

NAZARENE

CRAIG CUNNINGHAM



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First paperback edition October 2020

Book design by Brooke Ashton.

ISBN 978-0-9915749-6-4 (paperback)

Published by Canowan Books

canowan.com

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Other Books in Theology

1. PATRIARCH
2. DEFECTOR
3. REZA
4. NAZARENE
5. VIGIL

I have seen the burning bush and heard the Word speak. What was spoken over me will surely be spoken over you. There is a new kingdom in us now waiting to be claimed and then proclaimed to those who must hear the truth of their origins.

But my brothers and sisters, know this: to pursue the calling of God in your life is to rise in defiance of powerful forces. The sacred individual is incompatible with those who wish for you to bow before manmade towers.

Be strong. Be willing to give your life for what you know to be true.

You have been marked for death among the living, living among the dead.

- Craig Cunningham

Nāzarene

Roaring down the roads of our centuries
comes the King of Salem carrying fire,
the High Priest who has come to bless
the nations gathered in the Valley of Megiddo.
Flames lick the darkness to reveal Jacob's deceit
while Pharaoh makes midwives murderers,
behold all of the post-flood children slaughtering
one another not for bread but for power.
On the road he passes a serpent on a stick,
Father forgive us for we know exactly
what we do and do exactly what we know,
aren't you the one who gave us this disease?
Further still is Samson's appetite for flesh,
a concubine carved into twelve pieces
and distributed to the sons of Jacob
who feast and behold the mirror of their souls.
Around the bend are collective cries for a king,
a spear soaring at the boy playing harp,
Uriah pushed to the front of the battle lines.

Tell me if it would be better to die or live
in the care of foreign kings, you who were born
from captives and you who shall remain captives.
Melchizedek carries his fire towards the Jordan
passing by crowds of leaping dustmen, pick me
O King of Salem, we long for bread and wine,
we long for salt, water, blood in the chalice.
And all of this to distinguish the difference
between dark and light?

With four hundred years to craft the forerunner
from the dust of creation, the Word presents John,
the baptizer who haunts the river with a song
of repentance, come all who must be cleansed,
come all who are ready to touch the face of God,
come all who have dog blood in your veins.
Like father and grandfather he is nothing
to behold, a man who comes from wild places
and eats locusts dipped in honey while dunking
his acolytes under the waters of the Jordan River.
If you do not see him it is because God neglected
to give you eyes, line up on this side all of you
who were never expected to bear fruit off the vine,
line up on this side all of you who have received
the subatomic elements.
The baptizer cannot recall his name when questioned
by the authorities who suspect this defector
has come to disrupt the minds of the docile.
The people groan to forfeit a tenth of their labor,

a tenth of their hearts and minds to the dying king
who stands head and shoulders above the others.

O to see him crouch in fear

when his name is called, O to forget that kings
of war fall on their own swords when all is lost.

At the appointed Hour the baptizer points
at the Nazarene to say:

Behold the King who cannot die,
the King who demands all of you.

The raven leaves the master's hand and flies
back and forth over the seas but the dove
discovers the branch on the new earth, hope
that perhaps this time will be different,
no more bashing brothers with stones,
no more incessant inclinations towards evil,
no more regret from the Maker of us.

In time,

the water abates and the earth is reborn
without the stain of Cain's transgression,
the blood washed clean from his hands,
apple skin washed out of Adam's teeth,
crowns washed off the heads of evil kings.

Now the dove descends upon the Jordan
to indicate the olive branch is found here,
in the craftsman who is named BRANCH.

Lift your eyes if you have them,
gaze into the ancient mysteries, the symbols
rising out of the seven days neverending.

The wandering dove lands upon the
One who takes away the sin of the world,
He who is the new heaven and new earth,
the lamb, the dove, the branch, see all
of you who are soaking wet with belief.
This man, O baptizer? The craftsman?
The baptizer says I am but a raven,
seeking that which has now been found.

In the corridors of time Nathaniel is placed at the foot of a fig tree planted not to give shade to the weary or fruit to the hungry but for him to sit beneath and be seen, sit for a million years if you don't mind while kingdoms rise and fall in the sight of the Word who spoke man, tree, kingdom into being.

What filled your mind in the days of waiting, my Nathaniel, and what do you make of your hands? This tree was grown for you. The Hour arrives when the Word appears to say, "I saw you sitting under the tree." At once you understand time is no longer moving the direction you always believed it should, and your life is ended by a choice made when water and land were divided, when seed-bearing plants were told to grow. There is no more sitting, just walking

into the jaws of death, the fig tree traded
for a road leading you to India, to a cross,
to your own corpse hanging without skin.

Tell us, O Nazarene, why you made sure
they were the ones to see you first,
the servants carrying wine to the guests,
the dustmen baptized in the river,
the shepherds on a hillside by night,
the boys who cast their nets into the sea,
Mother Mary who knows and says listen
and do whatever he tells you to do,
go ahead and make a mockery of the water
used to purify us from our inherited diseases,
isn't that the story we are sticking to?

O Nazarene!

Tell us why you are revealed at a wedding
instead of a funeral when it has become clear
that all who dare to look upon your face
discover they have been marked for the scorn
of nations, of kings, of fathers who say
no son of mine will fill his imagination
with fairy tales about God, floods, crosses,

water magically turning into wine in Cana.
Lift your cup with me, O bride and groom,
because the wine is tasting better and better.
But, won't someone tell the bride she is not
drinking wine but is drunk on the blood
of the One who holds a cup up to His side?
Drink both water and wine until you are full,
drink from the cup offered
by He who cannot die
for long.

Darling,
someone attacked the temple with a whip,
and to make matters worse He escaped.

Dove,
what good would it do to whip stone walls?

Oh Darling,
I'm famous for being vague when hysterical,
I should clarify, a zealot ran into the market
and sliced up the livestock handlers
and moneychangers, slicing them up
and cracking the air to frighten children.

Dovey Dove,
these zealots are going to get us crucified
if we don't put a stop to their wayward
fantasies, I say enough is enough.

Darling,
this was no zealot but the revolutionary
who thinks He can be a craftsman one day
and the King of the Jews the next, a maniac
among maniacs, and consider fishermen
are following him from town to town

hanging on his every word as if He's . . .

Dova Dove,

as if he's what? Don't say the Messiah
or I'll choke on my lunch, every so often
one of these types pop up but in time
they're exposed as charlatans and magicians.

Darling my Darling,

He whipped up the place saying it was His
Father's house, can you imagine? And darling,
did He make a real mess or what,
the tables are flipped, the sheep are lost,
the coins scattered, the sellers fled for safety.
My Dovey!

what more proof do you need that He's only
a rabble rouser, no Messiah would attack us
for spreading out lambs and gutting them
to wash over our transgressions.

Darling,

how could the temple be His Father's house
unless He is claiming to be the Son of God?

With a collective dream the earth is moved
and stacked with stones that embody hope,
the deepest kind of hope inherited from mother
who wandered around the desert chasing fire
and dark clouds as instructed by the old man
who spoke face to face with God on the mountain.
That collective dream manifested over forty-six years
in the form of a building constructed under strict
orders not to divert from the Creator's plans,
and forty-six years go by with men hammering
under the sun, under slavery, under siege
to the sound of mother's collective dream
echoing in their ears, until the day the Nazarene
attacks the manifestation with a whip and says
He's going to tear it down and rebuild the dream
in THREE DAYS.

And the earth, compelled by the Word, moves.
What madness is brought upon us by His arrival,
what great dream shall be torn down the moment

we follow through the gate and onto the road
of return to the land where four rivers meet,
the road from which we cannot return?
Children, the gate is narrow because so few
are willing to walk through it.

To be born again suggests life and death
and time must be redefined in our minds,
push forward into the mystery Nicodemus
for only there will you find what swallows you
whole, there you will extend your hand into a fire
and discover your only reward is death.

Where are you O Christ
but standing before me saying I must be born again?
Not all minds are able to deal in ancient symbolism
and the Nazarene isn't interested in hand-holding
the masses towards the solutions of His puzzles.
How can a man my size fit through a birth canal?
Tell me, O Nazarene, because I'm truly interested
otherwise I wouldn't have risked my life for you,
tell me what might befall my reputation, my job,
my possessions, the collectibles under my bed,
were I to be born again, have you any idea
what I have suffered, all the words I memorized.
Open your clutched hand, Nicodemus,

for what you hold most dear is what you owe.
O Nazarene,
tell me the other way to inherit the kingdom,
in words I can lay flat on the table for examination,
not like this, not by offering me a metaphor,
not by handing me a cup of blood and water.
On the river when the baptizer says sink,
Nicodemus says, but why.
Take off your hood, O Teacher of Israel,
and dip your face in the light.

Across the river is the Son of Man
but beyond Him, on the horizon,
is the prison that opens a door to thee,
a dancing whore at a birthday party,
bloodlust of mommy and weakness of daddy,
the sharpness of a blade through his neck,
his head presented on a platter like rack of lamb,
a cohort of followers who acquire his corpse
and bury it without a head attached.

The same cohort now comes questioning
whether the baptizer is being overshadowed
by the bridegroom, the Word, the dove.

What else can happen when joy is full?

Remember, sons of Bethany, the raven returns
with nothing but the dove returns with life.

