

Editorial

In his introductory essay to the current edition of *McCausland's Order of Divine Service* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 2001), Kevin Flynn refers to his childhood memory of the *Book of Common Prayer's* form of general intercession—the “Prayer for the Church”—as being “the first really long prayer.” If this is the case—and his piquant observation certainly reverberates in the memory of this cradle Anglican!—then the eucharistic prayer, or the “Prayer of Consecration,” as the *BCP* calls it, is “the second really long prayer.”



Lent 2002

In a great many Anglican communities, liturgical renewal has replaced “the first really long prayer” with other forms of prayer—principally litanies, normatively led by a deacon or lay person—which change according to the season and the Sunday. However, “the second really long prayer,” regardless of which prayer book it is from, is still a “really long prayer,” and probably results in the same feelings in the congregation of impending dread and drudgery as it did in previous generations.

“Restoring eucharistic praying” is the topic *Liturgy Canada* turns to in this issue. The conversation is anchored by an article of the same title by John Hill and Judith Alltree, which surveys the dimensions of the problem—centuries of liturgical change which have distorted or obscured the sense of the gathered community giving thanks together—and describes some liturgical changes they have implemented in their parish to re-create such a community.

The kinds of changes they have made do not alter the actual texts used; indeed, our canonical requirements as Canadian Anglicans restrict the wording of prayers to that authorized by our Bishops and Synod. The *Book of Alternative Services* has “fixed” the words, restoring the eucharistic prayer as the community’s expression of thanksgiving for God’s saving acts. Instead, their article suggests that it is changes to posture, gesture, ceremonial and physical space that will lead most profitably to a restoration of eucharistic praying.

For these things *do* make a difference—perhaps even more of a difference than the actual prayer texts. For example, in the parish in which I serve, due to limitations in physical space rather than theological conviction, the priest prays the eucharistic prayer with her or his back to the people, standing at the far eastern end of the liturgical space. A colleague of mine once described this stance as akin to “driving the bus”—you’ve got your hands extended and you’re working (praying) away, but you can’t be sure of just what’s going on behind you. No change of words can substantially alter the dynamic that our particular liturgical spaces create.

In this issue, we conclude Kevin Flynn’s three-part article, “The Work of the Spirit and the Work of the People,” a comprehensive review of the place and nature of the *epiclesis* in eucharistic praying and his survey of Canadian eucharistic prayers. We also publish a poem—something of a departure for *Liturgy Canada*—by Art Lawson. The poem, and its preface, speak for themselves.

The next issue of *Liturgy Canada* will continue to explore the question of restoring eucharistic praying, by looking in more detail at some of the specific aspects involved in addressing this challenge. As always, your comments, feedback and submissions are welcomed!

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Restoring Eucharistic Praying

by John Hill and Judith Alltree



Lent 2002

The great sleeper in Anglican liturgy is the eucharistic prayer. If we could ever restore it to its proper place in our spiritual consciousness, we might recover our identity as a priestly people. The Christian vocation has an ‘upward’ as well as an ‘outward’ dimension: Not only are we called to reach out, serving our world in the spirit of the Gospel; we are called, as representative members of our world, to enter into the sacrificial self-offering of Christ through which the world is transformed. This ‘upward’ movement—what we hear Jesus describing in the Fourth Gospel as “going to the Father”—is the priestly calling of those who belong to Jesus. In the common eucharistic prayer deriving from Basil of Caesarea, we ask, “Grant that all who share this bread and this cup may become one body and one spirit, a living sacrifice in Christ to the glory of your name” (see Eucharistic Prayer 6 in the Canadian *Book of Alternative Services*). But this ‘upward’ dimension is not prominent in our mission consciousness because we ritualize it so badly.

Further, this eucharistic motif of sharing in Christ’s sacrifice was once a storm-centre in Anglicanism. The 16th- and 17th-century revisions of the communion rite dramatically disconnected this impulse to make a “reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice” of our “souls and bodies” from the eucharistic prayer, by locating this intention in the post-communion prayer instead. Clearly, there were important reasons for doing this at the time, given the medieval abuse of the “sacrifice of the mass.” But today, as we reassemble the eucharistic prayer, we must do battle with the equally great abuse of clericalism which inhibits any true appreciation of the eucharistic act.

The introductory essay to the order for the Holy Eucharist in the *Book of Alternative Services* (page 176) observes that “It was in the eucharistic prayer rather than the creed that the ancient Church gave primary expression to its faith when it celebrated the eucharist.” This note has fallen on deaf ears largely because the eucharistic prayer continues to be exclusively the presider’s prayer. It falls on deaf ears equally because this prayer is not heard as the expression of our faith!

It is worth recalling, therefore, how we arrived at this state of impoverishment. One determining factor has been the development of a hierarchically divided liturgical space. The Second Council of Tours in 567 CE, for example, forbade ordinary Christians from standing amongst the clergy during the liturgy, and reserved the chancel for the ordained. Inasmuch as the eucharistic prayer has been recited in most churches in the chancel, or in the ‘sanctuary’ (a space exclusive to the clergy), ordinary Christians have generally assumed that this prayer does not belong to them. Centuries of recitation of this prayer *sotto voce*, with the presider standing and the congregation kneeling, has certainly not helped.

The appearance of the *English Book of Common Prayer* did little to alter the physical shape of the liturgy. The priest presided from the altar/table, only departing from this place to preach and to

administer the sacrament. And apart from a brief experiment begun in the prayer book of 1549, which directed those intending to be communicants to gather in the chancel for the eucharistic action, the prevailing pattern in Anglican eucharistic liturgy has been that the people approach the altar only at the time of communion. This has obscured the shape of the eucharistic action, and has given the impression that the people's part in this action is merely receiving the grace of communion.

Another powerful factor in the way this prayer has been heard by the laity has been the reshaping of the eucharistic prayer in the Western Church. By the third century, and probably much earlier, it had reached a stable form in the Mediterranean world as a thankful recitation of the saving acts of God (culminating in the events of the Gospel, and symbolically focused in the narrative of the Last Supper), ending in a plea that God would complete that salvation. But in the West, beginning in the fourth century, the prayer changed to become, over time, a very brief thanksgiving, in what came to be known as the 'preface,' followed by a lengthy plea for consecration and for divine acceptance of the Church's offering. The entire nature of the prayer changed: from a thankful recitation of the story of our faith, ending in a cry of eschatological hope, to a clerical manipulation of bread and wine accompanied by petitions emphasizing the necessity of this act for our salvation.

