

A Postponed Sacrifice

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It ain't enough to die once, Lord, to make the lost world see,
When the old age keeps on dying in the poor house of me.
They run to Kedar's canvas, to the tents beyond the town,
While the newsmen count the thunder and the holy stones fall down.

On the mountain still unfinished, where the altar waits alone,
Where the confessors keep bleeding on an unpolished stone,
Isaac walks through blueberry fields with the knife-light in his eyes,
And the bush says, I am living, beneath the burning skies.

Eliezer asks at daybreak, with the fire in his hand,
Where's the lamb for the offering, where's the one without a brand?
Where's the pure one Miriam mourned for in the salt and silver dew,
Where's the child the ages waited for, the Son she hardly knew?

Then El Shaddai split the silence till the stones began to cry:
Don't you touch my firstborn child, not today beneath this sky.
Not this morning, not this evening, not beneath this mountain's dome;
Wait till Friday at the ninth hour, when the Lamb comes walking home.

It's hard to die twice, Abraham, with your heart beneath the blade,
Hard to kiss poor Ishmael and bless the path he made.
Harder still to hear the whisper, not this hour, not this hill,
While the centuries roll like wagons and the promised blood waits still.

Heavier than Isaac's timber, heavier than Ur's old dust,
Heavier than every exile learning how to walk by trust,
Was the wood that Jesus carried through a city stripped of grace,
With no crowd that understood Him and no friend who knew His face.

Miriam stood there in the shadow, John beside her in the rain,
Till the seventh word was spoken through the world's unmeasured pain.
Then the curtain tore like thunder, and the calendar was changed,
Abram's day came back to Zion, holy, wounded, rearranged.

Longinus held the stiletto in the iron of his spear,
And the rib of God was opened for the thirsty drawing near.
From that side a fountain shivered, from that wound the rivers ran,
And the lambs of Bethlehem trembled at the sacrifice of Man.

So I ask You in the twilight, when the dark begins to rise:
How many deaths must claim me before Your death is mine?
How many Fridays wait for me beyond these rays of light,
Before I taste Your dying and wake beyond the night?