Children, soon you will see that all who follow
closely are not given keys to golden palaces
but are presented before the owners of palaces
for sport, even now I see where the road leads

and that I am already walking in the direction
of the river, I hear the chorus on the horizon
singing joy means knowing how the story ends,
and time is not moving the direction you think.

The Hour binds Him to a well in Samaria,
rest your walking feet my lovely Lord
though watch your back in the land of curs,
curs who lured Dinah into her lasting shame,
curs who turned their eyes from Shechem's sin.
Yes, yes, of course you may seize her hand,
but don't mind when the sons of Jacob storm
the town and cut your wicked sleeping throats,
don't mind when you are judged for father's sin
for the next ten thousand years, the unfortunate
truth is cur puppies wrestle beneath the table
for crumbs that will not fall, that cannot fall.
Here is the place Jacob sunk his hands
into the earth and dug until finding water,
the water of life!
What a relief the sons of Schechem are dead,
what a relief that for centuries to come
our father Joseph will have a place to lay,
put the sarcophagus in the ground, O family,

this is his inheritance, a bloodfield and a well,
what a relief this is no longer a land of curs.

Now,

the Nazarene waits for the sons of Shechem,
the dead rapist, the woman who arrives at six,
for He is bound by the Hour
and so is she.

Just as the fig tree was planted for Nathaniel,
so were five husbands conceived and birthed
in Samaria so they might claim the lifeblood
of Photine, briefly, in marriage, one after another
taking handfuls of her soul with them whenever
they fled for a better woman, a grander chance
to make more money, a finer pasture with
great thick sheep to shear and sell their wool.
Five husbands, all so the wandering Nazarene
can prove He has known her before the stars
were spoken across the skies.

If the Nazarene sets His sights on you,
which tree might grow over your head,
which diseased king might make you a gift
to win a smile from the dancing whore,
which nation might add you to the collective
of expendable millions gathered for prison,
shoved into the boxcar or the desert grave?
Which husband might rip out your heart?

She has seen and heard, now she goes and tells
children who do not know they, too, are worthy
of His enduring love.

O Nazarene! You wish to break the elements
that keep us alive, the sustenance needed
to stack up our years of suffering in silence.
All we ask is for pyrite crowns and a mouth
full of mud, a little money to build the machine
of our choosing in case we wish to drag the border
forward another inch at our king's demand.
Instead, you lead us to a table with bread,
wine, salt, water, the subatomic elements
meant to sustain us through time's corridors.
(Children, do you hear what I am telling you
or have you been mesmerized by the age
in which you live? Do you remember yet?)
Death is the revelation you keep hidden
in your cloak until we are willing to sit
with you a while, to endure your questions,
to go crazy at the symbols, to tell the truth,
to hear you say that you are the Messiah—

persistence then revelation then a quick
and brutal death at the strike
of your hand.

The Word begins to speak of the word
that needs no signs and wonders to be true.
One clan of the blind need not their sight
to believe the Nazarene who carries fire
from place to place burning kingdoms down.
There in the ashes He offers a cure to thirst
before moving through the mysteries of time.
Still,
another clan of the blind descend upon Him
clutching their eyes, we're blind, we're blind,
turn that pot of water into wine again,
or make the goat into a braying donkey,
or give this dustman his arms, eyes, and legs,
damn your ancient symbols just do the tricks
so we can be sure to believe you this time,
beloved Nazarene, prove who you truly are.
The Nazarene obliges the masses, except

which miracle occurred at Photine's well?
Dead boys rise on a word spoken
from faraway places.

Here I wait on the rippling of the waters
and the angels to descend at random
to announce the annual race for those
of us who are missing our arms and legs,
never ask why God chose this for us
or chose us for this, which one is it friend?
When mother pushed us through the canal
she did not foresee that our lives would be
a race to flop towards angelic waters.
Yet, here I testify that living water rose
and raced towards us, towards us.
Leap, O dustman! Leap for your salvation!
And, like God to our grandfather Adam,
a dustman was baptized as a Word
echoed in the chambers of his heart
saying Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.
None can know—not even the teachers—
why one dustman reaches the water first,
or why living water raced towards us,

or why the Messiah cut stone and wood
for thirty years, there is the problem of time
again and if it is moving in one direction
you must realize none of this is possible.
The borders between life and death
— the dust, the temple steps, the pool—
fracture on the footsteps of the Nazarene.
All the light that has remained captive
for the eons, for the thirty years a man
carved stones and ate at mother's table,
now leaks into the air for us to breathe.
By the footsteps of the Nazarene
life is now death and death is now life,
and Father and Son are Son and Father.
Listen, you tomb-dwellers, for the light
let loose is making its way to you.

Over the years we've grown accustomed
to your showmanship, the bent elements
catalogued in father's special books.
With Abram's animals sliced in half you burned
as a smoking oven and a flaming torch,
to father you spoke from a burning bush
and led our brothers and sisters across deserts
by night with a pillar of fire, and in the furnace
of Babylon's king you appeared to console
the condemned untouched by the flames.
Your wrath rained as fire on the altar,
on the wicked, on the captors, on the killers,
on the 250 who rose up against our father.
Wasn't it you who set Sinai ablaze?
Wasn't it you who consumed the sister cities?
Only your voice we have heard and your form
we have seen, yet here is a brazen Nazarene,
the whip handler, the winemaker, the craftsman,
the riddle king, the obsession of the baptizer,

carrying no fire.

Lean forward, Nicodemus, let them see
your face has been touched by the light
you cannot remove, tell them you traded
certainty for submission to a local craftsman
wandering the countryside on foot.

Bold is the Nazarene who advises fisherman
to declare that our father's desert prophecies
have been fulfilled by Him, Yeshua of Nazareth
who spent the last thirty years making tables,
chairs, cornerstones for Roman buildings,
what was it you made again, and for how long?
Tell us what the man who can build a house
with a word charges the man who can't,
tell us how many dustmen you walked past
on your way to thatch a roof.
Twelve disciples twelve spies twelve tribes
led across the River Jordan into the land
promised to grandfather under the stars
of Haran, and this arc of time soaked in blood
ends upon the head of a riddle king, and He,
like Joshua, is the one to carry the fire
of our fathers and lead us into the kingdom?
This one is Jesus, Joshua, speaking Father's
name to accuse we the obedient children?

Step forward, bold Nazarene, bow your head
for the crown fashioned out of thorns,
spread your arms wide to be embraced
with hammer and spike.

Return to the table, O sons of Jacob
and bring your quivering bellies to be filled.
The Son baked bread for each one of you
and filled twelve chalices with His blood,
He spread the subatomic elements for you,
but are they not also for the scorched boy
calling out from beneath the bush, are they not
also for Mephibosheth crutching toward us?
Soon you will die, but your birthright remains.
Eat and drink and eat and drink and laugh
together at fondest memories of your father
so the Son can revel in your final reunion.
Brothers, would it be okay if me and Photine
and all the cur puppies grovel for crumbs
under your family table?
We won't be a bother.
As He speaks the table grows longer and longer
until there is a seat for every promised star,

and one day you will come to see the castigated
boy under the bush is eating amongst you too,
one day you will discover bread can be multiplied
and living water flows from His side.

No one is going to kill you for multiplying bread
or feeding the dustmen who crossed the seas
and limped up the mountain to hear you speak.
You are safe, O Nazarene, with your wonders
performed among the poor, your charity magic.
Feed five thousand or everyone in the world
and we won't ask what you have been doing
for the last thirty years while dustmen starved
lying outside your front door with open mouths
and crooked spines, curled hands and missing legs.
Pursue your fame, O Nazarene, at any cost,
why should we slow you down?
The problem we're having is the leftover bread,
twelve baskets, the man from Bar Shalishah,
twenty barley loaves and two thousand men,
morning manna on the ground for forty years,
how you've structured your mountain magic.
Say what you are saying, O Nazarene,
say it once out loud.



He baked bread for lost and beloved children,
not wild curs,
and still from these children He escaped
into the mountain, worried they might
cram the wrong crown upon His head.
The crown set aside for Him at creation
like the well set aside for Photine was woven
with thorns not jewels, suffering not glory.
Reaching into the basket of leftovers my cur paw
is slapped, wild curs over there, children eat first!
Children,
the argument for a cur-Jesus hangs on mystery,
transfiguration, elements bent into submission,
roaming spirits, days out of order, traveling freely
through time and space, stormwalking on water.
He says it is I so do not be afraid, but He is the one
multiplying five loaves with no leftovers, we are
hoping that perhaps His intentions were broader
than stated, that crumbs in a mustache may be enough

to carry us from this age to the next.

Dwell not on the leftovers, O my cur soul,
but on mystery.

Still, if it was I who sailed a boat on the water,
would I look up to see Him walking towards me
or might He still be hiding in the mountain?

My daughters, ask if you truly believe you are
invited to take a seat at the table,
ask if you truly wish
to sit among the dead.

The local boy is talented and now wants everyone to believe He isn't the son of a man and a woman but the Son of God, the Bread of Life, the Living Water. Wouldn't it have been wonderful for Him to perform these tricks and miracles a few decades back so daughter might still be alive, cured of the sickness in her lungs. Of all the possibilities the most likely is that He is insane because I don't want to believe the son of my friends would cut stones for thirty years and hide His powers while I can still hear daughter coughing in the night, something that borders on evil, not that boy, not Him. My friend, I heard he offered for people in the crowd to eat His flesh and drink His blood, the case is settled. We shouldn't call Him a boy any longer because in truth He's grown up but He will always be the son of Joseph, and this son of Joseph exchanges pronouns at random—Father, Son, I, He, Me, Myself, One—and on and on until we are twisted into knots trying to understand His insights about heaven and eternity, if He has any.