Perhaps the most critical element of this change was that the 'charter narrative'—the remembrance of the Last Supper—ceased to be the climax of the narrative of God's saving involvement in our history, and became, instead, a formula for consecrating bread and wine. This is still the sense it has in the eucharistic prayer in the Canadian *Book of Common Prayer*. Little wonder, then, that this prayer, no matter which text is used, continues to be heard as a 'prayer of consecration' first and foremost—a clerical act, in which the people have no essential part.

In the *Book of Alternative Services*, however, the reformed shape of eucharistic prayer has restored the ancient sense of this prayer by making narrative thanksgiving the pre-eminent feature, and by restoring the narrative of the Last Supper to its original place as part of this larger narrative (i.e., part of the thanksgiving). The 'words of institution' no longer beg to be heard as words of consecration (although the presider's actions all too often suggest this very thing!). The whole of this prayer in its several versions can once again be heard as a communal act of recollection: We gratefully trace the pattern of God's unrelenting initiative of grace, culminating in the life-giving death and exaltation of Jesus; and we ask that, through sacrament and Spirit, our lives may be gathered up into this unfolding pattern of grace.

This reformed shape of eucharistic prayer calls for a change in the way the role of the presider is understood: The presider need no longer be seen as the technician exclusively empowered to confect the sacrament; rather, the presider can once again be seen to be the acknowledged servant of the Church's ordered life, able to empower the people of God in their defining act of prayer by leading them in that prayer.

In our congregation, we have begun to reshape participation in the eucharistic ritual. But the

important question we needed to ask was, “how has congregational consciousness of eucharistic praying changed?” To get some answers, we designed a process involving focus groups to get people talking about this issue, the results of which appear below.

But first, a description of how congregational participation has physically changed. In the hope of achieving greater clarity in the eucharistic action, its shape has been reworked in the following ways:

- the procession to the Table now follows the Peace and precedes the Preparation of the Gifts, with everyone gathering in a great circle (or crowd) around the Table for the entire eucharistic action;
- when this circle has formed, the Table is prepared and the offertory hymn is sung;
- the Lord’s Prayer has been moved out of this action (instead, becoming the culmination of the Prayers of the People, which leads into the Peace, as recommended by the 1995 “Dublin Report” of the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation);
- the presider moves to the Table for the beginning of the eucharistic prayer, only after leading the Sursum Corda (“Lift up your hearts...Let us give thanks...”);
- everyone stands throughout the eucharistic prayer (except for those who must sit for physical reasons);
- the presider sings the eucharistic prayer with hands lifted, but avoids other manual acts, except for the elevation of the gifts during the doxology;
- a real loaf of bread, baked by a member of the congregation, is broken and shared;
- the people begin to receive communion immediately following the invitation—“The gifts of God for people of God”—rather than having to wait for the communion ministers to eat first; they now eat last;
- the community remains together at the Table until everyone has eaten; and
- everyone, including the presider, is served communion (no one ‘takes’ communion).

Most of this reshaping need not be commented on here. We simply list the primary aims, the most basic of which has been to eradicate the hierarchically divided shape of the eucharistic action: The members of the congregation are no longer cast in the role of spectators or lower-order celebrants; they are physically part of the action, and thus are obliged to consider the meaning of their role, which is clearly more than just coming up for communion. A second aim has been to provide the opportunity for a different hearing of the eucharistic prayer: The eucharistic prayer, rather than being experienced as a necessary clerical procedure for providing consecrated bread and wine for communion, is now something into which ordinary Christians are drawn as a congregational act of praise. A third aim has been to once again weld together, in the most immediate and direct way, the successive acts of a) setting the Table (the preparation of the gifts); b) saying grace (the eucharistic prayer); c) breaking bread and d) sharing the meal (i.e., the ‘four-fold action’ which Gregory Dix taught us to recognize).

When we gathered people in focus groups, we asked the following questions:

1. What are the important elements of the table ritual for you?

2. How has the table ritual affected your life and the life of the congregation?
3. What is there about the Eucharistic Prayer that you connect with? How would you describe your participation in this prayer?
4. When the congregation joins in offering this prayer, given that ‘praying’ is not always asking for things, what do you think we are doing?

From the focus groups, we learned that the most valuable aspect of the eucharistic action was the distinctive event of being gathered in a circle, seeing everyone standing together, watching out for those with special needs, singing together in a circle, watching the bread being broken and experiencing the intimacy of receiving communion. Communicants are aware, in this all-embracing act, of the uniqueness of the People of God: young and old, rich and poor, in all our variety made one, with a shared sense of caring and connectedness. As one 93-year-old said, “Today, you might hold someone’s hand if they were deeply moved about something; you wouldn’t do that in days gone by. We used to put too much emphasis on things that weren’t important.” Many acknowledged the importance of singing the Sanctus; one person said, “Singing in the circle is the most spiritual dimension—you hear everyone’s voice.” And another talked about the “feeling of the Holy Spirit with so many people together.” Yet another identified the difference it makes to be up-close, not viewing something from afar; someone else spoke of being “comfortably included” in the eucharistic prayer.

When asked to reflect on the experience of offering the eucharistic prayer, people had considerable difficulty naming what was important for them, or what their participation meant. They were very clear that they now pay close attention (most of the time). One spoke of hearing the prayer as if for the first time, of being awakened; another, of being more “tuned in.” Another person mentioned being aware of all those—family, friends, the departed—who are not seen: “in memory of me” are words that evoke a memory of others. And then, he said, there are those who don’t bother coming: “I am doing it for them, too.”

Some recognized the overriding motif of thankfulness, and appreciated this as central to their own faith, while others admitted that the words of the prayer don’t do much for them. One person identified the version that speaks of “the vast expanse of interstellar space...and this fragile earth, our island home” as making the important connections for us in our time. Another described how the prayer “tells the story, enables us to remember it all and makes us aware of all that God has done for us.” Yet another recalled the experience, at a parish retreat, of being part of a small group that composed a form of eucharistic prayer: This, he said, had made the prayer far more valuable for him. But for most, word and action seemed to constitute a seamless whole which they had difficulty analyzing in its parts.

One person spoke of the way in which the present configuration has transformed the entire meaning of the eucharistic prayer: Rather than “focusing on a distant deity,” it seems, instead, that

we are celebrating “a presence within the circle.” Another spoke of being transported, in this act of prayer, to “the original Passover of Jesus with his disciples.” Yet another acknowledged the importance of the prayer in naming “why we’re here.”

