

ALDEN NOWLAN

He Grows In Understanding

"Which one of you is Christ?" somebody would shout
and I'd almost always answer,

"That's me. I'm him."

They'd throw me down

and pound spikes through my hands.

That hurt.

So now I keep my mouth shut.

I'm scared

and much more modest

than I used to be.



Religion

The real religion of an age
consists of whatever
men find it impossible
to disbelieve.

Our ancestors
could no more have doubted
the Signor Cristo, his
parents and paladins,

that I can be wholly serious
when I deny
the principles of physics
and proclaim

the splitting of the atom
is the devil's answer
to certain rites
and incantations,
also

that the world is round
only because we've agreed
to call it so.

The Married Man's Poem

Five years married

and he has never once

wished he dared kill her,

which means

they're happy enough

but it is not love.

The House Painters

The heads and shoulders
of the men painting the house
keep appearing at windows
and I don't have the gift
of being comfortable
with them,

I can't

feign blindness

with dignity

as they do,

can't close the curtains

in their faces

and what can you say to a stranger

who possesses rights

you'd deny a friend

and begrudge a lover?