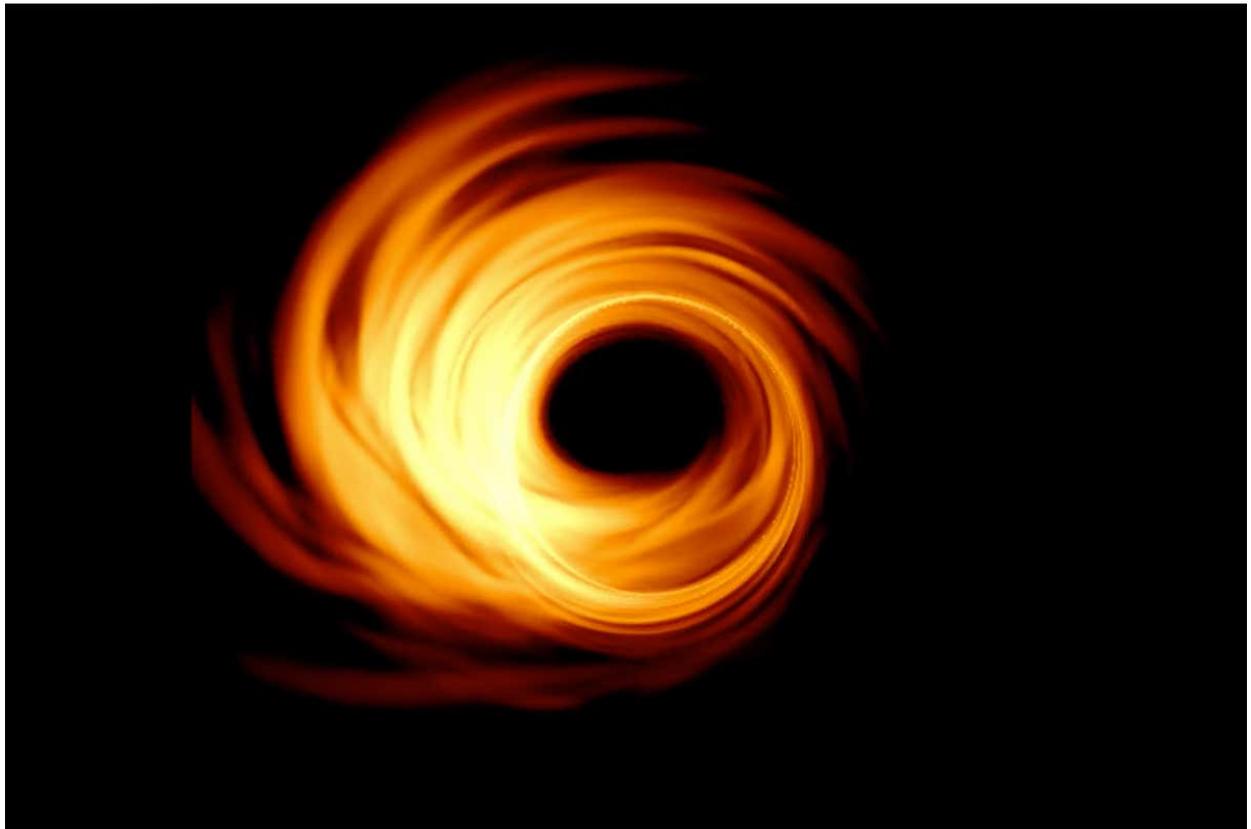


THE HOLE IN THE HEART OF GOD
A PASCHAL VIGIL IN POETRY



BY
PAUL HOOKER

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Each Holy Saturday, Christians gather at the fall of darkness for paschal vigils that await the dawn of the Easter Day. They set a new fire and from that fire light the paschal candle that will burn in the sanctuary throughout the coming year. They read passages of Scripture that recount God's engagement with the world from creation through the crucifixion to the resurrection, a story of brokenness and redemption, alienation and reconciliation. The vigil concludes with the baptism of new converts to the faith and the celebration of the Eucharist. The vigil is ancient, reaching back into the earliest days of the Church, but is still practiced in Christian communities. Through the anamnetic myth of the vigil, past and future are gathered into the mystery of the present.