Of the 40 or so who participated in the focus groups, only one spoke negatively of the reshaped ritual. She finds the others in the circle a distraction, and she made it clear that for her, it is important “to feel I’m one-on-one in praying to God...I’m trying to get into a state of grace...so I can feel this wonderful blessing...” In the eucharistic prayer, “I want to be opened up to receive the wonderful love of God, but I can only focus if I shut out the outside interferences. Otherwise, it doesn’t happen. It’s touch and go, a very delicate feeling.”

What can be learned from these insights?

It is perhaps noteworthy that when asked what we do in the eucharistic prayer, none of the respondents attempted to identify it as an act of blessing or consecrating food, nor did anyone attempt to resist the implication of the question and insist that it is a matter of what the priest does. One might even perceive in their remarks a glimmer of recognition of that ‘upward’ movement which we referred to at the beginning. It is clear, however, that more needs to be done to cultivate an awareness of the shape and character of the eucharistic prayer. Part of this work must be done in preaching, as the central thrust of the biblical story of God’s people and their vocation is linked to the eucharistic action that follows.

The one dissenting voice reminds us of privatized communion spirituality which, for many years, was cultivated in our churches, and which we cannot expect to disappear without much residual hurt and loss. At the same time, we can recognize the necessity of reshaping what we do if we want people to experience the real meaning of eucharistic praying.

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The Work of the Spirit and the Work of the People (Part III)
by Kevin Flynn



Lent 2002

In this, the third and final part of his article on the use of the epiclesis in eucharistic prayers, Kevin Flynn examines Eucharistic Prayers 4, 5 and 6 in the Book of Alternative Services, as well as the three supplementary prayers authorized for use by the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada. The first two parts of this article were published in the Lent 2001 and All Saints 2001 issues of Liturgy Canada.

Eucharistic Prayer 4

Prayer 4 is based on Eucharistic Prayer C in the *Prayer Book of the Episcopal Church, USA*.¹ It is distinctive in its use of contemporary language and imagery, especially in its thanksgiving for the created order. As well, it is frequently punctuated by congregational acclamations. It differs significantly from its American counterpart where the *epiclesis* comes immediately before the institution narrative. The framers of the *BAS* remained staunchly Antiochene, placing the *epiclesis* after the narrative. In this way, the Canadian book avoids the suggestion that the narrative constitutes the "moment of consecration," a possibility found in some other Anglican formularies such as *The Alternative Service Book* of the Church of England.

The *epiclesis* of Prayer 4 is so closely linked with the *anamnesis* as to make the two effectively one unit. The text is as follows:

Gracious God, we recall the death of your Son Jesus Christ, we proclaim his resurrection and ascension, and we look with expectation for his coming as Lord of all the nations. We who have been redeemed by him, and made a new people by water and the Spirit, now bring you these gifts. Send your Holy Spirit upon us and upon this offering of your Church, that we who eat and drink at this holy table may share the divine life of Christ our Lord.

Glory to you for ever and ever.

Pour out your Spirit upon the whole earth and make it your new creation. Gather your Church together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom, where peace and justice are revealed, that we, with all your people, of every language, race, and nation, may share the banquet you have promised.

This very rich text suggests a number of themes. In the first place, the baptismal identity of the Church is identified: "a new people by water and the Spirit." Naturally, this phrase evokes the pneumatic elements of the baptismal rite itself. The *BAS* encourages the formation of a baptismal consciousness by, among other things, urging that baptism be celebrated at certain especially

appropriate festivals: the Easter Vigil, the Day of Pentecost, All Saints' Day (or the Sunday following), the feast of the Baptism of the Lord and upon the visit of the bishop.

Even when there are no baptisms, the renewal of baptismal vows may take the place of the Nicene Creed. The readings for the four festivals are full of possibilities for treating of the pneumatological dimensions of baptism and the Christian life. All of these occasions hold up various facets of the mystery of baptism. Only time will tell whether this pastoral-liturgical strategy bears the fruit its framers intended. Certainly the frequent references to the baptismal covenant in various diocesan and parish statements across the country point to a degree of baptismal piety that would have been unimaginable a generation ago.

Churches of the Reformation have been reluctant to use the language of offering in the Eucharistic Prayer. To do so is to run the risk of Pelagianism or “works righteousness.” The *BAS*, reflects the BEM (“Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry” document) assertion that baptism “initiates the reality of the new life given in the midst of the present world” and “gives participation in the community of the Holy Spirit.”² So it is possible to say that the Church plays a role in the Eucharist. In Prayer 4, of course, the word is “bring”—a softer option, perhaps. It may be, however, that the recovery of a sense of baptismal identity has been one of the factors allowing Anglicans to make use of such language. Those who are already in Christ and sharers of his grace, who know the love of God in the communion of the Holy Spirit, are not mere passive recipients of an action that is God's alone. ARCIC affirms this in these terms:

*There is therefore one historical, unrepeatable sacrifice, offered once for all by Christ and accepted once for all by the Father. In the celebration of the memorial, Christ in the Holy Spirit unites his people with himself in a sacramental way so that the Church enters into the movement of his self-offering.*³

In Prayer 4, in particular, the “bringing” of the gifts to God comes immediately before an *epiclesis* that holds together both consecration of the gifts and consecration of the communicants. The structure of the Prayer avoids Pelagian overtones through its progression from the story of Christ's work, to offering and to *epiclesis*. The sacrifice of Christ is affirmed, but the Church's activity in worship is real.⁴

The *epiclesis* is the point at which thanksgiving moves into supplication. The petition asks that the faithful “share the divine life of Christ our Lord.” This is nothing less than the promise of 2 Peter 1:4, that we become participants of the divine nature. Divinization or *theosis* is the destiny of humankind who were created *capax dei*. In the *epiclesis*, that destiny is claimed and sought. It is worth recalling the observation of Archbishop Michael Ramsey:

*In Christ mankind is allowed to see not only the radiance of God's glory, but also the true image of man. Into that image Christ's people are being transformed, and in virtue of that transformation into the new man they are realizing the meaning of their original status as creatures in God's image.*⁵

Our original status is linked in the Prayer by supplication for the whole creation, that the Spirit be poured out upon it, making it new. In the first place, this is a powerful affirmation of the wholeness of the human person, against a false spiritualization. It is refreshing to recall the 14th-century Greek writer, Gregory Palamas, sounding this characteristically biblical and patristic note:

