxicate yourself with past glory  
Take command. Life shall not be tainted by past folly!

Do not pretend. Instead  
Know that good and evil transcend ethnicity,  
Wisdom or folly hinges on but a flash of the mind, fast as electricity.  
Cruel acts remain a curse.  
Your honoring it only makes things worse!

Let this be remembered:  
Loving kindness alone consoles all.  
That peace be with everyone who has fall'n!

(Written in Chinese on July 31, 2005 at Tachikawa, translated on August 1, 2005 on the plane to Hong Kong.)

## 22. An Ode to Civilization

Mighty columns stand in the midst of ruins,  
Remnants of the ancient Temple of Olympian Zeus  
As they attract thousands of visitors who marvel  
At the once majestic temple of marble.

A temple built through centuries by slaves,  
Constructed with human ingenuity and such grace  
Devoted to the god created out of imagination,  
Now called an icon of ancient civilization.

Is it really civilization in the true sense,  
Or is it just plain folly in essence  
That such ancient temples represent?  
Isn't the answer easy to apprehend?

It was Peisistratos the Younger  
Who first commissioned its construction in 515 BC;  
It was Hadrian the Roman emperor  
Who finally completed it in 125 AD.

A temple that had cost the lives of many  
At a time when abundance eluded most.  
Is this civilization,  
Or is this just hallucination?

The modern world isn't that much different.  
See the military build-ups and the destructions  
Amidst hunger and indifference  
As we sing our ode to civilization.

written June 13, 2005  
edited June 16, 2005



**24. The Pursuit** (Written on a flight from Toronto to Detroit, June 3, 2006)

People through the ages have been seeking:  
Some seek gratification of the senses;  
Some seek honor,  
Some seek power,  
Some seek wealth,  
Some seek knowledge and the truth,  
Some seek excitement, others calm.  
Some seek friendship and love,  
Some seek a place in heaven.  
Some seek an inner peace.

The pursuit goes on,  
The object varies;  
The reward also varies:  
It may be  
A happiness that comes and goes—  
A momentary elation that ebbs into nothing;  
Or a happiness that endures—  
A lasting joy that resembles an eternal spring.  
The momentary happiness gives way to a sense of loss;  
The lasting joy makes known the meaning of love.

The pursuit goes on.  
As people chase dreams and shadows,  
Making foes and friends,  
Creating idols and gods,  
Making peace and making wars,  
Creating chaos and restoring order.  
Making history and repeating history,  
Some pursue earthly dreams, others lofty ones:  
Unfinished dreams left behind by their forefathers,  
And passed on to their progeny and others..

Beautiful temples have crumbled,  
Mighty castles have turned into shambles.  
Mighty rivers continue to run  
Washing earth and debris  
From great mountains and along the way, to the insatiable sea.  
Only the wise have given up the chase:  
Rediscovering a peace and wholeness within,  
Their spiritual beings grow and mature,  
Beyond possession and strife,  
Awakening to a fulfilling and timeless life.

## 25. The Consumption Machine (Ann Arbor June 5, 2006)

Some people have become consumption machines:  
Consumption machines are like a powerful vacuum cleaner,  
Sucking away anything:  
Large and small  
Useful things and useless things,  
Beneficial things and harmful things:  
As dollars roll, valuable resources turn into waste.  
When the consumption machine takes over  
Gone are the soul, and the human face.

Some people have become consumption machines:  
Consumption machines are like a robot with a life of its own,  
Making you forget  
Simple things and delightful things,  
Delightful things that do not carry price tags:  
A natural smile, wild flowers, and a refreshing breeze.  
As dollars roll, even the heavenly stars lose their appeal.  
When the consumption machine takes over,  
The world known to be human is gone.

