

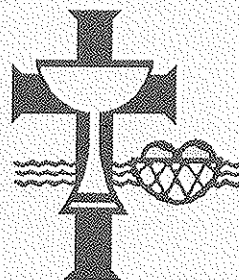


Afterthoughts

by

Henry Breul

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary
of Associated Parishes,
this collection from *OPEN*
has been made available as a memorial to
Henry Breul



Associated Parishes

AFTERTHOUGHTS

A Collection from OPEN by Henry Breul

Introduction:

Henry Breul died on February 24, 1996. For almost forty years he was a leader and gadfly in the movement for liturgical renewal in the Episcopal Church in the U. S. and the Anglican Church of Canada. The principal arena for Henry was the Associated Parishes for Liturgy and Mission (AP). He was also heard in groups such as the Association of Diocesan Liturgy and Music Commissions and at General Conventions, when throughout the 1970's he edited ISSUES, an alternative newsletter published daily at the convention by groups such as the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, the Women's Caucus, the Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity, and other groups (including AP) who were outside the establishment.

For many years Henry edited OPEN the quarterly published by AP. When he gave up that post he was invited to continue writing an end piece called "Afterthoughts" for that publication. Here we heard many of Henry's deepest felt convictions and were refreshed (or sometimes enraged) by his wit and his refusal to put correctness ahead of the truth as he saw it.

A product of the boom in seminary registrations by returning veterans of World War II, Henry studied at General Seminary in its period of leadership in liberal catholic theology and practice. Shaped by pioneers in the Liturgical Movement in the Episcopal Church as well as the Church of England (he recalled fascinating conversations with Dom Gregory Dix and Fr. George Hebert), he was soon involved in the newly formed Associated Parishes and was elected to its council in 1963.

When in 1970 the church building of St. Thomas' Parish in Washington DC burned to the ground, Henry and the members who stayed on moved into the parish hall and sought to model the church pruned of great property and wealth. The parish became a model to many and continues to worship in its parish hall today.

Henry's conviction that Western culture and thus Christendom had died in 1914, that we are living in the demise of a system, formed and was formed by the St. Thomas experiment. The best thing that could happen, he insisted, would be for the churches to lose their property and be cast back on only those things Christians can carry along: the Bible, a table, bread and wine, water, monastic communities, the eucharist, and the Daily Office.

We offer these selections from OPEN between 1991 and Henry's death in 1996

as a sample of his wit and wisdom and above all as a prophetic message to the church about God's call to be a holy people in the world.

This first selection from the Spring 1992 issue of OPEN demonstrates his central message.

The modern world in over four hundred years of trying has yet to find a basis for morality and society. All attempts to do so on secular standards are bankrupt as evidenced by the sudden departure from this life of the Soviet Union and the lingering illness of our own society. Trust in inevitable scientific and social progress has failed. Evil cannot be eliminated simply by improving the environment. The soaring 80s, based on the premise of wealth accumulation without work at the expense the common folk, has left us discouraged and nearly bankrupt. There is disillusion with the hallowed assumption that knowledge is inherently good. Knowledge has not eliminated racism, brought peace or justice, or cured our blighted environment."

This quote from a rather remarkable convention address by Bishop Haines of the diocese of Washington is a welcome change from the pious mouthings which seem normal on such occasions. But even this address has its problems: the "change" that is taking place is more profound than the end of the middle ages, or the Renaissance, or the Industrial Revolution.

Most people don't understand cultural change. The easiest thing is to deal with "short-term change" and not see, or refuse to deal with the gigantic crisis of the West until faced with "long-term change."

We are at the end of "Western Culture." It is not changing anymore; it is disappearing. We are not rehashing or redefining accepted values and epistemologies, we are in the midst of entirely new values and ways of understanding reality. This is the end of a two thousand year process.

Ours is an age much like that into which our Lord was born. The Hellenistic Age was the last gasp of a Greco-Roman culture going back to Homer and Hesiod. Western culture arose in the death throes of Hellenism, and the church was an instrument in the death of one and the birth of the other. Gibbon was quite right in accusing the church of a role in the fall of the Roman Empire. Constantine,

while capturing the church, swallowed an ethos which was quite inimical to the old Greco-Roman cultural gestalt. The church represented a new view of man and his relationship to the cosmos. At first it was disruptive, but then unifying, literally creating a new mix out of the old.