*Brother, do you not hear the apostle saying, "Are you not aware that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us?" and again: "We are God's house?" And God says, "I will make my home amongst them, and I will move about amongst them and I will be their God." How, then, should anyone of sense think it unfitting that the mind should dwell where God is destined to have his dwelling? And how should God from the beginning have made the mind dwell in the body? Has he, too, then, done amiss? People who say things like that, brother, talk like the heretics who say that the body is evil and a creation of the evil one.*⁶

It is through our bodiliness that we encounter and engage the world. We are derived, like the rest of the created order, from the same primordial fireball of the Big Bang. All matter—the stuff of which both we and entire galaxies are made—came into being in that instant. Thanksgiving for that event, expressed at the beginning of the Prayer, turns with the *epiclesis* into petition. The petition is grounded in the Paschal Mystery, to be sure, but relates as well to the first creation, to the creating God whose Spirit pervades the whole earth, rightly ordering all things (Wisdom 8:1).

Prayer for the renewal of creation requires our share in the work, as co-creators with God. There has never been a moment in human history when we have been as aware as we are now of our ability both to shape and to destroy creation. The science that has allowed us to do great things has also been misused to bring the created order to the brink of ecological disaster. To turn from that disaster will require more than technique. It requires a genuine *metanoia*, and with that *metanoia* the strength of will and clarity of vision that will lead us to a hopeful future.

The eschatological hope to which we press includes, again, the gathering of the Church. The ancient cry from the Didache sounds anew. The cosmic ingathering is to that table of which Isaiah sang: "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all nations; he will swallow up death forever (25:6-7).

The eucharist gives the foretaste, real if still partial, of the praise of the great multitude "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9). The very lavishness of God's gift, the eschatological banquet, is now spread out before the Church and disclosed in bread and wine, in eating and drinking together.

Eucharistic Prayer 5

A new composition for the *BAS*, Prayer 5 is intended especially for celebrations with children. Like Prayer 4, it is optimally sung with a common refrain. The simple, concrete language of the thanksgiving portion of the Prayer leads into an *anamnesis* and the offering of the worshipers to the Father in Christ. The turn to the *epiclesis* confirms that it is the Spirit who accomplishes these things, giving us a share in the “life of the family of [God’s] children” (cf. 1 John 3:2a). The eucharist, like the Church itself, is the “communion of the Holy Spirit,” communion with God who is love, through the grace of Christ (cf. 2 Corinthians 13:14). The Church which offers itself to God in Christ does so in the power of the Spirit even as Christ, the great high priest, offered himself to God “through the eternal Spirit” (Hebrews 9:13-14).

The *epiclesis* asks: “Send your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts, that we may know the presence of Jesus in the breaking of bread, and share in the life of the family of your children.” Explicitly consecratory language is avoided, but the result of the coming of the Spirit is to know the risen Christ “in the breaking of bread,” even as the disciples on the road to Emmaus knew him (Luke 24:35).⁷

The thanksgiving section of the Prayer recalled Christ’s care for the poor, the hungry, the sick and rejected. The extension of hospitality and concern for such always has the potential to turn an ordinary meal into an encounter with the risen One. In meeting the guest who is Christ, the believer discovers that the guest is, in fact, host. Participation in the symbolic meal of the eucharist is to heighten our awareness of the possibility and reality of such encounters outside of the liturgy.

It is highly appropriate, then, that this Prayer continues with the petition that the faithful who are called to be God’s servants be filled “with the courage and love of Jesus” so that “all the world may gather in joy at the table of [God’s] kingdom.” Disciples witness to what they have seen and heard (Luke 24:33-35). The message that is heard over and over in the believing community can be proclaimed, in turn, to the world, for now believers have been clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:48-49; Acts 2). As in Prayer 4, the petition for the Spirit opens into the eschatological hope of a renewed humanity feasting with God.

Eucharistic Prayer 6

The sixth Prayer is an adaptation of the *anaphora* of the liturgy of St. Basil the Great. Prepared by an ecumenical committee of Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Lutheran and Methodist scholars, it is similar to another such adaptation in use by Coptic Christians. The text of the Prayer up to the institution narrative is a translation of the Latin original of the form of this Prayer found in the sacramentary of Paul VI.⁸ “In its main substance the prayer, therefore, is authorized among more Christians than any other eucharistic prayer.”⁹

In this Prayer, the Spirit is invoked both upon “us,” the people of God assembled to make eucharist, and upon the gifts. Both are objects of the same verb. “Father, we pray that in your

goodness and mercy your Holy Spirit may descend upon us, and upon these gifts, sanctifying them and showing them to be holy gifts for your holy people, the bread of life and the cup of salvation, the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ. Grant that all who share this bread and this cup may become one body and one spirit, a living sacrifice in Christ to the praise of your name.”

As in Prayer 3, the *epiclesis* upon the gifts is clearly consecratory. The language of “sanctifying” and “showing” derives from the *anaphora* of Basil. In his discussion of that Prayer, William Crockett states that “the verb *anadeiknumi* (show forth)...reflects a shift from the eschatological perspective toward an ‘epiphany’ theology.”¹⁰ Taft, in his discussion of the meaning of that verb, notes that “show” does not seem as strong to us as “make,” only because of the modern rationalistic disjunction between the symbolic and the real.¹¹ That we are dealing with the language of prayer rather than of other forms of discourse is made abundantly clear by the subsequent piling up of imagery. The gifts are “holy gifts for holy people, the bread of life and the cup of salvation, the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.”

What is unmistakable is that consecration is for the sake of communion. As with other of the Eucharistic Prayers of the *BAS*, the unity of the Church is prayed for as essential to the character of what eucharist is (John 17:21). The eucharist is the sacrament of unity and is both the sign and cause of the unity of the Church.

The force of the imagery in the *epiclesis* is to underline the transforming dignity of our incorporation into Christ. Christians are joined to the work of Christ and to Christ’s self-gift and prayer to the Father. It is thus that we pray that the Spirit make us “a living sacrifice in Christ” to the praise of God’s name. Our communion with Christ through the Holy Spirit makes effective what Christ has won for us through the Paschal Mystery. We are brought with him before the Father.