Judaism, too, has its mythic reflection on God's engagement with creation. Kabbalah, the great tradition of Jewish mystical speculation, holds that in the eternal moment before creation *Ein Sof*, the Infinite One who is all in all, withdraws or contracts, so that a space might come into being where all that is not the Infinite One might exist, a sort of "hole" in the being of God (see the footnote to "*Ein Sof*—The Infinite One" below). Like the Christian paschal readings, Kabbalah tells the story of creation, brokenness and redemption, alienation and reconciliation. Like the vigil, Kabbalah anamnetically gathers all time into the mystical present.

The similarity between these two great mythic retellings of the sacred story is not accidental. Both are influenced by the same sources: the stories and poems of Hebrew Scripture and the speculative work of neo-platonic philosophers of the three Abrahamic traditions in the period between the 2nd and 12th CE. Throughout this period and beyond, Christian and Jewish mystics, as well as later Muslim mystics in the Sufi tradition, borrowed concepts and recast ideas from each other to their own purpose, mutually interpreting one another in an ever-rising crescendo of wonder and awe.

That same mutual interpretation is the purpose of this work. The readings come largely from the scriptural tradition common to both Christianity and Judaism (two readings from the New Testament appear at the end of the Word section). The poems employ imagery that occurs in Kabbalah as well as Christian mysticism. While the setting is explicitly Christian, it is the intent of this work to illustrate poetically the power of myths mutually to inform each other, creating thereby a new experience of thought or worship, enhancing each with the infusion of the other.

There are liturgical rubrics in red font that enable this work to be used as the text for a paschal vigil. But it is equally possible—indeed, perhaps desirable—to read these poems as a literary experience, perhaps as prelude to a discussion of the theological issues on which they touch. In either case, the full scriptural reading, and not just the scriptural epigraph, should be read especially if readers are unfamiliar with the stories in the readings.

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An act of creation is possible only through “the entry of God into Himself,” that is, through the act of tzimtzum, whereby [‘Ein Sof] contracts Himself and so makes it possible for something which is not ‘Ein Sof to exist. Some part of the Godhead therefore withdraws and leaves room, so to speak, for the creative processes to come into play.

—Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 129.

FIRE

[The vigil begins in darkness. All gather in silence around the fire-pit. Each participant is given a small, unlit candle.]

Prelude: Elijah Calls Down Fire

[In the darkness, I Kings 18:20-39 is read.]

“Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and even licked up the water that was in the trench. When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, “The Lord indeed is God; the Lord indeed is God.””

Fire

We limp the circled orgy ‘round the fire-ring,
and wager all our life and love on Ba’al.
O, fire the wood, consume the offering!
In vain we pray the lightning bolt to fall.

A little proof is all we seek: enough
to justify our shared presumptive truth,
a solace when the going gets too rough,
excuse for wary eye and bloody tooth.

Yet neither lightning falls nor fire consumes,
though surely prayers are fervid, true, and pure,
and hearts are set on all that heart presumes,
feet follow in the dance while strength endures.

But see that other altar, silent token
of the Strange One, full of cloud and storm,
whose name by tongue has never yet been spoken,
whose will bespeaks a world ‘ere it takes form.

Whence does he come, this Older-Than-the-Stones,
who counts the glassy grains along the strand
and knows the language written in the bones
beneath the skin of mountains where we stand?

Go back, go back, before there is until;
melt the rocks, evaporate the seas,
put out the stars, and bid the wind be still—
'til Light is all that only Light can see.

Antiphon in the Darkness

O Light!
But how can there be light, if there is no darkness?

O Endless!
But how can there be no end if there is no beginning?

O Only!
But how can there be only if there is no other?

O Truth!
But how can there be truth if there is no falsehood?

O All!
But how can there be all if there is no any?

*'Ein Sof— The One Without End*¹

We who *are* cannot in mind portray
what *is* before any *is* commence.
We who speak have not the words to say
that might connote the sound of sheerest Silence.

¹ *'Ein Sof* is a Hebrew phrase that may be fairly translated “without end.” In some forms of Jewish mystical speculation, before the creation of the cosmos and prior to the identification of a being called “God”—indeed, prior to being itself, if such things are imaginable—there “was” “only” *'Ein Sof*. According to the mystical tradition of Judaism, *'Ein Sof*, who is all-in-all, must create a space that is not *'Ein Sof*, so that all that is not *'Ein Sof* might exist. This withdrawal, called *tzimtzum* or “contraction,” is the first act of creation. Into the empty space created by *tzimtzum*, *'Ein Sof* sends a single ray of Light, an expression of the inexpressible. Light falls into the emptiness, and causes to exist the ten *sefirot*, a Hebrew term often translated “manifestations” or “emanations,” but perhaps better understood as particular expressions of the being of *'Ein Sof*—as it were, the “ten names of God.”

