

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS
Poems by FR ROBBIE LOW

THE FIRST STATION—PILATE JUDGES JESUS

Who holds the sword of Rome, the Empire's sway,
Determines puppet kingdoms, who shall rule,
Which gods to worship, where and how to pray,
What lives to cast adrift this 'Ship of Fools'

Seated upon this Pavement, judgement waits
About to etch his name in history
'You're King?' he asks the object of their hate,
Unsettled by this silent mystery.

This is the truth. But 'What is Truth?' he cries
And hides behind the Relativist fraud -
The war between objective truth and lies,
Pagan deceivers and the One True God.

Buck passed, hands washed, to Calvary he brings
The final Judge of All and King of Kings.

THE SECOND STATION—JESUS TAKES US HIS CROSS

How light it hangs around your neck
And sparkles in the noon day sun
This engine of Man's cruelty
Death Row's own sacred jewellery
The crossroads of Eternity
The shadow over Calvary
Where victory was won.

No silver in His hands he bears
But heavy, splintered, rough-hewn wood
Into His shoulder carves the groove
No resurrection can remove
The wounded corpus that will prove
The sacrifice that is God's love
This Friday we call Good.

THE THIRD STATION—JESUS FALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME

We, the sin-sick, sorry heirs of Adam's fall
Watch this Man of Sorrows go the way He must
Look down from rooftops on this chequerboard of fate
This boiling cauldron of Satanic hate
This poisoned tide of evil in full spate
Where history's pawns reduce its King to 'mate'
This beaten Saviour, toppled in the dust.

Sprawled in the street, this second Adam fallen
Flung earthward by God's love and Mankind's sin,
Whose weight upon the gallows He will bear.
This dust, that made all dust, returning there
Moriah, where the Son of Man was spared
This thicket where the sacrifice is snared
Beyond the gates of death to victory win

THE FOURTH STATION—JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

And has it come to this, blest Mother of the Manger child
That we should meet upon this road of death?
And you should dare to hold me in your arms
As once, so long ago, you did in flight
Sought refuge from these self-same swords now drawn
To hunt me down and pierce your very heart
As Simeon foretold in Temple years gone by.

This is the long road home on Sorrow Street.
You brought me here, now you will see me hence
To scaffolds foot and, from despite of Hell,
(The rusted bolts of Heaven's gates, blood-loosed,)
Hold me again. And I shall lift you high,
As, down all ages yet to come, you will
Present me still to worlds as yet unborn

THE FIFTH STATION—SIMON OF CYRENE

'We beat him senseless, half the night, thorn-crowned
him at the break of day.
The Jew has staggered, stumbled, fallen. Now we
need a strongish bloke.
Grab that big Jew to bear his weight and walk with
him his lonely way.
Libyan? Perfect! A black-arsed Jew!' – a last imperial
racist joke.

And so from out the crowd I took my place,
shouldered the fallen beam.
Each step an agony for Him, I saw the faces of
mankind
That lined death row and wept or jeered or silent
stood as if in dream
He staggered still, the loss of blood, parched, torn,
delirious and blind.

I saw the world as only He could see - loves - hates -
indifference.
I walked with Him where no-one else has walked to
pay sin's bloody price
On summit bleak where scorching sun and racking
pain brook no pretence

And watched Him hang and rock and gasp and bleed -
and promise Paradise

Now, in my dotage, with my sons at Mass in Faith's
Community
I bear the Cross and walk once more beside the Lamb
of Calvary.

THE SIXTH STATION—VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

Risking the spear points, sharp swords' jeopardy,
Breaches the crowd wall, stops the procession,
Heart of compassion for this dying man
Fearless, she kneels to wipe the face of God.

Down all the ages, image imprinted,
Sister of Mercy to brother of Man,
The very ikon, by which name we know her,
Hands on the cloth to all who will follow

This Way of Sorrows, paved with injustice,
Tortures the righteous at Satan's cruel whim.
Crack in the faultline of merciless Man,
Ikon of pity, Veronica kneels.

Seeking no glory nor this world's reward
Mercy is wiping the face of her Lord.

THE SEVENTH STATION—JESUS FALLS FOR THE SECOND TIME

The stumbling wreck of humankind
The airless press, the gaining sun,
The narrow street, the pulsing crowd
To see the execution done.