His sacrifice wins a holy people, a praising people, who actualize their priestly task in a uniquely concentrated and fruitful fashion when they offer bread and wine as a memorial and a thanksgiving for the act that still, from moment to moment, consecrates them, secures their access to God. The eucharist is always a celebration of the new humanity, the ‘community of gift’ between God and human beings and between human beings themselves.¹²

Prayer 6 follows the West Syrian tradition by including an extended form of intercession within the Prayer. Anglican Eucharistic Prayers tend to avoid such intercessions as a repetition of the Prayers of the People. Here, however, Anglicans join with most other Christian traditions in extending the *epiclesis* into intercession. This is not altogether a novelty among Anglicans. The Nonjurors included intercessions in their Eucharistic Prayers as they found them in their West Syrian models. Nonjuror liturgical scholars held that the intercession was even more efficacious within the context of the *anaphora*. Bishop Thomas Brett (1667-1744) wrote:

The Reason of the Thing also pleads for putting the Prayer for all estates and Conditions of Men after the Consecration, for as it is one general End of Sacrifice, and of this Eucharistic Sacrifice in particular, to render our Prayers more effectual...it is certainly most proper, that the Sacrifice or Oblation should first be offered, and that Prayer should be made whilst it lies upon the altar, and is already dedicated to God.¹³

A certain Anglican hesitation to support this view, however, is at least partially responsible for the fact that this intercessory section is optional.

The intercessions conclude with the petition that “we may find our inheritance with [the blessed Virgin Mary, with patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, (with...) and] all the saints who have found favour with you in ages past.” Although the Spirit is not explicitly named here, this section of the Prayer, as an extension of the *epiclesis*, is certainly suggestive of the pneumatological dimension of the communion of saints. The “holy people” who feast on the “holy things” are united in the communion of the Spirit with all the holy people throughout time and space. The earthly liturgy shares in the heavenly liturgy for “we praise you in union with them and give you glory through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”

First named among the saints is Mary. She is the one whom the Spirit overshadowed. In that moment of her obedience she became the exemplar of the Church. Throughout her life she is “blessed” because her existence is filled with “hearing the word of God and keeping it” (Luke 11:28; 2:19-51). Her obedience takes her to the cross where she must be stripped of her own son, a sword piercing her heart. The “holy people” who make eucharist are likewise called to a life of obedience in which “love does not insist on its own way” (1 Corinthians 13:5).

The memorial of the saints in the Eucharistic Prayer is a telling declaration that holiness is essentially social. So Paul asserted in his discussion on the gifts of the Spirit in the Church when he pointed out that “there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord” (1 Corinthians 12:4-5). The rich variety of holiness as it is manifested in the lives of Christian people is referred to here in the prayer as it evokes “patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs.” The individual must find for him or herself the will of God, but that discovery will always, in some way, be joined to all others who have given glory to God in ages past.

The memorial of the saints following the *epiclesis* is analogous to the structure of the Apostles’ Creed. There, belief in the Holy Spirit is followed by belief in the holy, catholic church and the communion of saints. Elizabeth Johnson reflects on the ambiguity of the Latin form of the Creed. The *sanctorum* may be read as “the communion of saints.” It may be, however, that the word was originally the genitive plural of *santa*, or holy things. In other words, the phrase would refer to participation in holy things, especially the eucharist. She points out that there is no absolute need to choose between the personal, predominantly Western, and the sacramental, predominantly Eastern, meanings of the *communio sanctorum*. The elusive quality of the phrase’s original meaning is a happy circumstance, allowing it to bring forth a complex, multi-layered reality,

namely, the kinship of God's friends and prophets in a Spirit-filled company grounded in Christ and constituted by a sharing in the holy things, these being each other's lives and witness plus the sacraments, particularly the eucharistic bread and cup of salvation.¹⁴

Johnson's reflections on this phrase take her to a theme encountered in our reflection on Eucharistic Prayer 4, that of the ecological implications of eucharist. The *communio sanctorum* can be interpreted to include the natural gifts of the rest of the created order. These are the gifts which human persons receive first as bearers of life itself. Participation in the *communio sanctorum* of the eucharist calls for a prophetic stance against the degradation of the sanctity of the earth itself. "Through the power of the Spirit there is a deep intermingling of holy persons and holy things in God's good creation."¹⁵

Supplementary Eucharistic Prayer 1

The creation of the three supplementary Eucharistic Prayers was called for by the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada in 1995. The Synod requested material that would include an inclusive language eucharistic rite, one that would reflect a "reformed theological conscience," and a eucharistic rite open to Aboriginal spiritual traditions and other cultural expressions. General Synod of 1998 approved for trial use three new texts: two featuring inclusive language and one "Reformed Prayer."¹⁶ These Prayers have been issued to the Church for trial use with an explicit request for evaluation by those who use them. Again, our concern will be the *epiclesis*.

Neither of the inclusive language Prayers is particularly daring in their language about God. While masculine pronouns have been avoided, no distinctly feminine imagery for God has been used. In the first Prayer, however, there are more references to the Spirit than is typically found in the other *anaphoras* of the Canadian Church. God, the lover of creation, is said to have placed "the song of the Spirit in our hearts." The Spirit, too, is described as speaking through various prophets and sages. Finally, at the *epiclesis*, the following petition is uttered: "Breathe your Holy Spirit, the wisdom of the universe, upon these gifts that we bring to you: this bread, this cup, ourselves, our souls and bodies, that we may be signs of your love for all the world and ministers of your transforming purpose."

Asking God to "breathe" the Spirit upon the gifts is a departure from the usual language of sending. Given that in the ancient languages of Hebrew, Latin and Greek "breath" and "spirit" are the same word, this is not inappropriate.¹⁷

The Spirit as "wisdom of the universe" is an evocation of those texts, especially in the deuterocanonical books of Wisdom and Sirach, in which the *Hokmah* (Hebrew), or *Sophia* (Greek), appears to have characteristics and qualities associated with the Spirit. This appealing feminine figure creates and vivifies the natural world (Genesis 1:2; Judith 16:14; Proverbs 8:22-31) and is at work, as well, in human history. She is at work in salvation, leading slaves to freedom (Wisdom 10:15), establishing justice and teaching life-giving ways to receptive mortals (Wisdom 7: 27-29; 8:7; Proverbs 8:1-21).¹⁸

With the Spirit so characterized here, the Prayer comes as close as it ever does to a feminine image for God. While this is an opening to a richer, more expansive set of images for God, it would be a mistake to limit the feminine in the Godhead to the Spirit alone. One out of three is still a minority!