The *sefirot* are traditionally depicted in a vertical configuration often called “the Tree of Life,” in which the order of the *sefirot* in closeness to the essence of *'Ein Sof* is depicted as flowing from the first *sefirah* (*Keter*) to the tenth (*Malkhut*). Traditionally, the first *sefirah*, *Keter* (Crown/Desire) is the wordless, formless impulse of *'Ein Sof* to create. The second through eighth *sefirot* are understood in pairs of counterbalancing characteristics that shape both the divine creative impulse and the resultant creation: *Chokmah* (Wisdom) is structured by *Binah* (Understanding); *Chesed* (Love) is disciplined by *Gevurah/Din* (Resistance/Judgment), and their union results in *Tiferet* (Splendor/ Beauty); and *Netzach* (Perseverance) is nuanced by *Hod* (Yielding). *Yesod* (Foundation) is the point of unification of the energies of the *sefirot*, and *Malkhut* (Manifestation) is the presence of God in creation (often called, *Shekinah*, Presence). To follow the connections between the *sefirot* from *Keter* to *Malkhut* is to trace the presence and emanation of *'Ein Sof* in creation. Additionally, because human beings are created “in the image of God” (Gen 1:27), many of the characteristics of the *sefirot* are true of humans as well as of God.

When the Light of *'Ein Sof* falls into creation, some of the *sefirot*—those closest to *'Ein Sof*—are able to retain it, but others—those farther away—shatter, and the Light is lost among the broken fragments. Thus begins the brokenness of the world. The repair of creation—in Hebrew, *tikkun 'olam*—is accomplished by human beings whose acts of faithfulness, kindness, and justice are the agency of healing. In a sense, human beings finish the redemption of creation that God alone cannot complete.

We peer into the blackness of the Light
but cannot see all that cannot be seen.
We yearn to know but know we have no right.
Is there a will, and in the will, a dream,

and in the dream a vision of a space,
and in the space a coming into being,
still a synapse in the mind of Grace,
still a sight not yet prepared for seeing?

Light imagines darkness. The One-in-All
summons forth a single blinding star.
Bright as the sun, thin as a hair, it falls
from past the ancient orbs. It is new Fire.

[The new fire is lit.]

In the beginning was the Word,
**and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.**

The life of Christ is the light of all people.
**The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness will not overcome it.**

Prayer:

Come, Fire of Christ, illumine darkness.
Come, Light, and show the way;
Come, Word of Christ, help us to harken
to what the Light will say.
Through dark of sorrow
to dawn of morrow
O thought of hope, O coming day,
shine on us your eternal ray.

[The paschal candle is lit from the new fire, and participants' candles from the paschal candle.]

[The procession into the sanctuary begins, led by the bearer of the paschal candle.]

*[As the procession moves forward, the leader and people sing or say responsively:
The Light of Christ. Thanks be to God.]*

WORD

[Hymns and other music may be interspersed between poems and prayers, or after prayers and before readings.]

I. A World is Created

[Gen 1:1-5 is read.]

“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light; and there was light.’”

The Hole in the Heart of God I

In the beginning was Desire,
and Desire was with The Infinite,
and Desire was The Infinite.
Desire was the crown The Infinite wore,
and Desire made The Infinite Beautiful.

And Desire said, Let there be.
But Wisdom said,
How can there be if there is no room for being?
How can there be *not*, if The Infinite is All in All?
How can *being* be?

Then Understanding said,
Let us cease to be not-being
so that an empty place might be
 where there is no *where* before,
 when there is no before or after,
 while there is neither yes nor no.

Let us make a single point within
 The Infinite
 that is not The Infinite,
 an end where endlessness ends
 and endings begin.

Let it be dark,
 yet yearn for Light.

Let it be grotesque,
 yet seek after Beauty

Let it be hopeless,
 yet full of Desire.

Let it be the place
 where Desire imagines creation.