Blood blind, shaking, legs gone, wobbles,
He's parched and broken, down again
Clown – like, flailing on the cobbles
A beaten fighter hooked on pain

The soldiers wait for Him to rise
For this political charade.
On battlefields they'd end it now
Death, their familiar stock in trade.

To rise, to fall, to rise for men
Who shall not pass this way again.

THE EIGHTH STATION—THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

Howl, as the siege engine of Titus
Breaches the ancient city wall
Puts to the sword your precious children.
Scream as the sacred Temple falls.

Weep at the coming devastation.
Mourn for the life beyond recall.
In these stone clefts press prayers of exile
This solitary remnant wall.

Sob as another Son of David
Falls to the Empire of the sword
The cry for freedom and salvation
Has reaped its regular reward.

Hearts in the cradle, wake begun,
Keen the death of each mother's son

THE NINTH STATION—JESUS FALLS FOR THE THIRD TIME

'Dust thou art and unto dust...'
So runs the Lenten roundelay
We are the debris of dead stars
So long ago, so far away.

Yet, animated by the Word
And Spirit breathed and then, by Christ,
Allowed the husbandry and fruit
Of all but one in Paradise

In dust the Lord kneels, as before,
Him who, alone, should be adored,
Upon unyielding earthen floor
And Cherubim put up their sword

The Cross in view, the hill awaits
Who holds the key to Eden's gates.

THE TENTH STATION—JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

Strip down the altar !
Strip the sacrifice !
Death's not enough, we needs humiliate.
Naked you came here.
Naked you return.
What holds you now is not your mother's arms.

Dice for the seamless
Signal of unity
The beauty we see, your faithful will rend.
Rags of poverty
Robes of majesty
All, at the last, will hail the Son of Man.

Spear of Longinus
Piercing God's heart.

THE ELEVENTH STATION—JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

Kind of Pilate to flog Him
And have Him nailed up too
They both increase the blood loss
And leave death less to do

The shattered wrists won't haul him
Up for another breath
To gasp some words of comfort
From suffocating death

The ankles, bust and bleeding,
On which no man can stand
To look across the valley
And see the Promised Land

Here on Mount Moriah
They slew the Son of Man.

THE TWELFTH STATION—JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

The demons squeal in ecstasy at this dark triumph of
their rebel lord
Into the hands of death surrendered is the sovereign
heir and God's own Son,
Who gambled all upon this hilltop sacrifice to save the
son of Man.
Fell halls of Hell re-echo to the jeers at love and mercy
now undone.

Beneath the broken Corpus weep the faithful few,
hopes dashed and future fled,
Courtiers of this their Sovereign Lord, so cruelly
crowned and Kingdom never come.
King Shepherd, scattered flock, abandoned God,
passes the portal of the dead.
The Light of light extinguished and the Word that
spoke Creation now struck dumb

The noontide sun wears widow's weeds, caparisoned
in midnight's deepest black.
The freedom Lamb, God's only Son, is sacrificed, this
blood-stained Paschal moon
The Temple's curtain ripped, the sanctuary exposed,
the Presence self-removed.
Across the ancient valleys and Mount Olivet deep
stirring in the tombs.

All bleak on earth, whilst fools stand stunned in
Satan's rotten maw of death and sin
By Cross condemned. God's life, invincible in Christ,
begins the Harrowing.

THIRTEENTH STATION—JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

Was it for this the Angel overtook me
And bade me bear this last of David's line?
Was it for this the shepherds came rejoicing,
The star-led chieftains knelt before His sign?

Was it for this the old man in the Temple
Cradled Him close and spoke of my hearts grief?
We fled the swords of Herod into Egypt,
Long years of exile, struggle for belief?

Was it for this, obscurity returning,
The long and weary way. The Gospel road?
Dark sorrows' path, this sacrificial hilltop,
Pierced side from which salvation's blood has flowed?

Serene pieta? Nought but keening wild.
The Mother holds the body of her only child.

THE FOURTEENTH STATION—JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

Into a stranger's grave, a borrowed tomb,
The remnant of salvation's hope is laid,
Wrapped in a linen shroud, the head bound tight,
The agony ends here. The price is paid.

Relaxed in death, the mortal man lays down
Defeat and dereliction hold the ring
In darkest night which never has a dawn
Bleak Winter which will never welcome Spring.

Here the place where time has ceased to matter
Matter degrades, resolving into dust.
Decay, triumphant in death's lonely realm,
Corrodes eternity with time's cruel rust

This vault yet changed the destiny of Man,
For, where it seemed to end, it all began.