The *epiclesis* is linked with the oblation of bread and wine, as well as “ourselves, our souls, and bodies,” the latter phrase being a quotation from the post-communion prayer of the *BCP*. The purpose of this offering is the transformation of the worshipers into signs of God’s love in the world and “ministers” of God’s transforming purpose. In this respect, the Prayer is much like the others we have examined in seeing the purpose of the eucharist as transforming the Church into what it is called to be (i.e., the Body of Christ in the world for the life of the world).

Supplementary Eucharistic Prayer 2

This Prayer is quite unusual in being cast in the form of a lament. Whether a prayer of thanksgiving can actually be a lament is a matter for discussion elsewhere. The *epiclesis* includes, first, prayer for the worshipers and then for others, especially those in need. Oddly, the petition then returns to concern for the worshipers. “Pour out your Spirit on these gifts that through them you may sustain us in our hunger for your peace. We hold before you all whose lives are marked by suffering, our sisters and brothers. When we are broken and cast aside, embrace us in your love.”

The *epiclesis* here is certainly not consecratory, but what sort of communion *epiclesis* it is does not seem altogether clear either. While there is a certain eschatological anticipation of God’s peace, we simply ask to be sustained in hungering for it. Unfortunately, there is no suggestion that our hunger might lead us actually to work for, exemplify or even share in that peace, at least proleptically. Instead, the petition turns to a somewhat querulous request for ourselves that “when we are broken and cast aside” God would embrace us. One is left wishing that there was some further petition that asked for the courage and love of the Spirit to engage the powers that so corrupt and destroy the creatures of God.

Supplementary Eucharistic Prayer 3

This prayer was the subject of significant revision at the General Synod of 1998. An earlier version of the *epiclesis* in this Prayer asked that God send the Spirit upon “the meal.” Such a phrase could have commended itself both to those whose focus would have been on the presence of Christ in the elements and those for whom Christ is made known in the act of eating. Instead, the evangelical voice at Synod called for this present form: “Send your Holy Spirit on us that as we receive this bread and this cup we may partake of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and feed on him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving. May we be renewed in his risen life, filled with love, and strengthened in our will to serve others;

and make of our lives, we pray, a pure and holy sacrifice, acceptable to you, knitting us together as one in your Son Jesus Christ, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, now and for ever.”

The language of “feeding on him...” evokes the words of the administration of the chalice in the *BCP*. At the same time, there is a resolute move from the draft version and its susceptibility to consecratory interpretation to a form that would have gladdened the heart of Cranmer in 1552.

Communion is for the renewal of life in Christ and the commitment to minister to others. The language of sacrifice is attached to the oblation of the lives of the worshipers. Together Christians are knit together into one body for whose unity the prayer finally asks before breaking into doxology.

A meeting of General Synod is an awkward forum for the alteration of liturgical texts. As it stands, the *epiclesis* of this Prayer is consonant with the theological concerns of many other of the Prayers of the *BAS*. The revision of the earlier form, however, reveals that there is a body of Canadian Anglicans who believe that the “Reformed” theological position must exclude language about the Spirit coming upon material things. This seems a peculiarly narrow view of the work of the Spirit given the enormous variety of images of the Spirit in the Bible, not to mention in the rest of the Tradition. Many of those images are themselves drawn from the natural world, such as blowing wind, burning fire, flowing water, light. Genesis 1 pictures the Spirit of God as a great bird hovering over the formless void.

Some of the suspicion about connecting the Spirit with the material world may arise from the West’s practical neglect of God’s presence in the cosmic world. Instead, a stress on the divine immanence among human beings, and particularly on the relation of the individual to God, has combined fatally with the West’s relentless tendency to dualism. Body and spirit, matter and spirit, flesh and spirit: As these are kept separate in Christian thought, so there is a retreat from a theology of wholeness.¹⁹ The Nicene Creed speaks of the Spirit as the Lord and giver of life. The vivifier gives all things life. “Let all your creatures serve you, for you spoke, and they were made. You sent forth your spirit, and it formed them” (Judith 16:14).

The objection to invoking the Spirit upon material things may arise from a conviction that this suggests that matter is actually devoid of relation to Spirit, that it is profane. It would be difficult to support such a view from the actual texts of the *BAS*. All of the *epicleses*, consecratory or communion, turn on the establishment of a new relation of gifts to community, community to Christ and the Spirit-filled community to the world. Drawing the creatures of God into relation with one another and with God is precisely the work of the Spirit. “All creatures from the personal self to the non-sentient cosmos are mutually related and exist in an interplay of communion thanks to her [the Spirit’s] presence.”²⁰ Too narrow a focus on formulae connected with Reformation-era controversies about the presence of Christ in the eucharist may lead to a neglect, not only of the substantial consensus achieved in the 20th century about those issues, but

more importantly, to a neglect of the recovery and renewal of thought about the work of the Spirit.

One may hope for improvements to the Supplementary Prayers. The second one, overall, is a weak prayer text. The *epiclesis* is no stronger than the rest of the Prayer. The first and the third, however, as well as the official texts of the *BAS*, are nonetheless consonant with the great Tradition of the Church. In addition to a refurbished Basil, the *BAS* includes new compositions that are worthy additions to that Tradition.

In Robert Taft's essay²¹ mentioned above, he observes that behind the formal, euchological differences between Eastern and Western Eucharistic Prayers, there is nevertheless a common eucharistic doctrine. The Prayers of the *BAS* and the Supplementary Prayers are faithful to the variety of *epicleses* found in the great Tradition of the Church. The historic influence on the Canadian Church of the *BCP* continues in that the majority of Prayers have communion rather than consecratory *epicleses*. The witness of both forms of invocation are found nonetheless. However much the Prayers might be improved or changed in future, the fact remains that their presence within the use of one ecclesial body attests to the need for a variety of expression of the work of the Spirit in the eucharist. Just as the Church decided that short of a return to extempore prayer by the presider, a variety of Eucharistic Prayers is needed, so within those Prayers a variety of forms of *epiclesis* is the only way to do justice to the expression of the work of the Spirit.

The apparent lack of strict doctrinal definition by the Anglican Church may be a cause of concern or anxiety to many. Nevertheless, the peculiar genius of this Church is to hold together in one body, through forms of common prayer, the often widely varying theological consciences of its members. Whatever the compromises or mental reservations that have gone into their creation, despite even the possibility of an unwillingness to recognize the witness of their own rites, Canadian Anglicans share in the *epicleses* of their Eucharistic Prayers prayer forms that are both deeply traditional and convincingly open to contemporary reflection and use.