The Infinite inhaled,

and became infinitesimally
smaller, withdrawing,
fullness contracting
into lesser full-
ness, and giv-
ing birth to
nothing. A
creation is
born

Desire makes a hole in the heart of God.

Desire gives birth to God and not-God.

And God says, Let there be Light.

[*A brief silence is kept.*]

Prayer:

How lovely, Christ, the Emptiness
by which is heaven adorned;
How lovely, Christ, the Timelessness
that dwells before the dawn
'ere the Light
makes end of night
and signals new creation's morn
wherein the inkling world is born.

II. *Love Floods the World*

[*Genesis 6:9-22 is read.*]

“Make yourself an ark of cypress wood... For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you...”

Light Falls

And God desires Light.

So Love floods, explodes upon creation:

Fireworks sun: novae, nebulae,
constellations gyre in eternal dance,
star-cloud towers space-scrape The Infinite,
a universe expanding, quivers
pure with fired and sparkled Love.

Light torrents from clouds of glory,
swells from wellsprings of the deep,

creation washes, tumbles, drowns
in the whelming Light:

Omnis ad majorem gloriam Dei.

And Love says, Let there be no end to Love,
as there is no end to endlessness.

No, says Judgment.

Let Love be limited, let there be
a hope for all that might yet be.

For the traveler always seeks return,
as the not-God seeks God,
and emptiness yearns for filling.

Rather let there be form, a boat atop the flood
and deep within its hold,
hope and heartache, pain and possibility,
a pair of every kind—
adrift, through calm and squall,
with all creation in its womb,
and never come to shore
until Love and Judgment are as one
in the hole in the heart of God.

And God says, Let there be a world amid the waters.

[*A brief silence is kept.*]

Prayer:

O Arc of Light above the mountains
bent low to touch the earth,
O Promise made that stops the fountains
and teaches us our worth,
Praise flight of Dove,
Praise saving Love,
Praise colored bow 'cross heaven's girth,
Praise ark of wood, that holds new birth!

III. Isaac is Bound

[*Genesis 22:1-18 is read.*]

“Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son.”

The Knife

Love is the father put to the test,
Judgment the son he holds to his breast.
Beauty is the blade of the knife.

Love is the father righteous and good,
Judgment the son who carries the wood.
Beauty is the blade of the knife.

Love is the father who pauses for rest,
Judgment the son who begs of the quest.
Beauty replies with the knife.

Love, says the father, will surely provide.
Judgment the son who must now decide
if Beauty resides in the knife.

Love is the arm that raises its hand.
Judgment the blood poured out on the land
by the Beautiful blade of the knife.

What is this Love that kills its own son?
What Judgment stands by for the deed to be done?
What Beauty in the blade of a knife?

Love without Judgment is the love of a fool.
Unloving Judgment vindictive and cruel.
Beauty unites in the knife.

[*A brief silence is kept.*]

Prayer:

O Christ, your love will know no bound;
'tis blood of our redemption.
O Christ, your judgment spills to ground;
'tis our one boon exemption.
Our weak obedience
is but expedience
and nothing more than our convention.
We live by Beauty's intervention.

IV. *Israel is Delivered at the Sea*

[*Exodus 14:10-31 is read.*]

“Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.”

The Crossing I

We who wait in darkness huddled,

terrered by the angel's wings,
have learned to hoard our hope, befuddled,
for want of grander schemes of things.

Blood of lamb and blood of child
mingled in some ghastly plan
in which some die, and some, beguiled,
survive. We had no choice. We ran.

But now at edge of ruthless water,
surrender hope; we wait the fate
of any slave, or son or daughter
of a vast, unyielding state.

Antiphon for the Seashore

O Horse!
Your hooves pound like pulse of sin.

O Chariot!
Your wheels grind out a reckoning.

O Sea!
Your basin bounds both death and life.

O Wave!
You drown the prayers of desperate strife.

O Rod!
You limn the path through parted wave.

O Fire!
You burn, and aught is left to save.

Dare we pass through gathered surge,
a sea divided, torn in twain
at beck of god or demiurge,
transgress the waters deep as pain

toward deserts lit by midnight moon
and mountaintops too high for hope
and promise made but broken soon
and suffering beyond the scope

of words? If we but yield our trust
and pass through waters parted here
will crossing somehow make of us
a people loved and god-endear'd?

