

ERNEST DOWSON

“Benedictio Domini” [Blessing of God] (1893)

Without, the sullen noises of the street!
The voice of London, inarticulate,
Hoarse and blaspheming, surges in to meet
The silent blessing of the Immaculate.

Dark is the church, and dim the worshipers,
Hushed the bowed heads as though by some old spell,
While through the incense-laden air there stirs
The admonition of a silver bell.

Dark is this church, save where the altars stands,
Dressed like a bride, illustrious with light,
Where one old priest exults with tremulous hands
The one true solace of man's fallen plight.

Strange silence here: without, the sounding street
Heralds the world's swift passage to the fire:
O Benediction, perfect and complete!
When shall men cease to suffer and desire?