NOTES:

1. *Book of Alternative Services* (Canada, 1985), 180.
2. World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist & Ministry (BEM)*, Baptism, I. E.
3. Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), *Report I*, section 5.
4. See Kenneth Stevenson, *Eucharist and Offering* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1986).
5. Michael Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1949), 151.
6. Triad 1 2, 1, in ed. John Meyendorff, *Défense des saints hésychastes*, vol. 1 (Louvain, 1959), 75.
7. While there is no explicit mention of it, this allusion to the Emmaus resurrection appearance is a reminder that the risen Lord is also known in the Scriptures which were earlier proclaimed.

8. Leonel Mitchell, "The Alexandrian Anaphora of St. Basil of Caesarea: Ancient Source of 'A Common Eucharistic Prayer,'" *Anglican Theological Review*, Vol. LVIII, No. 2, April 1976, 194-206.
9. Marion J. Hatchett, *Commentary on the American Prayer Book* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1981), 377.
10. William R. Crockett, *Eucharist: Symbol of Transformation* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1989), 59.
11. Robert Taft S.J., "The Epiclesis Question in the Light of the Orthodox and Catholic Lex Orandi Traditions" in ed., Bradley Nassif, *New Perspectives in Historical Theology. Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 220-221.
12. Rowan Williams, *Eucharistic Sacrifice: The Roots of a Metaphor*. (Bramcote, Nottingham: Grove Books, 1982), 32.
13. A Collection of the Principal Liturgies, Used by the Christian Church in the Celebration of the Holy Eucharist: Particularly the Ancient, viz., the Clementine, as it stands in the Book call'd The Apostolic Constitutions; the Liturgies of S. James, S. Mark, S. Chrysostom, S. Basil, &c. Translated into English by several hands with a Dissertation upon them, Showing their Usefulness and Authority, and pointing out their several Corruptions and Interpolations. By Thomas Brett, LL. D. (London, 1720), 185-86, in Leonel L. Mitchell, *Praying Shapes Believing. A Theological Commentary on the Book of Common Prayer* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), 172.
14. Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets. A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints* (Ottawa: Novalis, 1998), 96.
15. Johnson, 97, 240-243.
16. Kevin Flynn, "Whither the Canon? Reflections on the Development of Canadian Eucharistic Prayers," *Liturgy Canada*, volume VI, Number 3/Trinity 1998, 5-8.
17. Donald Gelpi refers to the third Person of the Trinity as "Holy Breath," arguing that "breath" is a better translation of the Hebrew *ruah*. It also avoids further dichotomizing matter and spirit. See Donald L. Gelpi, *God Breathes: The Spirit in the World* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1988).
18. For an exploration of the theme of Spirit-Sophia see Johnson, 40-42, and *idem*, *She Who Is. The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 124-149.
19. See Sally McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 169-171; 157-180.
20. Johnson, *She Who Is*, 134.
21. See note 11.

A Selected Bibliography for this article can be found at: [HYPERLINK
http://www.saintstephens.ca/Essay/KF/selected_bibliography.htm](http://www.saintstephens.ca/Essay/KF/selected_bibliography.htm)
www.saintstephens.ca/Essay/KF/selected_bibliography.htm

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Book Review

by David Harrison

Living Liturgy: Sundays and Solemnities (Year A 2002)

by Joyce Ann Zimmerman, Thomas A. Greisen, Kathleen Harmon,
Thomas L. Leclerc

Liturgical Press (Collegeville, 2001)



Lent 2002

The briefest of forays into the land of the worldwide Web will uncover a plethora of materials to assist liturgical planners, preachers and musicians—there is so much material, in fact, that one wonders if print resources for liturgical planning will become obsolete. Certainly, resources which must still be purchased now compete with what can be garnered from a rich variety of sources over the Internet—and frequently at no cost.

A new print resource is *Living Liturgy: Sundays and Solemnities (Year A 2002)*, published by the Liturgical Press for a Roman Catholic readership, but useful just the same to any worshipping community which follows the *Revised Common Lectionary* (allowing for the Roman Catholic variations). The contributors to this collection have produced it in response to what they consider a “liturgical hunger” on the part of many “to know more about liturgy, to plumb its depths with greater richness, to see its challenges for daily living.”

In a two-page spread for each Sunday of the year (and Roman Catholic Holy Days), it assembles a variety of resources to assist liturgical planners, preachers and musicians. Its visual and linguistic style is compact and efficient, presenting a kind of magazine-style compilation of materials. The full text of each of the readings is included, as well as a brief reflection on the Gospel, and a *lectio divina*-style drawing out of key words and phrases. A “model penitential rite” is included for each Sunday, reflecting the Roman Catholic practice of beginning each service with the penitential rite. Some of this material could easily be adapted, however, to other areas of the liturgy. Musicians are given suggestions for service music, although the suggestions tend to be rather sparse and are far from approaching a comprehensive musical concordance to accompany the lectionary.

The real “value-added,” if you will, of this book is in the material it provides to foster “liturgical spirituality,” the deepest articulated purpose of this volume. For each Sunday and Holy Day, there are brief questions, based on the Gospel of the day, for discussion by “assembly and faith-sharing groups.” Presiders, deacons, ministers of hospitality, music ministers, altar ministers, lectors and eucharistic ministers are challenged with questions which relate to their particular ministry. (For example, on the Feast of the Epiphany, presiders are asked to consider this question: “The adage is ‘actions speak louder than words.’ In what ways is your daily life an epiphany of Christ?”) Lectors are invited to ponder this: “To what extent does your preparation with the word go beyond the mechanics of proclamation to an encounter with the newborn King?”) Questions, challenges and helpful information are also addressed to cantor, choir, music director and “liturgy committee.”

Simply as a resource to aid the busy or distracted liturgical planner, preacher or musician, this book will not add a great deal to what can easily be found elsewhere. Its usefulness lies, instead, in its value to a community or to liturgical leaders who seek to integrate their own spirituality with their preparation for liturgical ministries and leadership. Study groups could profitably use this resource, and the authors suggest it could also be used by individuals keeping a journal. In the Liturgical Press's promise that this volume will be the first of an annual series, its presence on the bookshelf might keep before us, as individual ministers and eucharistic communities, the challenge of centering our liturgical planning in our spirituality.

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A POEM FOR FATHER BULL

(The Rev. Canon) Edgar Bull was a distinguished priest of the Diocese of Toronto, and especially in his retirement a spiritual companion to many, including myself. It is to his funeral that the title refers, and to his memory the poem is dedicated.