Who is this "god?" A presence known
in neither effigy nor name
but in the yearning Fire alone,
a Perseverance none can tame

but only follow in the night
toward destinies baptized by fear
and sanctified by headlong flight
ahead of horse and blade and spear.

Yet even Perseverance yields
to Yielding. Look! The tides return.
Detritus washes up on fields
along the shore. We remnant turn

again toward Fire that glows ahead
and follow where its shining, bright
against the inky darkness, leads
toward unseen stations in the night.

[*A brief silence is kept.*]

Prayer:

We pass through waters on the way
to places still but dream,
like those of whom the ancients say:
they trusted things unseen.
Teach us such peace
as may release
our spirits from sin's slav'ry mean,
and drown us all, and make us clean.

V. *The Words Are Given to Moses on the Mountain*

[*Exodus 24:15-18 and Deuteronomy 6:1-9 are read.*]

“Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days”... “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”

Children's Sermon

Listen, little children: I know my hair
smells of burnt wool. I know my eyes
glow with eerie light. Don't be afraid
of me. Glory sometimes does strange things
to a person, if you dare to linger
too long in a place you shouldn't be.

I climbed the mountain, where I shouldn't be.
A wind from someplace ancient stirred my hair,

the foggy air inside the cloud lingered
like a burial shroud wound 'round my eyes,
and I began to be aware of things
moving in the mist. Was I afraid?

The Fire. The Words. I should have been afraid
but there wasn't time. Later there would be
time to think of how It burned up things
I once believed. At the time my hair
seemed to be ablaze, and my eyes
grew bright. I should have run but lingered

while the mountain shook. And now what lingers
in mind was not that I was so afraid
but that I longed to see It eye to eye.
(Of course, I know that such can never be.)
Instead I saw the Fire like silken hair
that danced and shone and burned up everything.

That's what I called you all to hear: that things
are burning. Listen to the Words that linger
on your lips and heart; they singe your hair.
Love the Words, the Fire; yet be afraid.
(To be afraid is what it means to be
wise.) The Fire will sear your shining eyes.

Your shining eyes! Oh, I see in those eyes
the Fire of Glory! It will burn up everything
you love, always causing things to be
reduced to ash and then raised anew. Words linger.
Listen, even though you are afraid;
give all to Love, though Fire ignites your hair.

Children, let it be. Don't close your eyes
or douse your hair. Watch the Fire burn everything.
The One is all that lingers. Be afraid.

[A brief silence is kept.]

Prayer:

Teach us the Words not writ in stone
but carved upon the heart;
not scribed upon the stars alone
but known in faith's true art.
Ignite the Fire,
enflame desire
to learn what Love alone imparts:
the One is Light; all else is dark.

VI. *The Spies are Concealed by Rahab*

[*Joshua 2:1-21 is read.*]

“She said, ‘According to your words, so be it.’ She sent them away and they departed. Then she tied the crimson cord in the window.”

The Crimson Cord

Everything depends upon a crimson cord
hanging in a window, gentled by the breeze.
Everything depends upon these last few words

said in haste, in hope that others will be pleased
to make them true. Everything depends upon
fragile promises made in times like these.

It matters not so much who will have lost or won
as whose promises are kept and whose forgot
and who when all the words are said and deeds are done

spies the crimson cord tied with a faithful knot
to the window and, recalling, stays the sword
and protects this door when the fight grows hot.

Everything depends upon a crimson cord
binding past to hope of what is yet to be:
a home, a place, a life. According to your word

so let it be. Leave now, and on the third of three
cold daybreaks rise and go. Neither pause nor turn
until you reach the future. Yet remember me

and these secrets I have kept that I might earn
a place at table when at last you’ve kept your word,
and safety in your house, a Fire that, when it burns,

consumes all. From this window like a bird
I would soar, borne aloft by gentle breeze,
no longer tethered here by this crimson cord.

[*A brief silence is kept.*]

Prayer:

Bind us, O Christ of solemn oath,
by cords of love and grace,
that we may yet fulfill this troth

we pledge now in this place.
So let faith stand
with reaching hand
outstretched toward your shining face,
and there your saving love to trace.

VII. *Samuel Encounters God*

[*I Samuel 3:1-20 is read.*]

“Therefore Eli said to Samuel, ‘Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’ So Samuel went and lay down in his place.”