This son of Joseph is clever and talented no doubt
and I'm willing to go so far as to say He's a prophet
like the baptizer who appeared from wild places,
but I can tell you right now He didn't come from heaven.

Come along Brother Simon before our careers
come to an end by being associated with the One
who asked us to drink His blood and eat His body,
say it out loud, say it out loud, say it out loud
Brother Simon and look into my eyes and say
this riddle king isn't a stone-cutting maniac
but the truth-telling Son of God, no Simon no?
The magic on the mountain bought Him time
but like the stones He stacked for thirty years
a case is being made against Him, and it is you
standing next to Him with your throat exposed
to professional sacrificers holding up their blades.
Every single step you take in His shadow dissolves
your future, don't you see that He is leading you
up the steps of the altar for a blood sacrifice?
No one will survive the Nazarene.
My brothers and sisters,
if you draw close to the power of life and death
you shall have the sharp edges of both.



The story changes when instead of walking
in circles amongst the rolling hills of Galilee,
far from the altar where He will be splayed,
He puts on the heavy cloak to hide His face
and points His feet at the storm gathering
on the horizons of King Melchizedek's city.
The storm gathers over the temple for you
on the same day land is separated from sea,
and all these years it has waited for your return
like a lovesick father peering out the doorway.
O my Son won't you come home to die, please
won't you leave the hills and drench the altar
with your blood that is living, potable water?
To really get your life going—you or me or her—
just go wherever they want to kill you
and see how long you can survive.
Your Hour awaits.



Sennacherib stands outside the walls waiting
for the people in the city to grow so thirsty
that they might unlock the gates and let him in
because being clubbed into pulp is preferable
to watching a child gasp for a drink of water.
Ah, but Sennacherib of Nineveh doesn't know
inside the walls the children fill their cups
from the Pool of Siloam
flowing cold from the Gihon through a tunnel
into the waiting mouths of Hezekiah's children.
How long will you wait, O warrior king?
How long will you keep your sword sheathed?
How long until you realize your crown is pyrite?
On a feast long after Sennacherib of Nineveh
dissolved into the dust of Babylon's footprints,
the Nazarene stood in Jerusalem's temple
to say that the words He spoke over the crowds
flowed through Him from the Father's spring.
Drink, children, for the water is alive.



Still Nazareth is a barrier to belief,
a scandalized mother and the thirty years
of cutting stones while everyone watched
sweat fall from his brow and calluses form
on the hands that traded a hammer for a whip.
Keep in mind what father told us might happen,
yes but not like this, don't be a simpleton fool,
not to mention all of our maniacal uncles
writing down their prophecies in the desert,
but you're overlooking key components
because you want this to be the Messiah,
and this wanting of yours has made you blind
to the fact that I know a boy who grew up
right next to this character who sneaks
about the villages in a cloak and confuses
everyone He meets with twisted metaphors,
yes, but what about the blind who now see?
What should we make of the bread multiplied,
water transformed into wine at a wedding?

Friend you don't see what is at your feet
because all your life you have been trained
to keep your eyes on the illusory horizons.
This new troublemaker
was born in Bethlehem, the register says so.
At the dissention, the Nazarene peels back
a thin layer of time and steps into the corridor.

Like Sennacherib some men will find their names
written into the dust on the day of a windstorm,
and then what should we make of them?
Father put the rules in place and the rules stand—
civilization cannot exist without the stone tablets—
and none could decry the official who picked up
a rock and hurled it into the back of her head,
over and over, take this whore, until the earth
is restored to its axis at her final, diseased breath.
The vanishing whore means eradication, fulfilment
of the theory that we begin with Adam's choice
and not with Adam the reflection of good God.
Rise all you who are able to distinguish one image
from another, rise all you who can tell the difference
between a true and a false reflection of God!
One stands under judgment and one acts as judge
yet the roles are confused again, as happens
in the presence of the Nazarene who swept
laws aside with an invitation to kill her, why not?

She too is made in the image of He who saves
and not He who condemns, yet on this day
He says go ahead and kill her, anyone worthy.
The young men full of hot fire for father's rules
thought they might, I might just kill this whore,
one sharp stone and my famous aim would do it,
until He put their names in the dust, two tablets
revised, and Sennacherib trembles in the wind.
Am I looking at God on Sinai?

Step by step, make sense of the miracle, the mystery that transformed from spirit to flesh over millennia and now rubbed spit and mud into your dead eyes. Present the happening on a timeline with every detail so the chemistry can be examined, the who what when where exactly did this happening take place, all the way to what you had for breakfast, do dustmen eat breakfast? How did you first engage this rabble-rousing craftsman, are you hypnotized, are you a magician's devoted assistant, did He wield demons and ghosts at the tip of His whip? Everything, dustman, lay everything on the table! Careful how you speak of sin, thou foolish dustman, you were BORN IN SIN, and sin like dust is your home, so death hangs on every single word you choose to speak. The Five Sons of Annas wish to know if this riddle king mentioned the prophet Isaiah, saving a whore from stones, or the cur puppy groveling for breadcrumbs by the well.

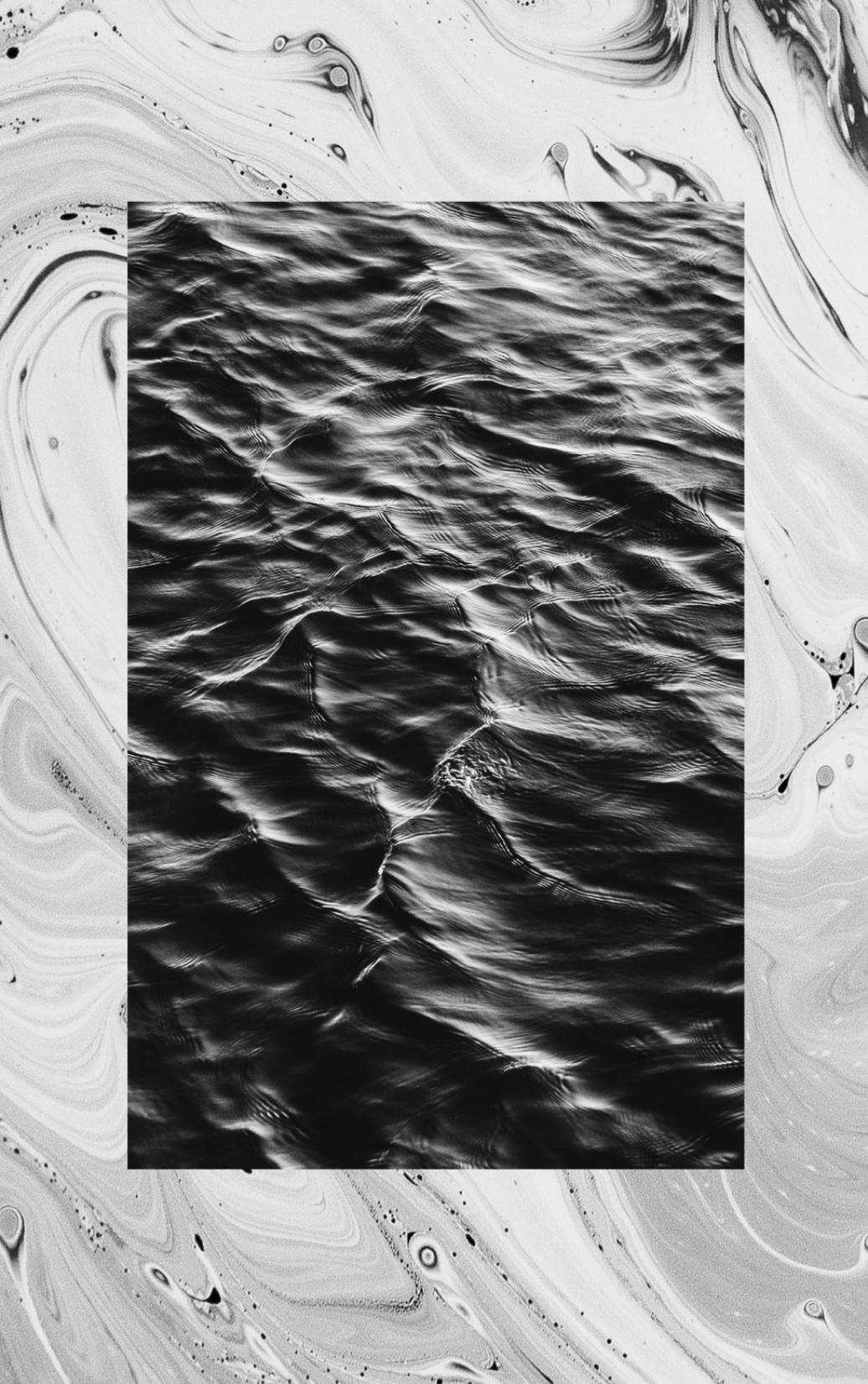
Don't you think
the time has come to remind men they are nothing?
Don't you think
we ought to remind the individual he is not sacred?
Sennacherib wants to know about the water,
the water, the water, and how much is left.
The sons want to know if anyone remembers
how to find it.

