

Autumn Testament (I)

BY JAMES K. BAXTER

As I come down the hill from Toro Poutini's house
My feet are sore, being bare, on the sharp stones

And that is a suitable penance. The dust of the pa road
Is cool, though, and I can see

The axe of the moon shift down behind the trees
Very slowly. The red light from the windows

Of the church has a ghostly look, and in
This place ghosts are real. The bees are humming loudly

In moonlight in their old hive above the church door
Where I go in to kneel, and come out to make my way

Uphill past a startled horse who plunges in the paddock
Above the nunnery. Now there are one or two

Of the tribe back in the big house—What would you have me do,
King Jesus? Your games with me have turned me into a boulder.

James K. Baxter, "Autumn Testament (I)" from *Selected Poems*. Copyright © 2010 by The James K. Baxter Trust. Reprinted by permission of Carcanet Press, Ltd.

Source: *Collected Poems* (Oxford University Press, Ltd., 1979)

A o ou aga'I ifo I le tula mai le fale o Toro Poutini
O o'u vae ua
As I come down the hill from Toro Poutini's house
My feet are sore, being bare, on the sharp stones

And that is a suitable penance. The dust of the pa road
Is cool, though, and I can see

The axe of the moon shift down behind the trees
Very slowly. The red light from the windows

Of the church has a ghostly look, and in
This place ghosts are real. The bees are humming loudly

In moonlight in their old hive above the church door
Where I go in to kneel, and come out to make my way

Uphill past a startled horse who plunges in the paddock
Above the nunnery. Now there are one or two

Of the tribe back in the big house—What would you have me do,
King Jesus? Your games with me have turned me into a boulder.