The Call

It was the Fire—
embodied with a disembodied light
shimmering, quivering against the door—
but what I remember is the smell,
smoke and seared flesh,
some burnt and some about to be.
Holiness, it seems, always smells like that.

I was a boy. I had no name for
how they walked me to the shrine
then turned on heel and headed home.
We’re just keeping promises, they said.
These days we’d call it child neglect.
Who brings a child into the world
then abandons him to endless midnights
in empty moonless places, to the clutches
of decrepit priests deafened to the truth
and fickle gods that will not say their name?
No matter. That night, the sum of things
was the Fire it was my job to tend
and a torqued and tangled restless bedsheet
that always seemed to smell of smoke.

Shmuel. God Hears. Nowadays
I chuckle at the too-delicious irony.
They said, this god answers when you ask.
I asked. But there was no answer.
I guess I got the name wrong.

Instead, *Yehoshua*, God Saves, or so
he claimed, when God at long last broke the silence.
Woke me up—arrested my attention—
some tingling of the ear, perhaps some

preternatural cat-like apprehension
of danger waiting just beyond the dawn.
God Hears, God Hears.
The old man said when prompted I should say
I'm listening. Not my will, but thine....

It wasn't so much the sound as the smell:
that piquant Fiery smell of holiness.
Beware of gods who claim they come to save.
Their hot breath torches everything in sight—
temples, priests, nations, thorny crowns,
abandoned sons of men and sons of gods—
'til all that's left behind are the sheets
torqued and tossed aside, or neatly folded:
they always smell of smoke.

Ever since, amid the long *vendette*
between the two competing would-be kings,
'midst petty squabbles over land and women,
a thousand angry neighbors, gesturing
in city gates, and battles sometimes won
but far more often ignominiously lost—
I've tried and mostly failed to save a people
stoutly unconvinced they needed saving.
And still I smell the smoke.

And in the timeless midnights of my life,
wrapped in smoky silence beneath the stars
or else inside an empty, moonless chamber
with stone rolled up and sealed against the holy,
I tend the Fire and listen for our names.
God Hears. God Saves.
Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.

[*A brief silence is kept.*]

Prayer:

Teach us to hear in darkness, Lord,
in hours before the light
the awful sound, the fiery word,
the news of coming night;
that with the dawn
we may be strong;
uphold our weakness by your might
and give our souls a measured flight.

VIII. The Song of the Vineyard

[Isaiah 5:1-13 is read.]

“...he expected justice,
but saw bloodshed;
righteousness,
but heard a cry!”

Confession

Not the misdeed in the dark, the calculated criminality,
not the cynic’s act of cruelty, the scandal or the shame...
these are not our downfall, Lord, they are clear enough to see;
they offer small temptation to make us break the frame.

But the thousand barely noted little acts of infamy—
small betrayals of the heart, extended hands ignored,
loves dismayed, sleight of poison tongue or stroke of key—
does not each crack the vessel wherein the Light is stored...

‘til it shatters, and the Light goes skittering
down the swirling darkness that seems to have no end?
We offer heart, we yearn for hope, we raise our voice to sing
songs too faint to call the Light or make it shine again.

You who are the One Light, in whom Desire be found
to make a world the first time: only you can make repair:
You who made us once, now remake us whole and sound
and make a place wherein the act of justice holds our prayer,

‘til the world is right, ‘til hope does not die a-borning,
and peace no more a stranger in the dark and threatening night.
Then teach our lips and tongues to sing the morning
When even dark shall celebrate the coming of the Light.

Antiphon for the Shattered

O You who made us
See the weakness in your craft
O You who call us
Know we cannot bear to hear
O you who break us
See that all our bones are crushed
O you who bury us
Clothe us with the dust of death
O you who would raise us
Give birth to us in hope.

[*A brief silence is kept.*]

Prayer:

O Christ—who broken on the rood,
with drooping head, stilled heart,
e'en yet repairs, nailed on the wood,
the pain of sinful art—
now from death's lair
the world repair,
rebuild the garden of the good
where once the tree of wisdom stood.

IX. *The Valley of the Bones*

[*Ezekiel 37:1-14 is read.*]

“The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones.”

I Seek the Shining Darkness

I seek the shining darkness,
the basement path beneath believing,
the way that knows but is not known.