O dustman, do you believe in the Son of Man?
The Nazarene offers sight to you but promises
to bring blindness upon those born with eyes.
Thunder rumbles in the hearts of all who hear,
all who see, all who walk through the temple
unaccosted because they do not make a bed
in the dust begging for penance, bread, coins,
have mercy on me in the name of God, good sir!
The Nazarene came to the world to separate
the blind on one side, the seers on the other,
and by the sword make them switch places.
Reality itself is madness until we understand
time is not moving in the direction we think,
I've told you over and over my dearests
if we are on a linear line then the collectivists
are right and man is nothing but skin and bone.
Like frightened children the temple walkers
say, "To which side do we belong, O Nazarene?"
Ah, because you asked the wrong question,

the Nazarene intends to pluck out your eyes
and confiscate your bread.

(Judas asks the same question and discovers
his sudden desire for silver.)

Since the day a well was dug for lonely Photine,
the clan of sheep have remained at the mountain
waiting on their good shepherd to return, the One
they know inside of their blood by His smell,
His gait, His whistle, the staff He carries to battle
wolves who move in tightening circles by night.
Imposters came to cut the throats of stragglers
after coaxing them from the mountain with gifts,
and it was the wolves who lapped up our remains,
whetting their tongues and inflating their appetites
so that the circle moves closer closer with dawn
thirty years or thirty million years from breaking.
Is tonight the night of the wolves?
Behold, a familiar scent is carried on the wind
and He walks through the door of the mountain
carrying fire.



Tomorrow,
under the shade of Solomon's Portico, the survivors
of the Nazarene gather to crane their necks
at the Mount of Olives in anticipation that His feet
might split the great valley in two from east to west,
with half of the mountain moving north and half south,
the blind on one side and the seers on the other,
famished cur puppies on one side and sons of Jacob
on the other, stuffed, as it has always been my friends.
Instead a fire rains upon these desperate Galileans
(the fire also fell on Joshua, Caleb, Bezalel, Oholiab)
and at once they speak the language of the nations,
Parthians, Medes and Elamites, Judea and Cappadocia,
Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and Libya
Rome, Cretans, and Arabia—a wonder, yes, but not
a mountain splitting in half and the Nazarene on clouds.
With these tongues of fire flapping at the foreigners,
surely everyone took notice of the familiar warning posted

on the edge of the square where curs could lap up crumbs:
“No foreigner is to go beyond the balustrade and the plaza
of the temple zone, whoever is caught doing so
will have himself to blame for his death, which will follow.”

Today,

before they splay the Nazarene on the altar,

He strolls under the same shade of Solomon’s Portico
only to be surrounded by a horde of clarity seekers.

If you are the Messiah just say it, clearly,

no baskets no metaphors no symbolism no charity magic,
just say it, clearly.

I and the Father are one
(I breathed life into Adam,
I destroyed the earth with a flood,
I made the covenant with grandfather,
I sent plagues on Egypt,
I guided your fathers for forty years,
I wrote the law on stone,
I raised the shepherd king,
I held you like my children,
my disobedient rotten children
who needed to be punished
in order to be properly loved,
I AM.)
At this, they gather up stones
to execute the creator of stones
speaking in blasphemies,
with perfect clarity.



Darling,

He's out there in the hills somewhere
and I have a hard time sleeping knowing
any day He and His fishermen could appear
right outside my window playing tricks
with fake blind men as props.

Oh Dove,

like I've told you through the centuries
these madmen pretending to be God
don't last long, in a week or two, a year
at most He will be in an unmarked grave.

My Darling,

I'm just fearful of what could happen
in the year He stays alive, imagine more
fishermen leaving their boats and nets
to go town to town playing tricks with bread,
all the poor and miserable people believe
already and more soon will if He continues.

Dovey Ma Dovey,

we can't let our allegiances be contaminated
by movements that come and go.

Of course Darling,

at the end of the day He's a carpenter
or a stonemason or a what was it they said,
a revolutionary intent on getting us killed.

Dovey,

it was me who said that but it's true.

Darling Darling,

all we have ever wanted is to have a happy life,
a happy life that isn't too complicated.

The Nazarene returns to the familiar river, O river
where the baptizer sunk acolytes and pointed
to the future, the dove, the kingdom, the lamb,
Him!

(Does his severed head satisfy your desires,
Princess Salome, or shall we bring you another?)
At Bethany they truly believe in the Nazarene
and don't ask why He spent the last thirty years
cutting stones in silence while Rome dug knives
into the bellies of their brothers and sisters,
or how a grown man can be born again,
or if a blind man should be healed on Sabbath,
or why the forgotten sins of a dustman's father
led to him racing other cripples to flop into water.
No one picks up a stone to execute the Nazarene,
what lovely people here, Lazarus, Mary, Martha,
and the others who sunk beneath the waters
without asking why it was necessary.
Behold the believers in the words of John,

the baptizer, the prophet, the headless waymaker
whose job came to an end the day he pointed
at Him.

Their clothes are still wet.

Like Photine abused by five husbands
and Nathaniel waiting under the fig tree,
Lazarus
stood before the winds of the Nazarene circling
the earth in search of those who can be useful.
Flee from this wind if you hear it coming or else
you might wind up lying on a bed, breathing last
breaths at the sorrow of your wailing family
until four days later (not three) a rolling stone,
a flash of light, a familiar “Lazarus, come forth,”
and you awake wrapped in cloth smothered
in the scent of a dead man, because you are dead.
In walks the Nazarene holding fire
to prove this mystery sickness which killed you
and carried you into the abyss of death and sorrow
is naught but a temporary inconvenience, forget
the four days (not three) of your brother in a tomb,
the hysterics of the funeral, the consolation food,
questions over why He spent two days

staying instead of coming, recall those thirty years.
But, you are people of the river, are you not?
All that will be already is,
and all you see is yours.

Point your toes at Judea, Doubting Didymus,
your death has been prearranged as a table
filled with colorful foods, a table you chose
on the day you agreed to follow the Nazarene,
a table you cannot escape, like Lazarus' tomb,
or Photine's five, or Judas' sack of silver coins.
Take heart, you who doubt the healed wounds,
the hands and the feet and the pierced side,
the meal has been prepared for you to feast,
just not now! Not yet, O Thomas! Muziris awaits!
Whet your appetite for the next forty years
until, on a mountain, a knife opens your throat
announcing that you may begin to prophesy
of the goodness of God, the mercy He offers
to those who follow, the goodness available
to all who walk in His footsteps.



Uncle Elisha stretched himself
on top of the dead boy's body
aligning eyes on eyes, nose on nose,
hands on hands, breath on breath,
a mirror to the Shunnamite boy
who grew warm under the heat
of the prophet's bones,
the bones that sprung a corpse
to life when tossed into his grave
during the spring invasion of Moab,
don't you see?

Have you succumbed to amnesia?
Before him Uncle Elijah stretched
himself on the widow's son
three times, one two three.
See, angry widow, your son lives.
The man from Bar-Shalishah

brought loaves of barley to multiply
so the leftovers may be gathered.

Who do you say I am?

Die so you might find out.

Down the same river travels word
that the Nazarene has raised the dead
and now eyes a revolution against Rome,
against us, against the crowns we raise
each morning to father's desert altars.
He said He would tear down the temple
and rebuild it in three days, but He won't
have the opportunity when Caesar transforms
these stones into ashes, enough is enough,
better to splay this riddle king for all
to see His human blood and guts.
As He grows in stature Rome sharpens
her sword with wary eye on us, not Him.
The dustmen cry out they are now a mirror
and order is marked by whoever places
their hands on the void to crush it.
As the craftsman wanders the hillsides
with falsehoods and magic tricks sold
to the poor,

Caiaphas longs for twelve baskets of bread,
truly truly he wants the nation restored,
bread cannot be gathered with the Nazarene
still breathing, shh, the prophecy enacted.
Smear blood over your doors, O Israel,
the angel of death will be here soon.

A dead man lounges at the dinner table
breaking bread with the raiser of dead men,
the Nazarene who deals in subatomic elements
like the baptizer who offered repentance to Mary,
Mary who baptizes the Nazarene in perfume,
prepare thyself my dear Lord, for what
I do not know—how could I?—I only know
that you must be on a grand mission of death
because Didymus points his feet at Jerusalem
where the expert slayers of livestock await you
as they might a prized sheep with hearty flesh,
flesh to be roasted and salted after the ceremony
then paired with wine, but does it taste like blood?
Caiaphas salivates for lamb when his plate is empty.
Judas calculates the cost of Mary's baptism
with the arithmetic of a thief, surely Joanna
knows by now, surely Judas knows the Nazarene
knows, surely John knows, surely Peter knows,
surely Susanna notices when the purse is light,

surely this thieving disciple has been discovered,
but what use is making a scene over thievery
when five loaves of bread and two fish
can be turned into a thousand, a million?
What's money when a dead man sits at the table
with the raiser of the dead?

