

Blaze

i.m. Giordano Bruno the Nolan, 1548 – 1600

A finite chamber, the domed sky of the chapel
shows God as Father, Son and the same Holy Spirit
that descended on the apostles as tongues of fire.
Filled with the ardour of faith,
they preached in language understood
by those who would believe.

Giordano, your knees ache from the immutable truths
that sit on your shoulders. Then you stand up.
From beneath your cowl, you watch the skies,
light-pricked, expanding as a dark ocean:
God's domain, Heaven.

In the evening drizzle, the tails of stars burn the sky.
Their flames fall near Vesuvius and
as you watch, their light passes through you.

The thoughts of stars linger in walks and prayers
and speak of more complex notions.
You are encircled by earth, water, air and fire.
You are earth, water, air and fire.

This is spirit.

No skullcap will fetter ideas that break through
as branches born of Egyptian, Greek and Arabic plantings.
You teach, travel, but the hounds of dogma
inhabit the world, and Venice delivers you to Rome.

You say *innumerable suns exist;*
innumerable earths revolve around these suns—
in the city's prison, the world is dark.
Here your thoughts are free to roam
with the chattering rodents.

Your cheek against the damp wall, empty chains and
names carved into stonework are all that is left of the others.
You look up, filthy and bloodied.

There are no stars in the spears of light from the window.
God must be completely infinite because he can be associated
with no boundary and his every attribute is one and infinite.

God is silent.

Winter, and there are no flowers on the Campo de' Fiori.
Mouth vised, you are tied to the stake on a mound of branches.
Smoke rises to the cold sky.

And you
 the fiery, living torch.

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