

Holy Week Meditation

He is alone, and henceforth all His pain
And all His burdening must be alone,
For this is night, and this, Gethsemani
Where none may follow, none may move to Him
Companion. He is lost to solace, stripped
Of presence, voice, or any face of friend,
And lonely, takes within the night the edge
Of individual, inventive sin
That separates and cuts to Him like new,
Distinctive evil that had not been slit
Before. He does not dull or grow complacent,
His perception does not wane. He sees,
He feels and touches, but He sees no friend,
Nor feels a sigh, nor reaches to a hand
That He may take in hold of brief relieving.

Only evil, dripped and thickened slime
Of evil, leering, hideous in grin,
In posturing, obscene and cruel, cold
As tyranny and smooth like oil, like flame
To burn, like noise to startle, as a grief

To be deceiving, thumbed and whined and brayed
Around Him, in Him, pressed and bearing down
Above Him, after, bitter in His veins,
Corroding, chafing, vomiting in stench
Abruptly, teasing, laughing in His face.
The shrill, staccato blasphemies of Hell!
And all of this in concentrate and sweat
Past measure, long in drain against His heart
That is but One heart, weary and alone.

He shudders and the nails
Are in His mind, the thirst is clutched about
His throat, His breathing is the laboring
Of pain not yet endured, the lash is striped
Across His shoulders, still unmangled, gall
On sponges touches to His lips, the cries,
The heat, the spittle's fall foreknown: the thorns
Are locked in fire, and banded to His head,
Twist tight to agony that will not yield.
He writhes and lifts again to gasp the air
In great repeating sobs, and finds His hands
Are not before Him in a poise of prayer,
Nor does He kneel: His face is wet, and pressed
Against the ground, His arms are wide in grip
And forming of a cross!

Death, mere death
Itself is kindly, wounds are good, the nails,
Sweet beneficent transfixing feet with bliss,
The thorns are easy garlands, every sting
In kiss, denial, lash, is like caress
And multiplying comfort when His soul
Looks inward to accept corruption, sees
Within Himself what fallen form and face

He must assume, and on the summit be
Beyond division. He is Adam cast
Again from the ancient garden: He is man
And woman: He is Cain and Sodom, Saul
And Caesar: He is fleshed humanity
In race and tribe and city, in the dark,
Too secret rooms where only Satan smiles,
On continent, and street, and in the dust
That does not now remember that it stood,
Defied, rebelled and spat out sterile prides.

His heart, His lonely man-heart, joyed to brim
With image of His Father, innocent,
Looks down, astonished at its blasphemy!

"Who knew no sin, He hath made sin for us,"

Thought repeats against His thought, the curl
And cunning of perversions. He is red
With murders, foul with lingered usury;
His eyes are darting in the cheapened stealth
And glinting of a fraud. He trembles, bleeds,
He will not look upon Himself! He cries
With pain He should not feel, puts down upon
Himself an inner loathing. He is lost
And stranger; He is tumult, bent, transformed:
A pool where evil sluicing from the drains
Of time is pouring; He is refuge, hut,
Enclosure for the vile. He is alone!
His lips are smirking lips, His fingers, thieves,
His feet that are as blossoms to the earth,
That walk like living springtime, blessing earth,
These feet are lechers' feet!

And when His soul
Looks upward to His Father, He can see
Not love, but justice and descending wrath.

He hears not now: *"Thou art beloved Son;"*
The sentence falls to Him as one Accursed.

"My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me!"

The flesh turns fugitive. His pleading mind
Would fly, would run away, compel the soul
And body to refusal, speak the rights
Of guiltlessness, escape, be farthest free.
And then His heart, His lonely man-heart, heard
His will, and knew it for the Will of God,
Conformed, and close and wearing bruise for sign.

His will takes hold of flesh and soul and mind
And brings them triple victims to His love.

"Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."