

COSTLY GIFT

The world spins, whirls
in oval procession around the great fire.
The world spins, whirls
in one continuing act of being born.

Earth spins. Yet,
in the heart's deepest recess
a shudder disturbs our sleep.
Is earth spinning—out of control?

Were woman, man, flesh and bone, blood and breath
made for this—
roar of guns, fire of a different sort,
the slaying of Abel renewed in endless compulsion?
The city of God in ruins?

With trembling hands, we lift this fractured globe in prayer.
What, we ask, has become of the Wondrous Exchange,
the wedding of heaven with earth,
God with us,
spirit with flesh,
friend with foe?
Has even this strayed from its orbit?

Suddenly, during our night-turning,
in this blood-soaked world of Cain
(Bethlehem is here or nowhere),
hope's promise is born again,
Christ, Sun of Justice,
a meteor forever flaring among us
in an exchange of gifts more costly
than we can imagine.

A Fire no darkness can extinguish.
O *admirabile commercium!* O wondrous exchange!

- *Brother Philip*

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