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THE
BRIGHT FIELD



*Three Welsh
Christian Poems*

Prayer for Burial in the Holy Island of Bardsey

(Bardsey, an island off the Welsh coast, is still called *Enli* in Welsh)

The King of all lords knows me, won't deny me
His mercy for my wickedness.
I was often given gold and silk
by transient lords for praising them,
but after the lively gift of poetry
my wretched tongue is struck with silence.
May I, the poet Meilyr, pilgrim to Peter,
gatekeeper who judges the sum of virtue,
when the time comes for us to arise
who are in the grave, have thy support.
May I be at home awaiting the call
in a fold with the moving seas near it,
a hermitage of perpetual honour
with a bosom of brine about its graves.
Island of fair Mary, pure island of the pure,
how lovely to await resurrection there!
Christ of the foretold cross knows me and will keep me
From the pain of hell, that remote guest-house.
The Creator who created me will take me in
To the good parish of Enlli's people.ⁱ

ⁱ Gwyn Williams, *An Introduction to Welsh Poetry from the Beginnings to the Sixteenth Century*, Ayer Publishing, pg. 73 (out of print).

On Hill, In Dale

On hill, in dale, in the islands of the sea, in every way one goes, there is no seclusion from the blessed Christ. My Friend, my Intercessor, it was my desire to attain to the Land far away to which thou wentest. Seven and seven score and seven hundred saints have gone to the one Tribunal, and in the presence of the Blessed Christ they have not endured terror. The gift I ask, may it not be denied me, peace between me and God; may I find the road to the Gate of Glory, Christ, may I not be sad before thy throne.

Anonymous 12th-century Welsh poet.ⁱⁱ

ii From Kenneth Hurlstone Jackson, *A Celtic Miscellany*, Penguin Classics, pg. 299.

The Bright Field

I have seen the sun break through
to illuminate a small field
for a while, and gone my way
and forgotten it. But that was the pearl
of great price, the one field that had
treasure in it. I realize now
that I must give all that I have
to possess it. Life is not hurrying
on to a receding future, nor hankering after
an imagined past. It is the turning
aside like Moses to the miracle
of the lit bush, to a brightness
that seemed as transitory as your youth
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.

R.S. Thomas (1913-2000)ⁱⁱⁱ

iii *Laboratories of the Spirit*, MacMillan, 1974, Reprinted courtesy of Kunjana Thomas, c. 2001.