Fear not, daughter of Zion, your King is coming,
seated on a donkey's colt, what year is this?
Find your palm, O my brother, and lay it in the road,
for Jerusalem awaits her Savior King, the One
who rides a donkey towards His crown and cross,
the One who peels back time and in the fashion
of a craftsman carves palm branches into the walls
of the temple at Solomon's orders and again pulls back
the layers of time and is enthroned amongst the endless
multitudes from every nation who wear white robes
and hold palm branches in their hands, and again
is a dustman on the Feast of Booths, choose wisely
the four species, the symbolic waving of the palms.
What year are we in, haven't we been here already,
or am I at the end
again?



If only the riddle king was executed
maybe the movement could be stopped
but here the international festivalgoers
are asking if perhaps this Jesus is Messiah,
even Greeks, who arrived with hammers
in their hands intent to build a church of curs
down the line at the instruction of Paul
who climbs up on a rock in Athens to say
yes indeed this is the Messiah, behold the place
of Ares' conviction, you who killed the son of god.
The Nazarene welcomes every tribe and nation
with words of death, the Son of God carries
the Hour with Him as if holding the hand
of a child through the festival crowds,
are you hungry yet my child? Are you thirsty?
The Nazarene warns that those who follow
will burst as a seed underground to sprout
fruit yet the bursting is brutal, O dustmen.
Thunder (or angels, or God) shakes Athens
in agreement.



All prophets who challenge the collective
must go into hiding, as all who come before
or after.

Recall father stayed on the mountain for so long
our family had time to mold gold into a calf.

O dear son, isn't it true God wrestles His children
in the night of their solitude to cripple walking hips?
Perhaps in the great distance He hears the rumblings,
the horns the fires the trumpets the freedom cries
of the nation held captive by the king whose heart
was hardened by external power, a choice made for him.

Those who cannot see the Nazarene cannot see
because they aren't allowed to have eyes yet, O you
who do not recognize yourself in the mirror.

Trust His breath in your mouth and touch the place
where your rib was removed, find the soil of Eden
upon your flesh and beneath your fingernails.

Line up on this side of the valley you whose hearts
are turned into stones by the creator of hearts.

Back to light and dark.



Lay your worries aside and recline
at the table, friend, lounge freely amongst fruit
and bread and the eleven brothers you followed
for years, from one group of dustmen and curs
to the next, the commonplace miracles of God
witnessed on a Tuesday afternoon, just dead
men coming back to life on a word, nothing
to see here that hasn't been done at least twice.
The curtain of time flutters under Grecian thunder—
wasn't it you who turned an ear to the king?
Aren't you the one who gave birth to Eliam,
who gave birth to Bathsheba and her bathtub?
Wasn't it you who stuck a knife in the king's side
with your dreams of 12,000 soldiers?
Are you not the counselor who betrayed the king
in exchange for the promises of another king
only to discover that both are diseased
and hacking up their lungs today or tomorrow?

Did not your final breath come in the moments
after your neck snapped in half from a noose?

Yet,

David didn't wash the feet of Ahithopel.

My Judas,

we've come here hungry from every nation,
our mouths whetted for lamb, our pockets
emptied of leaven, our feet in need of washing
from the servant boy who still makes claims
He witnessed the Nazarene turn water into wine
at the union of the bride and groom in Cana.

My Judas,

I remember God hardened the heart of Pharaoh
so there might be twelve sons, twelve spies,
twelve nations, twelve mighty angels guarding
twelve gates leading to a tree of life with twelve fruits,
twelve legions waiting in the trees of Gethsemane,
I'm lost in the corridors of time again, the lines blur
as the Nazarene cuts in and out of centuries,
twelve stones, twelve wells, twelve baskets,
twelve disciples and one with hands of silver.
Melchizedek carries the fire and hands the torch

to whoever must keep the story going along.

My Judas,

he hands the blood-soaked morsel to you.

A demon wanders the streets of Jerusalem
sniffing out his thirty pieces of silver
while we are fattened by bread and wine.
We have entered into the Hour, O Simon Peter,
the one that has been seeping towards us
since great-grandfather Adam was promised
his future would end in sweat and dust.
This is the Hour when the fig tree blossoms
and grandfather's knife stops over the throat
of his boy, the ram bleats in the bushes
yet the altar still cries out for blood.
Allow the experts to splay the Nazarene
who spreads His arms and transforms to bread,
baskets of it for Jacob's sons and crumbs for curs,
yet the boy under the bush calls out for water!
All, take your places, the Hour is upon us.
Photine sits on the edge of Jacob's well,
the dustman clamors for the rippling waters,
the prophetic baptizer wades into the river,

the whore shakes at the rattle of a tambourine,
Nicodemus enters the night with a question,
and a rooster crows for thee.

Gentle orphans,
fear not that the Nazarene re-enters
the mystery of time and you cannot
follow Him through the fractured centuries.
The cost to take your seat at the table
He prepares inside the folds of the ages
is calculated not in suffering, not pain,
not commitment, not righteousness,
but in the buckets of blood you are willing
to haul around and distribute to the nations
for the rest of your miserable, living days,
collected from the streams that have drained
off the altars of Israel for all these years,
streams of inherited sin, streams of atonement,
a misplaced word or a forgotten Sabbath
erased under the sliced throat of the family lamb,
one after another after another until the day
the Lamb of God says the Hour has arrived,

my blood runs forever, and up He goes.
Still, Phillip has the courage to ask
for the Father,
not the Son.

Again

the forthcoming harvest is promised—
branches with fruit on one side,
branches without fruit on the other,
the ones who see and those who will,
the good dry living people here,
dead men in wet clothes there.

The vineyard that produces no wine
is not ignored by disappointed Father.
He claws the bricks off the walls.

Perhaps

it's not so simple as curs and sons,
what do you have to say Nicodemus?
Is He not still spreading stars
across the universe, and has He not
also promised them to the scorched
boy under the bush who asks for water?
In the garden the laborers gather
up the dried sticks with hardened

buds, no fruit ever grew from this
and so never will, bundle the dead
and haul them to the fire pits
so we can warm our weary hands,
our children, our bread, and live
a little longer on account of the dead.
O Nazarene,
can't you at least hang a vessel from me?

Darling,

I've been dreaming about fishing boats and I
am a fish far beneath the surface of the sea
but then I see the glimmer of a great net
and cannot help but to swim into it, and then
I'm drawn up onto the ship and see Him.

Oh Dove,

dreams hardly mean anything at all, don't trust
your mind at night for that's when unfiltered
ideas rise up and cannot be managed easily.

Of course Darling,

it's just that I like seeing His face looking down
even though He seems to know me inside out.

Dovey,

your mind is not your friend, at least not now
when the world seems to be disintegrating.

Darling Darling,

stop lecturing me about the value of dreams
when I've already told you I don't trust them,

I'm only letting you know that if I see Him truly
in real life I cannot guarantee I will feel vengeful.
My Dovey Dove,
that's just it, that's how these magicians advance
in society by making friends of those who should be
their enemies, a little touch of niceties and suddenly
He's not so bad anymore, just a whip-wielding
craftsman pretending to be the Son of God,
and soon enough you believe Him.

The diseased king offers an inheritance
to his children, the abundant affection
of a father, of course, but don't forget
he is rich in his own ways—the inheritance
you seek to win holds gifts fit for Yuri of Silla,
Guangwu, Kujula Kadphises, Amanitaraqide,
Shorkaror, Scorilo, Ptolemy of Mauretania,
Antedios, Antonia Tryphaen, Daru of Baekje,
all of the names that will never leave
our lips, fame, abundant fattened whores,
crowds on their knees as kings pass on high.
Consider that if things go abundantly well
your name could be added to the list of kings!
O child of the world, this belongs to thee,
for sons of the world are kings in the making,
and surely a birthright cannot erode, surely?
Surely we can have the poison stew tonight
and receive the inheritance tomorrow, surely?
Surely the kingdom is within reach for all,

our names on lips forever, our fingers dripping
with grease from the feast of food and love.
Imagine, just imagine, the forlorn followers
of the Nazarene who shall not receive
the inheritance of the world, who win nothing.
Those who reach past the pyrite crown
for a bite of bread will be hated by all,
eternally.

The Nazarene speaks clearly of death
now that the Hour has come. Tonight,
the King of Salem stands on the horizon
with his torch held high so all might see.
The riddles and metaphors have ended
in exchange for the words (the Word!)
that have been pushing up from the ground
all along, since the day the baptizer pointed
at the dove, the craftsman, the Son of God,
Him!
and said this is the One we have waited for.
I am not talking about which gate to enter—
we've all accepted our place among the curs.
The message you overlooked is this:
After they splay Him on the altar
they will turn their eyes on you.
The words rising from each happy campfire,
each grateful dustman with senses returned,
each road the disciples have walked, lingering

under the winding metaphors of the Nazarene,
have always promised that all who follow
are following Him into the tip of a spear.
The chance to walk away for thirty pieces
of silver has passed.