We are in the midst of a cataclysm of the same magnitude today. We are here to humanize it, to save people in it from destruction. We are here to survive it.

Our survival kit was prepared for us in the Pre-Constantinian church through baptism, eucharist, and monastic communities, and through holy orders of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, and laity without hierarchy, all equals. The Bible is to be seen again as a product of the church, not the creator of it. The church is to be seen as a living organism sufficient in itself without any particular cultural affiliation, seeking the new on its own terms. The liturgy becomes an expression of the "selfhood" of the church as God's people in an alien world.

The dying West will take us down with it unless we see clearly that we are not dependent upon it. If there ever was a "Christian Society" it is gone. Let us rejoice therefore.

In the Winter 1993 issue of OPEN, Henry took on the *Anglican Service Book* which reproduced all the services of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer (albeit in many cases modified in eccentric ways) in Cranmerian English. Henry disliked liturgical nostalgia and detested anachronisms in liturgy.

After reading Boone Porter's review of *The Anglican Service Book* in *The Living Church* and *OPEN*, and having heard it used in my home parish, I thought I ought to look it over. My title would be "Son of the Anglican Peoples' Missal," except that this time we are presented with a translation back from modern to Elizabethan English. In the 1940s James Agee was a film critic for *The Nation*. His reviews were so highly regarded that my college contemporaries would race to the library on the day they appeared. One that I remember is germane here. It was about what Agee called "pseudo-folk" — the condescending and somewhat denigrating use of made up folksy language in Oklahoma in particular, and in films and the theater in general.

"When I'm with a feeler I fergit" and "Bess, yo is mah woman now" are quotes that come to mind. They are fake at best. . . .

The trouble with pseudo-folk, pseudo-history, pseudo-liturgy is in its very pseudoness, which always covers up another purpose:

Ado Annie sounds stupid in *Oklahoma*.

Porgie is kept in his place in *Porgie and Bess*.

Liturgy is made nostalgic in the *Anglican Service Book*.

Why not put Joyce's *Ulysses* into middle English, or Wordsworth into medieval Latin — now there's an idea. Why didn't the translators of the *Anglican Service Book* think of Latin? That wouldn't be pseudo anything, but a simple imitation of *Winnie Ille Pooh*, and would be ready for use in English university chapels. What we end up with is pseudo-Cranmer, without the rhythm of the legal repetitions that were so much of Cranmer's charm. Perhaps the producers of this volume should have considered Geez or Old Slavonic, but pseudo-Cranmer just doesn't fly.

In 1991 Henry retired and with his wife, Sally, moved to a small community in Maryland. To the amusement of all who knew him Henry found himself in a parish which had heard nothing of the reform of worship which Henry had espoused for forty years. Rite I, altar against the wall, and wafers for communion were a few of the features of the parish. Henry believed strongly that one goes to one's parish church rather than shop around for something more congenial. His reflections on moving back liturgically to 1938 follows in this piece from the Fall 1991 issue.

I think that it is difficult for those of us who have been immersed in the liturgical reforms of the past twenty years to understand the profound changes that have taken place. We have become used to many things that have, as a result, disappeared from our consciousness and become part of the furniture, as it were. When one of these young people moves into a "time warp" there is culture shock lurking in the pews. Imagine, if you will, a lovely, riverside community with colonial houses and a slow living pace. A place where all the store clerks are genuinely helpful and where people stop to "chin" on the streets. A place where blacks avert their eyes from white gaze and the supermarkets are filled with farm folk on weekends, folk who speak a special patois related to the watermen and the colonial past. Put this altogether and then place yourself at

the 8 a.m. eucharist in the parish church — liturgically it is 1938. The priest faces the wall, he wears brocaded Barclay Street vestments, he reads all the lessons, moving from lectern to pulpit, he says all the "Amens," and nobody passes the peace.

Now what? Does one simply leave? Look for another church in the next county? Surreptitiously read Rite Two as he reads Rite One? Or hunker down and let it all flow over one? There are more options, but let's not get into Rome or Presbyterianism. If one stays and participates it is necessary to rediscover the piety that served well in seminary. In other words, if you accept the time warp of the streets and market place, the concomitant liturgical time warp is part of the deal, and it is surprising how easy it is to slip back and worship in a past mode, even secretly rejoicing in the forgotten richness of an outmoded piety.