Lent 2002

The “lemonade party” (Part III) actually occurred: the night Edgar died (at home) the morticians who came for his body were surprised by the mood of Edgar's family who, singing songs of thanksgiving and deliverance, treated them to an impromptu party.

The quoted line at the end of Part IV is from John Updike's “Seven Stanzas for Easter” (Collected Poems 1953-1977). Readers will be aware of other voices, echoes, intimations, and baldfaced borrowings (e.g. II Kings 6 and 13; George Herbert's playfulness with metaphorical and typographical imagery; Matthew Arnold, T.S. Eliot, etc.) – only some of which I am and/or was aware. Please ascribe these and others to a habit of mind one might interpret as larcenous, but which I prefer to see as ever-absorbent but not always source-retentive.

The poem's differentiated voices, the “argument”, the movement of thought/intuition/ discovery from irritating contradiction to rich and celebrated paradox, might be better appreciated if the piece were read aloud (or at least semi-voiced, if the neighbours are already suspicious) to catch its sound - which is at its essence what separates poetry from prose. Isn't it?

Look! There be more of them that be with us
than those that be with them!

My father! my father!
The chariots and the horsemen of Israel!
The chariots and the horsemen of Israel!

(For Edgar +):

(It is, when you get right up to it,
mainly a matter of seeing, really - perspective, point-of-view.)

I

In the world-baffling, head-boggling paradoxes of the Realm,
this all makes sense:

Your going from us unaccountable joy,
the loss of you a flood of good tidings.

The once-again wondering strangely suspended,
yielding to awareness of greeting-gathered winged ones,
visions caught just as they were about to go of some sort of

triumph, I guess -
where death feels less like the feared enemy,
so utterly defeated, this time anyway,
the way you did it.

This all makes so much more than sense
for the brief split-hour or so
here in the place you loved so much
(but you did that so readily so often so well),
where we have, it feels, been gathered
more than that it was our idea in the first place.
Here it seems only natural, the expected thing,
to find (among others) the following reconciliations:

“God is Great”this with “God is Good”
“In death is life” this with "Rest in peace”

“Unless you die to self you cannot live” this with
"You have to have a self to give”

this, and

"... the Resurrection of the Body..."
(I?I this?? this body?? this BOdy?!?)
this with just about anything!

These.

II

yaaaaaaaaaaaaah! I cannot stand it! can not tolerate
this this this utter topsyturveydom,
this this this absolute contrariety,
this somersaultitude, this headoverteakéttledness of it all!
This should be sad! - we loved him, right?
My mentor and companion on the way,
 my guide, my first of Fathers,
is gone!
Is. Gone.
In the world-baffling, head- and heart-boggling
 paradoxes of the Realm
this may be old news, but
I am not there yet,
still unfamiliar with its idioms and syntax
 (unlike him who read and spoke it
 worlds more steadily, and now
 sees and sings it whole!)

I have (hah! "have"!) it in winks and tremors only,
graced so well but dissipating much, assuming
that so much so given could never
slip through my fingers, whose cracks between
were caused by carelessness and
cold.
And I, simpler and stupid in heart and spirit,
probably (I say, such is my ache to hear it contradicted),
I continue in my baffledom.
My old-Adam's brain's aback, when this
ought-to-be defeat, this
should-be cause for grieving, this
 feels-like damned shame, and
such a fine man and isn't it too bad
is and feels (by Christ) altogether different!
Like victory!
Like good cause for a break-out-the-bubbly
lemonade celebration!

III

Like a party indeed, with lemonade
and whatever else is to hand,
for whomever's there,
 come gliding in grim from the night,
come responding to the call that had such silence about it,
to get

 this,
it,

expecting the usual dread and furtive air
 found not so much in death
 as in those in the shadow of death,
and finding rather:

 Love Joy Peace
No, really! - there this time for sure -
and goodly intimations of the rest!
Not at all:

the edgy urge to see them gone
and it gone with them, taken with them,
reminders all of what may not be mentioned,
guilty, dead or not, of the same dread curse and charge:

 "Found Among the Dead", "Death-Handlers"
pallid reminders of what we will not mention,
preferring (we say) the "way we remember them": (sprung
from the irretrievable past
to a present unreality

 in one astounding, death-denying leap!)
to

 this
uncannily

 still
thing.

Fearing contagion, fearing we might catch
mortality too from this once-loved but can no longer,
shunning

 this,
we make our desperate myths
about "the soul" gone larking off to heaven,
leaving us with
 this
for us to deal with.

IV

You who loved the flesh too much,
why do you loathe it now?

I ask you: how can we humans

do without our humus -
dead or alive?

How can any you or I,
so shaped by and so dependent on,
for all our mind and imagining

this flesh

this merely meaty thing, substantial with
bone and muscle, this too palpable you or I,
how can we expect anything at all

raised

if not

this

this

this

“If he rose at all it was as his body”

this

body

beloved

V

which corporeality we
have been holding onto as long as –
ah! so long and do for dear life,
as he once held it dear (and holds it now, still
some otherwhere God knows),
precious to him and

yes

yes!

and Yes! willing to pay the price
of:

Staying with the absurdities,
Saying it for all to see, Setting it forth
that those with ears might hear,
at every lifting up of hands and hearts,
with each prayer rising thick as smoke,
in each blurred voice that thrills beneath
the accustomed drone of creed
and the routine miracle
in these dog days of ordinary time:

"Do this" - "Do this!" - "Do this!"

for

" 'This' is my Body"!

(He Explains)

(Yes, "this" - Yes, "this body" -

and, Yes, "this BOdy"!)

So that

 This Done This Done This Done
becomes our song, our call from the minaret
always, in places where the faithful hearing
stop, look up, consider, maybe even cross
themselves (wiping on themselves all that
absurdity, all that nonsense, all that self-
cancelation); and where the neighbours
gripe about the churchbells one split-
second before they yank their mowers into life.

Could these hear, I wonder, even these

 high on decibels, and would they, if so, wonder at

 "expecto"

[I await, expect, anticipate, look forward to]

(so much cheerier than the drearier “look for”,
as one would “look for” a misplaced will, or
even the insurance cheque the Company
insists it did so send us - ages ago!)

the resurrection of
the body
and the
life
of the world to come

VI

which, in this brief split-hour
of the paradoxes of the Realm,
turns out (now and forever)
to be

true
+

*Art Lawson +
1995-2002*

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