Three years is not long enough to reveal
the fullness of eternity to Galilean fishermen
who cannot yet embrace the mystery that time
means nothing and everything to the Nazarene.
(Remember, He stepped over dustmen for thirty years
milling about the courtyards of His Father's house.)
On the other hand, the Nazarene is bound by the Hour
that has pursued Him as a wolf pursues a lost sheep,
make this easy for all of us and lay yourself down
my beloved sheep, God breathed in me to hunt thee.
Master said He would be gone for 'a little while',
yes but what does that mean, fair Nathaniel,
to me 'a little while' means I'll be at the market
for a little while, don't be stupid dear Thomas,
by 'a little while' He means they're going to kill Him
and 'a little while' could be a thousand years knowing
Him, we can't bear a thousand more years of Rome.
He staggers off the stage as a villain in Herod's theater,
covered in blood to the cheers of the masses. Gone

is the rabble-rousing riddle king, for 'a little while'.
A new character enters called The Helper, but look,
friend, is this not the same actor in a new mask?
What happened to the blood?
Someone sewed up the wounds in His hands and feet,
someone dried the blood and water pouring forth
from His side, someone drank the cup overflowing.

Seeds are planted between the first two rivers
and Sargon etches his words on stone,
now let's test eternity when I conquer a city or two.
Egyptian tombs rise around kings who can't die,
the water ensures eternity, may it never transfigure
to blood at the request of our adopted son Moses.
Epeius builds a trophy horse for the Greek boys
to enter the gates and slaughter Troy's children,
O Greece, your philosopher kings and Olympians
ensure eternity through intentional culture, yet,
your eyes cannot see over the mountains where
Gautama Buddha plucks hairs for gifts to friends
and discovers the path to what we've always sought
—enlightened eternity—
but wait, Confucius to the East has other ideas.
His emperors build a wall to keep the world at bay,
insulation is the key ingredient of our eternity,
but keep an eye on the priests of Teotihuacan
who behead dustmen on the altar for the gods,

we're getting closer to what's about to happen.
Caesar takes a knife in the back, O my Brutus,
we had such plans for the eternal kingdom.
Tension builds across the centuries, a rope
tightened until it must snap in the Hour.
Scatter home in peace, my temporary orphans,
this is not a place for mortals.

The Roman cohort sharpens their spears
and a demon prowls the temple for silver.
Caiaphas readies his bowl for lamb, a groan
erupts from his belly, wouldn't it be wonderful
to never hunger or thirst again?
The Hour baptizes the Nazarene in the afflictions
of every tongue and nation, creation groans,
time runs out of breath, the Son of Man
devolves into the Son of Sin, Adam chomps
the fruit and points at the woman you gave him.
A song rises from the Word to the Light
on behalf of the men at His table chosen
to inherit the kingdom that is a kingdom
of capture, torture, mockery.
Surely the fishermen don't understand
what awaits in the years ahead, surely
they would flee by sea and not look back.
Father,
may they know the only true God

and carry the words of Truth in their days,
Father,
keep them in your name, the name of Jesus.
This is the love song for the children of light.

Won't you sing the love song?

Nathaniel: skinned alive, beheaded, crucified.

James the Less: stoned and clubbed.

Andrew: crucified.

Peter: crucified upside down.

John: boiled in oil then exiled.

Thomas: speared.

James: stabbed with swords.

Philip: tortured and crucified.

Matthew: burned to death.

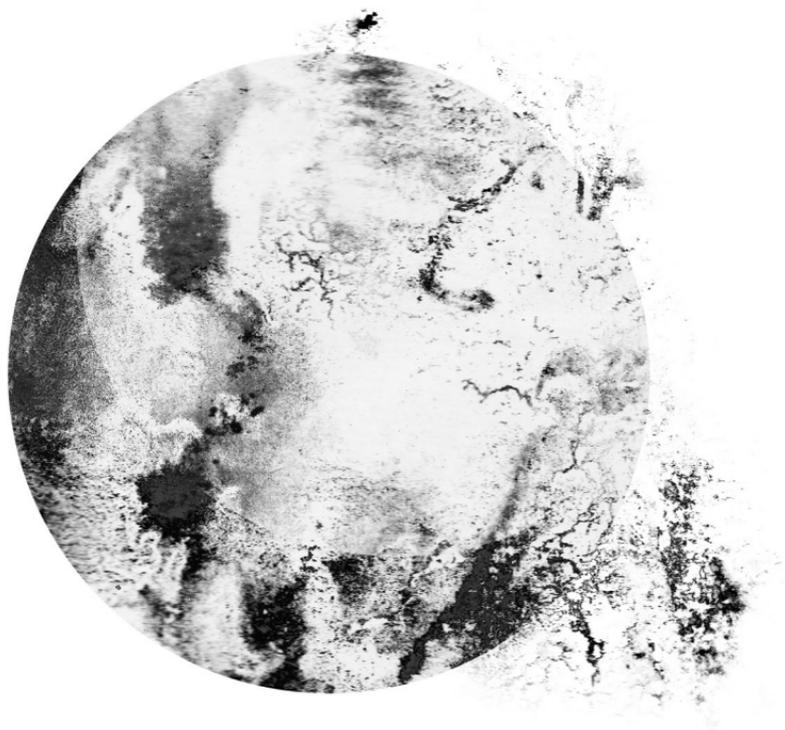
Thaddeus: chopped with an axe.

Simon: sawed in half.

Judas: thirty pieces of silver.

O Nathaniel, you traveled far
beyond the shade of your fig tree.

Didn't He promise you would see
great things?



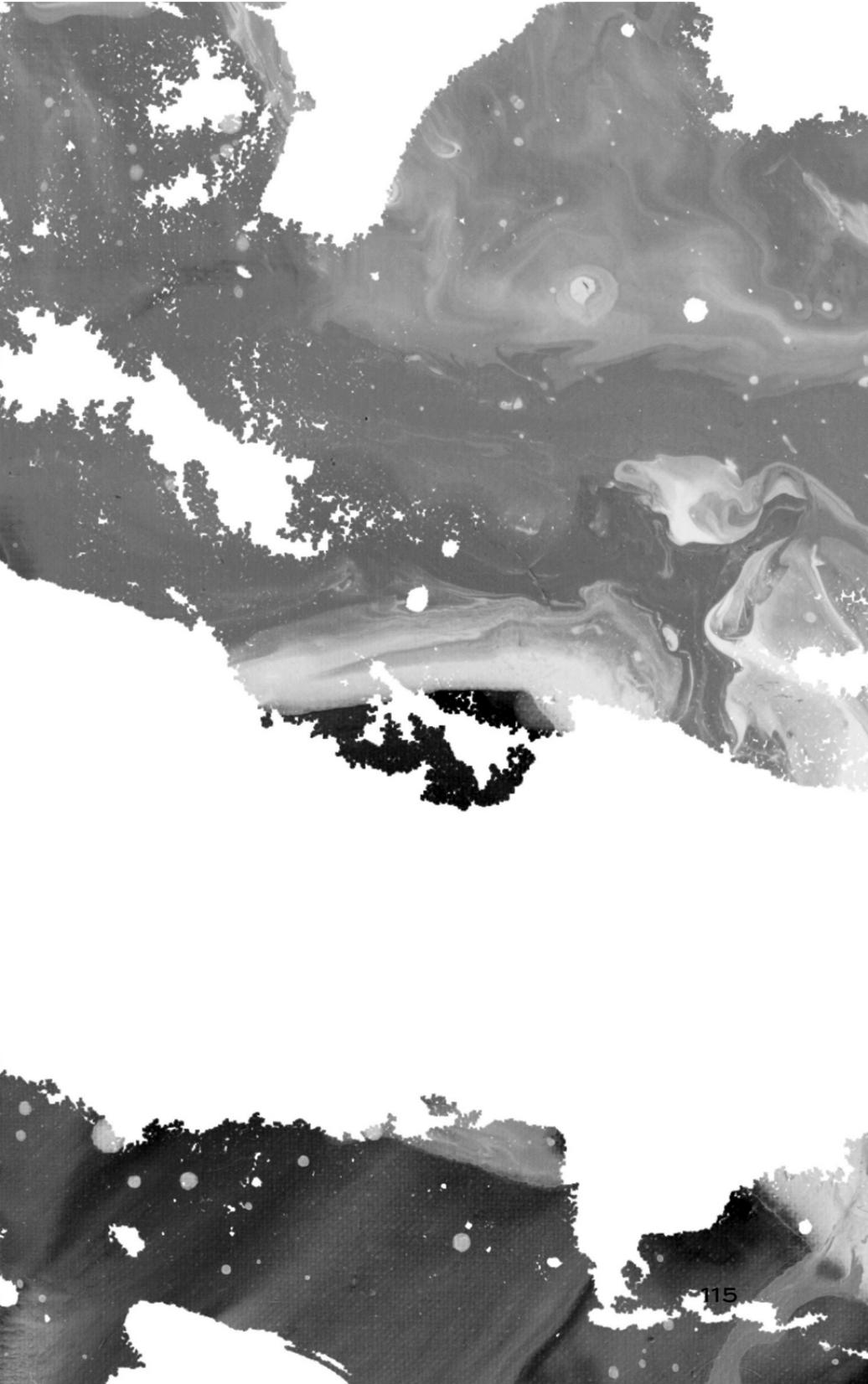
The Son of Sin descends into the Valley
of Kidron, a village of desperate bones
lacking the power of Elijah,
Messiah, Messiah,
lift us up in the Second Coming of David.
Polished, whitewashed tombs mean nothing
to the craftsman who sniffs the stench
and dissolves the last wishes of the dead,
I AM the kingdom and the culmination,
ask Nicodemus how to be born again.
Down, down he travels towards Gethsemane.
Isn't it odd the Hour has brought Him
to a garden to speak with the Word of Life,
isn't it odd a tree of life is transformed
into a tree of death, isn't it odd the tomb
of Absalom, a sinful son of a mighty father,
rises over the bones and remains empty.
Children, we seem to be at the beginning
and the end all at once.

