

| | *xv. Brother Cain.*

Mid-winter's early morning light
moves along the hill
to the opening in the wall of white
and shines, with ancient skill,
along the silent passage way.

I reach and find
and gaze and grieve
at the pitiful display
of an old man drooling on his sleeve.

Another morning comes to mind,
when two brothers made a vow to bring
a friendly sign –
a token of sweet labouring.

You brought the finest wheat
and grapes plucked freshly from the vine
and Abel came to greet
you with his new born lamb.

Your eyes were merciless and calm,
as you made him plunge the knife
and in the widening pool of blood,
with envy seething in your soul,
you watched the ebbing of a life –
the beauty of your brotherhood.

You put your arm around him then,
inviting him to take a stroll
like two brothers, friends, two men
and from his unsuspecting love,
the sacrificial knife you hid
till, like a hand into a glove,
the blade into his belly slid

and, as you turned your face to flee,
his bleak bewildered pain
sank, with bloody stain,
into your memory.

Your hands are old and withered now
as you cringe and bow
and touch the waiting stones
of this dark recess.

I bring the bread of faithfulness,
the happy cup of memories,
to reach your unloved groans.
My fingers touch your wrinkled face with ease.

I am God's oldest and most foolish Son,
born to gather Abel's blood.
Now come and kiss the wood
where love's victory was won
for I have brought a fish to eat,
caught in the deepest pool of praise –
salmon of wisdom at your feet.

I bring Abel by the hand
from those early carefree days
and, side by side, we stand.
Can you hear the refrain
of our unlikely song?

*Come from the darkness, brother Cain,
and see the rising sun grow strong.*