A voiceless song of echoed longing,
empty skull in an arid vale,
jawbone agape: a windswept moan.

I seek the primordial Before—
before light, or day, or even Word—
region where the Serpent roams,

dragon mother of the deep;
her face the maw of fertile chaos,
her womb is dirt, her breast is bone.

I seek the land of birth and death
from which come both birthing, dying,
to which they go, their labors done,

chthonic realm where little gods
come and go without a sound,
Ultima Thule, wanderer's home.

I seek the dawn of the second day
not the day of witnessed passion

nor when they found the body gone,

but the last pregnant day of possible,
uterus of a new creation,
with cervix of eternal stone.

Deep inside the shining darkness
believing dies and trust, unborn,
unknown and knowing, waits alone.

[*A brief silence is kept.*]

Prayer:

O Christ, in darkness, timeless, waiting
not for release of sunrise
nor rescue, nor for liberating
fire in angelic eyes.
But, quiet, may then
dawn the day when
Light that dark itself denies
awakens in your darkened eyes.

X. *Jonah in the Belly of the Beast*

[*Jonah 1:17- 2:10 is read.*]

“But the Lord provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. ... Then the Lord spoke to the fish, and it spewed Jonah out upon the dry land.”

The Belly of the Beast

The darkness is perhaps the place to come to terms
with the craven absence of the Light, the last
fading glimmer of hope, final breath before
the long exhale.

So this is how it ends, you say:
here in this piscine prison with no possibility
of parole for good behavior. Cell block C
for “Cetacean”—a scholar’s joke.

My crime? Refusing
to go where normal folk would never be caught dead.
Dead. The irony’s so thick you could cut it
with a knife. But where’s the knife

could cut me out

and Emptiness is Silence.
Emptiness is the womb pregnant with Beauty.
And Emptiness makes Silence Beautiful.

In the eternal moment,
a distance divides their unity
And Emptiness says, Why?
But Silence gives no answer.
And Beauty sees the terror in their eyes.

And Beauty says
 Let there be a space in Emptiness for Silence.
 Let there be a space in Silence for Emptiness.
See, I dwell in Emptiness and Emptiness is Beautiful.
See, I dwell in Silence and Silence is Beautiful.

This is the hole in the heart of God.
This is the moment of our alienation and our union
 our agony and our joy.

And Silence withdraws
 and becomes eternal and free
 opening a space where
 Emptiness pours
 Itself until
 it is fully
 Empty.

And Beauty says to the caverns of the stars: Come!
 to the rolling canyons of the waves: Come!
 to the Words aloft in the wind: Come!
 to the Fire in the sky: Come!
 to the scattered Light:
 Come!

Come to Emptiness and be filled.
Come to Silence and hear music.
Come to Beauty's Garden and wait.

Come to the doorway of darkness
 to await the gathering of the Light.
Come to the temple of terror
 to await the revelation of Hope.
Come to the cusp of new creation
 to await the birth of Possibility.

Come and wait.

[*A brief silence is kept.*]

Prayer:

O shattered Light, that 'ere poor hours
began their daily race,
be gathered now on Love's rude tower
revealed in time and space;
make all things whole
and heal the soul
that yearns within a world displaced
'til all be one before Love's face.

XII. Resurrection

[*Colossians 1:15-20 is read.*]

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation..."

Resurrection

Before the dawn, he slips into the flow
so silently no star in heaven hears
nor earth beneath, nor even hell below.
It seems it hasn't been like this for years.

Silence reigns. No star in heaven hears
the subtle, scuttling last retreat of death.
He thinks it hasn't been like this for years;
it would be such an effort to draw breath.

The subtle, scuttling last retreat of death
rolls the stone aside, and now the breeze
suggests the effort of unsteady breath.
Nothing in this life is done with ease.

Stone rolled aside. The movement of the breeze
stirs the acrid dust upon the floor.
Not so, he thinks; the one thing done with ease
is dying. Living always summons more.

Again the acrid dust stirs on the floor.
Another moment: could he just abide
in dying? Living summons. There is more:
they want his blood, their fingers in his side.

Another moment. Rest, and just abide.
But then the nostrils twitch and muscles move;
the blood flows into fingers at his side,
rising from the deep abyss of Love.