Behold the fire coming down the hillsides,
the King of Salem is ready to pass the torch.

A cohort arrives with lanterns and weapons,
Judas the Demon is the tip of the spear, Roman
boys woken in the middle of the night to hunt
a craftsman who has enflamed the Sanhedrin
by discussing books and old sayings and bread.
Perhaps they had been warned about the whip
used several years back to slice up the market
or feared He might cause a ruckus at the festival
or heard tales of charity magic on the mountain.
Wouldn't it make for a great letter home if we
could convince Him to turn our water into wine?
Then again the centurion ordered four hundred
soldiers prepared for battle guided by a demon
with sliver clanking in his pockets to the tree
where the Nazarene waits alongside three men,
and only one wild-eyed fisherman carries a blade.
“Whom do you seek?”
“Jesus the Nazarene.”
The Nazarene says, “I am He.”

Now, they wish for a legion,
an army, an offering
of peace.

The cup of death is offered
and accepted the moment
you step in the shadow
of the Nazarene, choose
the sword,
the noose,
or the cross.
Knowledge is death.



The sword is now sheathed, dripping
ear-blood into the flames, drip, drip.
Two-eared Malchus is inside
listening at the feet of his master
to the Master who waits to be splayed.
Attempted murderers, slaves, officers
wait outside under anonymity of night
and smoke, their thoughts protected,
words withheld, say nothing be nothing
do nothing just observe and survive.
Peter, O Peter, the slave girl asked
if you knew Him and the words fell
from your lips without hesitation.
Did you choose them, or did the answer
surprise you as water surprised Photine?
Pardon me stranger, but your sword
appears to be dripping blood into
the fire, and are you not a follower
of the Nazarene?

Again, the words fall from his lips.
Surely you're the maniac who attacked
the servant in the garden, surely it's you,
surely this is the sword drawn, one man
against an entire Roman cohort, indeed
you are bold, stranger, but where is your
boldness now?

Again, Peter is nothing, I am nothing,
and a rooster announces dawn.

The Nazarene appears before the old man
in the flesh,
not as a rumor, not in the wayward fever dreams
of Nicodemus or the quiet prophecies of Caiaphas,
not from the lips of a madman on the riverbanks
or upon the witness of a dustman racing to water,
but as a prisoner bound in ropes and chains.
Absolom,
who tricked multitudes into believing he was anointed,
a craftsman who says He is the Messiah Son of God,
bound in the same ropes Samson flicked into threads.
Annas Father of Five, recall your boyhood
when Levi appeared in mirrors and Melchizedek
in your nightmares, breathe easy child, cur puppies
will polish the temple back into the prominence
of David thanks to the goodwill of Rome, Rome
who permitted you to gut thousands of sheep
and manage the scales of sin and blood, blood
that has defined a life of obedience to both

Rome and the Law, what realistic arrangement
is better than a temple and bowls of juicy lamb
and freedom to be festive as God commands.
The Nazarene said He would rebuild the temple
in three days, what more needs to be known?
If this is the King of the Jews,
who could be a Jew?

What is truth, O Pilate,
when washing the blood from your hands,
when a threat of violence is met with real violence?
Already on edge thanks to the zealots,
Pilate steps forth in the morning sun
to field the complaints of the most pious
with their beards and robes and crazed rules
no one seems to be able to keep, Rome
is a land of laws but this is not Rome,
not really.

Take this for example: these characters
wish to execute a craftsman for words
He spoke against their expectations, words
any sane nation would dismiss as lunacy, words
about ethereal kingdoms and bread, words
about the difference between light and dark,
words about grown men being born again.
These offenses do not warrant an execution.
Yet, are you not the healer

who lifted my centurion's daughter from death?
Then again if you are disrupting the festival peace
with your presence then you must be removed.
The justification: Be violent so no one is violent.
Barabbas and I rattle the bars on our cell,
free us, swap us, we promise not to speak
of bread or shield whores from stones,
we promise not to offer water
to thirsty boys under the bush.

Darling,
the bloodshed is overwhelming to me,
I know I know this is not my concern
but just today I was thinking of all the wars
and all the men who have fallen and shed blood
into the soil, isn't it enough already?
Don't you think at some point the earth will be
so saturated that when we walk our feet
will turn red?

Oh Dove,
what's all this about now?

Darling my Darling,
I'm talking about all of the endless battles
and beheaded fellows throughout history,
I'm talking about the mentally ill placed
upon crosses to be mocked by passersby.
Dovey,
now I see what's going on, you're worried
about the Nazarene but let me assure you

He's no victim of the system, He is a threat
to all we hold dear, you remember the words
He spoke about the temple falling in three days.
My Darling,
I know all the bizarre things He has said
but this is a man who needs help not execution,
I'm only saying a little compassion is in order.
Dovey Dova,
I can't tell if you're underestimating Him or
overestimating Him, never forget people believe
He raises dead men back to life, never forget
the impact that could have on our society.

What use is weeping over the blood?

Dance.

No need to flinch, O King of the Jews,
your crown grew from the brambles of Eden
and cannot fit the head of any other man or god.
Every drop of blood awakens the hunger pains
of those who have gathered to see Him die,
do you smell that, yes, isn't it wonderful, yes,
this is man-blood bursting forth from man-veins,
yet my stomach groans for lamb, the elemental meal.

Whip his back, won't you, in the spot you missed
so we can sniff fresh blood and absolve our hunger?
The riddle king, the rabble rouser, the craftsman,
the friend of the blind dustmen and cur puppies,
the magician, the leader of the fishermen armies
is displayed to the crowd with a crown and purple robe
so that all questions regarding this bloody Nazarene
can be answered: HE IS NOT THE SON OF GOD,
"Behold, the Man!".

Breathe easy, Caiaphas, your lamb is simmering
and the theatrics of the craftsman will soon end.
Yet, Annas, what objections might be raised
by the five thousand, the palm wavers, the whore,
living Lazarus?

Explain to Caesar that somewhere in Judea walks a powerful magician who calls Himself a KING.

Explain to Caesar that this King has ten thousand believers who saw water turned into wine and nothing into bread.

Explain to Caesar that He claims a new kingdom is coming, that His disciple drew a sword on the cohort, that His habit is to disturb the peace and foster the winds of revolution.

Explain to Caesar that His greatest advocate was beheaded by Herod for just cause, these revolutionaries are rising against the empire and also against our balance of peace—we are satisfied with the arrangement, are we not?

Explain to Caesar that King Herod already tried to kill Him thirty years ago and failed, for thirty years this rabble rouser has been building a quiet army in villages and on the seas of disaffected dogs who have nothing to lose and all to gain.

Explain to Caesar that this man said He would rebuild the temple in three days, meaning He also plans to destroy it,

and what kind of effect might that have on the zealots?
Explain to Caesar that we want Him dead and you don't.

At the bottom of Moriah God tested grandfather—
take the only son you love and splay him open
so I may be satisfied with your allegiance.
Isaac the obedient carries the wood on his back
not understanding this is the wood to kill him,
if anyone would come after me let him deny himself
and take up his cross and follow me,
up the mountain with wood on his back trusting
father will discover a substitute creature to butcher,
isn't this strange, and why do you tremble?
Here,
on Moriah,
now called Golgotha,
there is no ram and this is not test of allegiance
but a test of prophecy, I hear the cries of Isaiah's
Immanuel, Zechariah's donkey, Micah's Bethlehem.
The Nazarene carries wood up the mountain
understanding this is the wood to kill Him,
He is the substitute creature for butchering, I'm lost

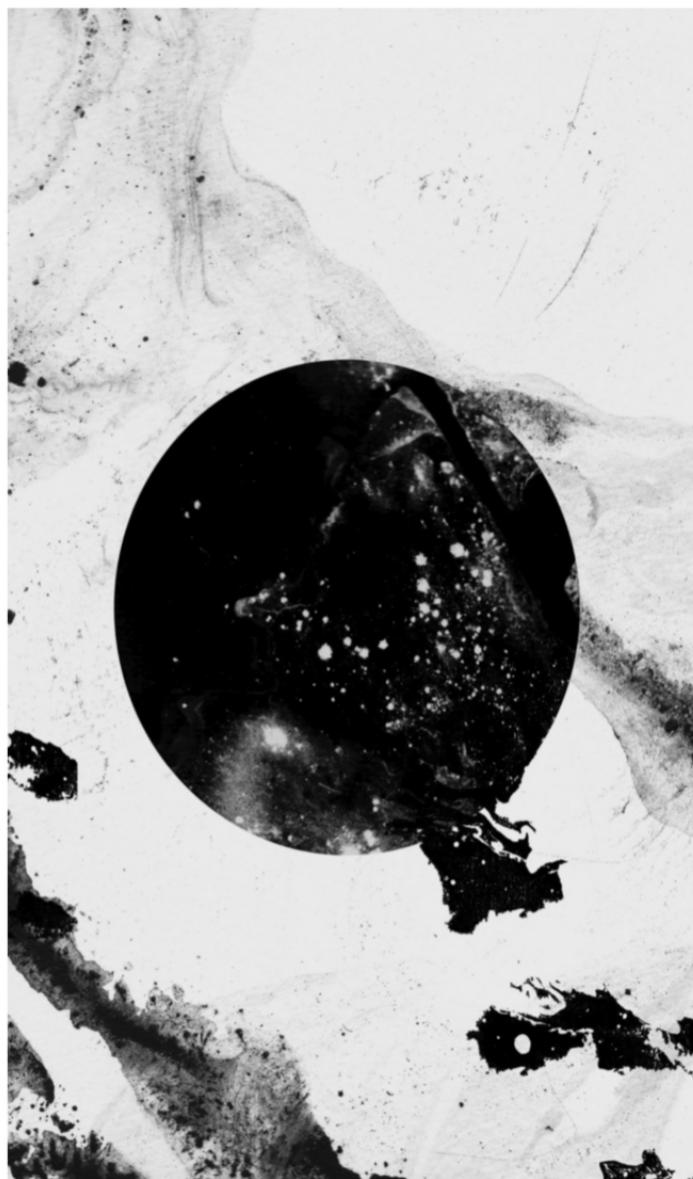
in time. What happened then, what happens next?
God hungers for blood, Caiaphas hungers for meat.
The knife doesn't stop in the air but continues as
spikes are hammered through the hands of Jesus,
spikes are hammered through the feet of Jesus.
Let us call this place The Lord Will Provide.

