

A Word
The Wages of Sin

I WAS always taught at school –
They rammed it home, and still I see –
That there is one unfailing rule
For usage of the verb *to be*,
Relating to the facts one faces
In deciding verbal cases.

It's not a complicated game,
Or mystic, ritualistic dance:
Verb and subject are the same,
And complement must take its chance –
A rule that gives us cause to wonder
When we see the Bible's blunder.

What can we make of holy writ
Which so disdains the golden rule;
Whose semantics scarcely sit
In line with what we learned at school?
It roundly rips the rulebook, *viz*,
Insisting that *The wages is*.

Having blithely gone thus far,
Affronting niceties of speech,
It might as well decree, *Death are* –
And keep correctness out of reach:
Invert the sentence, just to show
It's gone the way it meant to go.

It all began, we clearly see,
When the Bible came brand new,
In Romans 6, verse 23,
And now it's plaguing me and you.
Our language lives – well, so they say –
Although it's murdered every day.