

Two Poems

by [Michael Williams](#) (October 2020)



Yellow Sky, Milton Avery, 1958

Recipient of Mustard Seed

Recipient of mustard seed
And told to move Denali,
I gaped in mute perplexity

In that unhaunted valley,
As lonely as a teardrop shed
Upon a desert dune,
Compelled to irrigate that waste
As barren as the moon.

Was it a promise or a warning;
Is it hope or is it threat?
Does He command what can't be done,
Or is He just all wet?

Such is an expectation that
Can make you weep a fountain,
When you can't find a precedent
Of one that moved a mountain.

Self-Rebuke

it can be difficult to buck up
when you're convinced that you're a fuck-up
your friends may tell you otherwise
try to believe their honest lies

allay the dearth of hope with pleasure
the nervous system's buried treasure
that bullion to coinage shape
by which you purchase your escape

but saturnine reality
casts a pall on levity
night envelops joys diurnal
life is short and hell's eternal

since the pursuit of merriment
will rarely ever make a dent
in the iron gauze that parts
the joy we crave and our sad hearts

perhaps the moody melancholic

instead of finding ways to frolic
might bear the crucifixion labor
and try to serve his god and neighbor

for love—not pleasing fancy’s bliss—
and its attendant sacrifice
and some degree of self-control
make happy the unhappy soul

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Michael Williams is a Catholic convert, a crude man of letters, a bleeding heart and a goofball. He—like St. Francis—is wedded to poverty, but with moderate success. His interests (apart from writing) include smoking cigarettes, drinking beer and whiskey, reading history books, playing chess, and entertaining his friends. He lives in Anchorage, Alaska with his faithful kitty, Olivia. He has been published in the *St. Austin Review* and the *Catholic Anchor*.

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