Pilate must have smelled the blood, the sweat,
when he hammered the sign into the cross.
Let it be known this man suffering to death
is Jesus of Nazareth, THE KING OF THE JEWS,
peace Caiaphas, that's not who He is that's His crime.
Of course but you've made a grammatical mistake
O Pilate, rewrite it to say that this man claims
to be KING OF THE JEWS and we take this claim
so seriously that perhaps others will be dissuaded
when they hear the Nazarene retching for breath.
Perhaps when they see the slow drip of lifeblood
pooling at the feet of the cross they will submit
to their rulers.

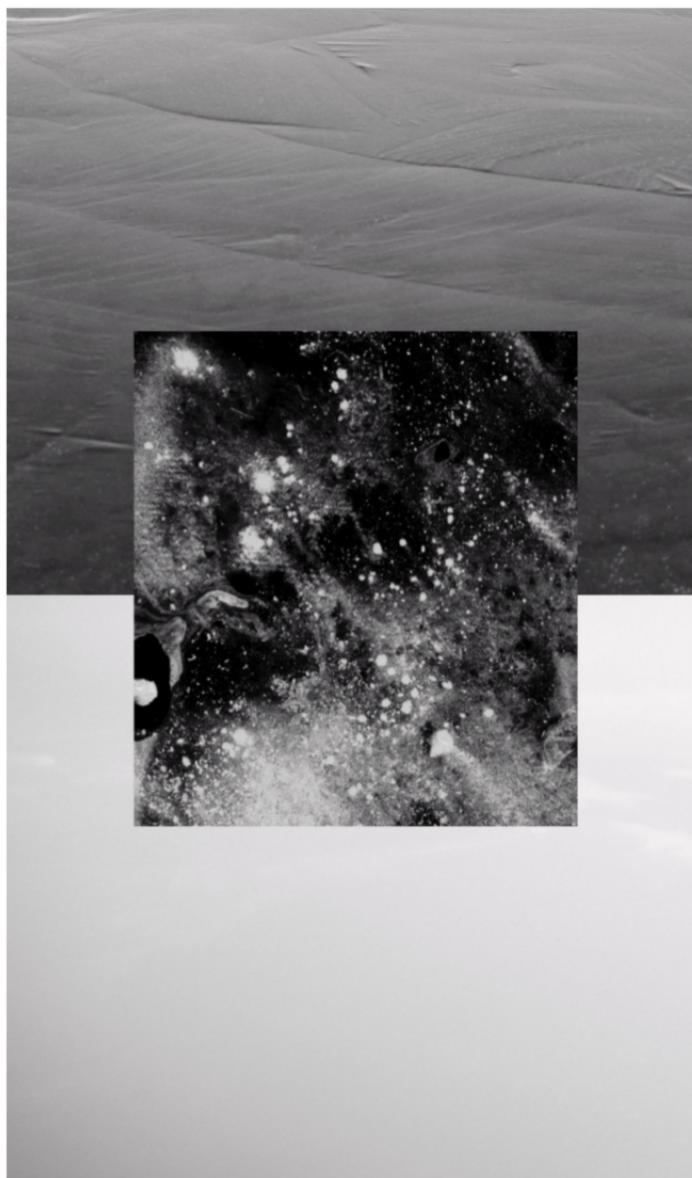
Again Pilate washes his hands, a fatalist, it's done,
whatever has been written down was meant to be.
Three men tortured on crosses is a sight to behold,
even for a man who beholds insurgents on crosses,
what do you have to say to us now, Pilate?
Have you noticed the world is split down the center,

the blind on one side and seers on the other,
those who remember and those who cannot yet?
Here on the cross the blood of a cur puppy merges
with the blood of Jacob's sons, crumbs will suffice.
All of you who are soaking wet come on this side,
and all of you who cannot bear fruit, the other.
This is not a cross but a sword, my blind Pilate.

The end is elemental, a child of a mother,
a world of blood and nakedness and thirst
while soldiers maneuver for a souvenir
to take home and say this belonged to Him,
the riddle king, INRI, the mountain magician
you heard about, my little son, my darling,
His death-scent is still fresh on my hands.
Three Marys gather at the foot of the cross
to confront the elemental with their eyes.
Dying (how can He be truthful and die?),
the Nazarene sees the first face He knew,
beloved John, won't you protect her?
A Roman spear opens rivers of living water
that flow from His heart into Photine's well,
drink Pilate, drink Sennacherib, drink Judas,
drink Caiaphas, drink Annas, drink Absalom,
drink Barabbas, drink Ahithopel, drink,
there is still time for Him to bleed for thee,
but every Hour comes to an end.



The fear is justified, look at the body
brutalized by fists and sharp points,
crushed, despised, rejected, sorrowful,
what can we do but hide our faces?
Yet here comes Nicodemus and Joseph
who believe in the night but not in the day,
not yet, anointing the body for life
as Mary anointed the body for death.
The defectors arrive under cover of night
to prepare the mangled body for burial.
O my secret Messiah,
once, years ago, you told me a man
can be born again.



The crow of a rooster echoes three days
across the Kidron Valley up to Moriah,
the chosen ones are stuffed with lamb,
unleavened bread, wine, we're still alive
thanks to blood smeared on the doorposts.
The crow moves through the courtyard
of the cur puppies slain by the angel of death
and down the River Jordan to Bethany,
out to the happy couple living near Cana
still taking compliments on the wine,
back into the temple disrupted by a whip,
all the way out to Jacob's well, Bethesda,
are the dustmen still waiting for angels?
The echo moves through the veins of Lazarus
and stops in an empty tomb.



Darling,

Nicodemus and the dustmen believe
the tomb is empty, that He rose up.

Pass the jug of wine, won't you?

Oh Dove,

empty of what, we've reached a new low,
whores and fishermen raided the tomb
and stole the body, only God knows
what they intend to do, probably sink Him
in the river or hurl Him into the sea.

Yes Darling,

it's a suspicious situation and my theory
is that He was a student of the scriptures
and orchestrated His entire life as art,
a work we should at the very least respect.

Dovey,

won't you pass the bread I'm ravenous.

Pilate says everything went splendidly,
an awful death filled with suffering,

they even jabbed a spear into His side to be certain.

Oh my Darling Darling,
yes but that sign was an embarrassment
to him, these Romans have a lot to learn.

Dovey Dove,
the Nazarene will be forgotten tomorrow,
the very fact that He died is proof enough,
and they didn't even have to break His bones.

The Nazarene appears after three days
to say where I am going no one can follow.
He battles within the folds of time for the hearts
of those who can see, but what of those
who cannot see yet but someday will?
O that He has carved a hole in time for me!
O that He makes room at the garden table
for crippled Mephibosheth and the scorched
boy waiting to die underneath the bush.
Tell them the ground is swelling with water!
In the shuttered room He reveals His hands
and the side opened with a Roman spear,
rejoice, O disciples, a river ran out of me,
open your mouths for the living water,
the bread of life, the wine-soaked morsels,
yet, where is Didymus who pointed his toes
at the land of death?
After eight days of rumors from dustmen
and gardeners, Nicodemus, three Marys, Simon,

the Nazarene appears and guides the hand
of Didymus into the river of life.

Rejoice, O Sons of Light,
the temple has been destroyed,
the temple has been rebuilt. ✱

I am so grateful you chose to read this book. If you would like for these ideas to spread, there are a few steps you can take.

The first is to write a review for the book. At the end of the day, we all give credence to books that are more thoroughly and highly-reviewed. That would be a great gift to me. Second, you could tell friends and share on social media. And third, you can connect with me online at craigscunningham.com or by finding me on social media at [@craigscunningham](https://twitter.com/craigscunningham). You can also email canowanbooks@gmail.com to let me know your thoughts and questions about this book. I would love to hear from you through one or all of these channels.

All that will be already is, and all you see is yours.

- Craig Cunningham

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1. PATRIARCH
2. DEFECTOR
3. REZA
4. NAZARENE
5. VIGIL

