

JOHN REMEMBERS

Jesus said, 'Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?'
'We can', they answered. (Mark 10:38-39)

Many a tortured night dragged through to day
before the aching memory of our fault
was healed. How smoothly paved appeared the way
he trod; the public loved him—he could vault
on to the throne of their regard, and thence,
within a week, the Romans would be crushed
like scorpions under heel. Our minds were dense:
we should have known that God cannot be rushed.

I guess it was the glories on the way
that mesmerised us as we walked with him—
the miracles, the signs, the overlay
of cheering crowds, of grateful souls, each whim
of public mood, of cheering, bustling throngs
who brought their sick and ailing to be healed
or ate the loaves and fishes, sang the songs,
all breathless for his realm to be revealed.

'Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he
Who ushers in the kingdom of the Lord!
Hail David's Son!' they shouted loud with glee,
'Tis joy he brings, and peace will be restored!'

My mother came to Jesus for a boon,
'Please, seat my sons on either side of you
when you dethrone the emperor of Rome
and recreate society anew.'

'I have a cup to drink,' he said. 'Will you
be able then to drink that wine with me?'
A celebration toast! What did we do
but blurt out stupidly our adolescent glee!

Not sparkling wine for Solomon's festival,
nor even hemlock for brave Socrates,
but bitter herbs; slow poison; wormwood; gall;
a cup of vicious, lingering agonies:
that was his cup.

It took a Roman cross
to peel the blindness from our stubborn eyes.
To drink with him would be to suffer loss
of all that we had fondly thought to prize.
My cup is not yet drained: more must be poured.
My brother James drank his by Herod's sword.

