

A Prayer in Gethsemane

Micheal D. Winterburn

Father,
The cross that once was small against a distant year
Stands tall against this evening.
I smell the wood.
I feel the grain abrade my back.
This tree that grew,
Was cut and hewn for me,
Is soon to serve.
And three barbaric nails
Await their term of tyranny.

Father,
Though flesh has known far greater torment,
And keener pleas have occupied your heart,
Yet hear my prayer
And grant me strength to meet this trial,
To firmly stay these feet that yearn to flee.
You have given me your seal and your sceptre
And I have worn your holy crown,
But soon will come another crown
To mock your gentle majesty.

Father,
I am afraid
When the hammer slams the nail
I shall feel the crack and splinter of bone,
The gush of blood that leaves me chilled,
Utter the physical cry;
And in that moment I shall be dazzled
By an agony that knows you not.

Father,
Though I shall have left you, in my pain,
Do not leave me.
Be with me.

I am afraid.
Already that hammer is labouring
In my head;

Those nails - so soon - are practising their perdition
In my soul;
And early fearful fluids flow
From every pore.

Where now are the stars,
Though they are abundant here above me?
Why do I not see the moon,
Though it wanders brightly through my gaze?
The bush and the stone are invisible to my eyes,
Absent to my touch.
- Why does the breeze not cool my brow?

The world is no longer with me,
Yet with me to suffocation.
My troubled mind bars all perceptions,
They are feeble in my bursting brain:
Minnows against the torrent,
Sparrows in the gale,
Trickles testing the furnace.
They cannot pass this battleground
Of bruises, blisters and blood,
Where one thought assaults another
And is assaulted in return.

Self and soul have called
This urgent conflict, given substance
To these warriors within, and as I dart
Between their camps I both swing
The cudgel and am spread beneath its brutal thud.

This inglorious war need not be fought,
For well I know which course
The match must take, in honour
Of an old and ardent oath.
But the cross has pressed its weight
Upon my will and fractured it.

Father,
At this moment I would rest my head
In heaven,
That place of goodness
Where the battle never plays,

That abode of balm
Where the weary soul is welcomed home.
Yet here I am, Intent on self,
No longer roaming free,
An animal of the plains
Gnawing at its caged interior.

O Father,
Let me sense once more
The blessedness of heaven.
Let my soul fly again within
That vast tranquillity,
That ease,
Where quiet rapture heals and saves
And nurtures.
Heaven.

Heaven, which has been my frequent
Refuge, dissolving all my troubles,
Refreshing my soul and straightening
My back, that I might face
The world with valour once again.

Oh, Father,
This is a late, a brief,
A hurried preparation
For a cruel surrender,
And I worry that I lack
The strength to carry it.

And how desperately I need a gentle interlude between
My present dread and the approaching deed.

Father,
The cross is paramount before my eyes.
I have known what was to come
And I suppressed the pain.
You know I could not love in your name,
In pureness and sincerity,
If troubles had occasioned me
To think upon myself.
But now that my work is almost done
I can no longer dislodge the terror from my mind,
And I am alarmed by this hour.

My tears wet my cheeks now and drip from my chin,
Yet they bring me no relief.
These meagre droplets cannot drain away
The passions and the tensions that I feel.

Tears are insufficient:
I need to scream,
To scream so loud and long and deep
That fur would quiver in the hills
Throughout Judea and swords would be
Unsheathed on the walls of Jerusalem.

But propriety and discipline
Hold fast this cataract of anguish
In my startled throat, and all it can
Articulate is a weak and high-pitched
Whimper: the impending roar has shrivelled
To a squeak, the boom has struggled
And failed to be born.

Father,
But point me a slight distraction
And I shall not hesitate to look.
Set ajar the door one smallest inch
And I shall kick it wide and flee
This oppressive cell that walls
My heart and mind.

Yes, yes, I would escape, if only
For an hour, for ropes and chains
Are tightly bound around me, and though
I pull and strain for greater slack
My sense of duty and my conscience would,
I know, soon haul me back to you.

I am free to choose and yet
Am bound. My will has shackled yours.
The two must be as one.
My hand it was that sought these chains,
My hand that confirmed the lock.

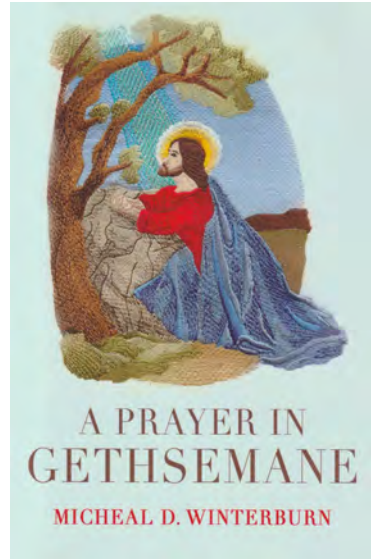
I have a choice
And yet no choice have I.

This poem is an extract from Micheal's booklet *A Prayer in Gethsemane* which explores the thoughts and emotions possibly experienced by Jesus immediately prior to his arrest.

Micheal has kindly offered to provide a copy of this booklet to all BSTS members completely free of charge. Any member who is interested in receiving a free signed copy should email him using the following email address:

michealdwinterburn@mail.com

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Committee News

We have a devoted management team consisting of Andrew Willie, Philippa Foster, Stuart and Brenda Benton, Phil and Pam Moon and my wife Lynne, and I am deeply grateful for their efforts on behalf of the BSTS.

We are however on the lookout for anyone who is able to contribute to our work, in the following areas:

- *Social media promotion of the BSTS*
- *Technical support including maintenance of the BSTS Newsletter website*

If you would like to become involved in this work and would be interested in joining our team, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please send your details to:

editorial@bstsnewsletter.com