The nostrils twitch, and now the muscles move.
Neither earth beneath, nor hell below
can stop this rising river, deep with Love.
His time has come. He slips into the flow.

Antiphon for the Empty Tomb

- O Fire!
Burn everything we believe, 'til there is only you.
- O Darkness!
Enshroud our eyes, that we at last may see.
- O Light!
Illumine hearts that, blind, we see the true.
- O Water!
Pull us down, that drowning, we are free.
- O Desire!
Yearn in us that we may yearn for you.
- O Wisdom!
Beginning of all thought, all thought inspire.
- O Understanding!
Thought-shaper, bind the chaos in our brains.
- O Love!
Set our hope ablaze with holy fire.
- O Judgment!
Love's limit, fire by Fire constrained
- O Beauty!
Empty, yet not by Emptiness consumed.
- O Perseverance!
Death's stony portal on its hinges turn.
- O Yielding!
Flesh surrendered, life from life resumed.
- O Foundation!
Rise with the dawn; for we have much to learn!

Prayer: The Exsultet

Rejoice, O heavenly powers! Sing,
O massed angelic choir!
For Jesus Christ our risen King
wears now the crown of briars.
The dark of sin,
he gathers in;
'til morning dawns with brilliant Fire—
the Light to which our souls aspire.

A brief sermon may follow.

WATER

The Crossing II

[To be read as the community gathers at the font.]

Remember the parting of chaos
deep in the darkness, before the first Fire
falls from the stars, 'ere the first day is
born in the mists of the mind of Desire.

Remember the floods broken free
from primordial rivers above and below,
and the promise-keeled frigate asea;
life atop death, it drifts in the flow

'til bereft of a hope for tomorrow
the raft runs aground on an infinite Love
that bears the first respite from sorrow:
the tree of redemption in the beak of a dove.

Remember the parting of waters,
and the far bank's ascent in the dubious night;
remember the sons and the daughters
who followed the Fire in the flickering Light

and arrived at equivocal stations
still wet from the surging of uncertain tides
and eager to give birth to nations,
still yearning to see what the name of God hides.

Remember the torrent of rainfall
soaking a land that knows aught but thirst
and the silence of gods whose names, called,
have nothing to say and can do but their worst

while thunder and storm rage, and lightning
falls on the altar of ancestral stone
and dances celestial jigs, singing
songs of the spheres to the One Name alone.

Remember the baptismal floss,
the drops from the brow of our fair pioneer,
the blood of ascent to the cross,
the rending of curtain, the cry of his fear

that now, in the ultimate parting,
must open a hole that denies all repair.

Yet here the whole earth's deepest smarting
receives of the salve that will soothe its despair.

Then remember your own true oblation
renewed in the spray of this holiest night,
and rejoice at the great confirmation:
Fire-born, Desire names you Children of Light.

[The Prayer of Thanksgiving over Water and the Service of Reaffirmation of Baptism follow.]

MEAL

The Invitation

[To be read as the community gathers at the table.]

You will meet him at the table,
the One who, emptied of Himself, becomes
the Empty space within the heart of Silence,
where Beauty gathers all the world's deep darkness
even now and fills it with the Light.

You will meet him at the table
who calls to you in midnights of the soul
and bids you follow through divided seas
and cross the holy deserts of the heart;
even now you feel the ancient Fire.

You will meet him at the table,
who reaches out to heal the shattered ones,
the dimming shards, the broken, disillusioned,
world-weary, hope long ago abandoned;
even now you see his wounded hands.

You will meet him at the table,
whom you know by many names, inscribed
across the intersticed universe
or whispered in the smallest breath of love;
even now your lips dare frame their sound.

You will meet him at the table
whom Love now fractures open on the altar,
whom Judgment now decants upon the earth;
his brokenness is rendered up in Beauty
even now, as you take bread and cup.

You will meet him at the table.
He is the host, and holds this space for you,
you who only lately join the feast
and yet are welcomed into realms of Light.
Even now. See, all things are ready.

[The Great Prayer, the Institution of the meal, and the serving of the faithful follow.]

Prayer after Communion

O send us forth in joy, in song
For you have shown us mirth
and in advance of swelling dawn

cast Light upon the earth.
Let now be fed
all those once dead
who languished long in night's sad dearth.
At last they sing the Light's rebirth!

[A closing hymn is sung, and all are dismissed with charge and blessing.]