All this triggers serious questions. Is it possible that the ethos of the 1930s remains in worship because it still speaks to a cultural backwater? Do people who meet almost daily in a small town find the Peace a very exciting option? People who have a strong sense of community are hard to persuade that the eucharist is community building. It is for them, rather the celebration of individualism with everybody, including the priest, doing their own thing.

The late medieval problems of Rite One become very clear when one returns to it after a long absence. Indeed, Cranmer's doctrines of atonement become offensive to the alert theological ear. The one thing that comes through very loudly in all this is that there is no going back. Even a backward, charming community deserves better of its worship than Rite I offers. Cable TV has arrived, drugs have appeared, four people were shot in the public park last Friday, and the signs of the late twentieth century are everywhere. It is time for the local parish to move toward reform.

Those battles that many of us fought years ago are about to break out here in the midst of the elms, formal gardens, and boutiques. Retirement seems to be getting more interesting.

Henry's impatience with bad liturgy could at times bring out a side of him which was caustic, as happened when he reviewed an annual meeting of the Association of Diocesan Liturgy and Music Commission for OPEN. His attack on

the musicians who planned the worship was so strong that relations between AP and ADLMC were strained for years. The dangers of insensitive liturgical planning and leadership were addressed in this piece from the Fall 1992 issue of OPEN (some years after the unfortunate review of ADLMC).

There are times when it seems that liturgists are putting on their "own show": quirky prayers at odd moments, frothy processions and clergy-centered goings on in general. Then there are some musicians whose ego trips during the liturgy are really destructive to the liturgy itself.

We all, both liturgists and musicians, need to be reminded that the liturgy doesn't belong to us or even to our congregations. The liturgy is an ongoing action of God that we are allowed to localize so that we can be involved in it.

Nadia Boulanger, the famous French musician and teacher of most of the American classical musicians of the twentieth century, once was conducting a performance of the Fauré Requiem (Mademoiselle Boulanger had been a pupil of Fauré's and was despairing about the way his music was being performed. This was before many people discovered the Requiem.) The chorus just could not give her what she wanted in the Kyrie and Sanctus. They were paying too much attention to the bars and not feeling the rhythm.

In order to correct them, she began to talk about Greek rhythm, that is, the beat that is going on when the music plugs into it and which continues after the music is over. Anyone who has listened to Eric Satie's "Gymnopédies" knows what she meant. The same sort of plugging into a prevenient rhythm can be found in many of Stravinski's works, especially his "L'Histoire du Soldat" and "Symphonie des Psaumes." Mlle. Boulanger explained it and demonstrated it in such a way that the chorus picked up the idea, and everything worked thereafter.

It would appear that this is an element of worship which has been lost in the western church. The eastern church has the feel that the liturgy is an expression of paradise that holds forth God's glory for all to see. It is something that God does for and with people, and it is going on constantly in the Godhead.

In the West, we seem to have fallen into the idea that somehow we do the right things liturgically and God appears! All this

wrangling about the "words of institution" and the "epiclesis" is typical of the western mindset. We need to recover or discover the "eternal rhythms" of our worship and make sure that we are showing this to the people of God and not some bit of "priest-craft" or "lay-craft." If we could remember that the eucharist in the local church is a dance to the eternal rhythm of the Godhead and that it is the basic rhythm of the universe and of our own bodies, we would be more humble about our expertise. Teilhard de Chardin in his "Mass in the World" gives us a glorious picture of the mystery of the eucharist in the total action of creation and redemption going on all about us.

On Sunday morning the congregation is faced with the eternal action of God's rhythm. The people are allowed to move with that rhythm and feel its power. All of us involved in "producing" the liturgy must be deeply conscious that it does not belong to us, but that we are to guide the people of God into a full involvement with the Divine.

We clergy need to remember Uzza and the Ark constantly lest, we mishandling God's eternal rhythm, the Lord might smite us, too!

Clericalism was a *bête noir* of Henry. But also likely to draw his attention was the reaction by those who respond to clericalism by leveling. Henry could see that the role of the hierarchical structure of the church does not require clericalism and that structure and clear roles are necessary if there is to be the liberty of the people of God required by the Gospel. Henry sets out to be politically incorrect (a role he relished) in this piece from the Fall 1995 issue.

It is time to be politically incorrect once again. The popularity of lay ministry notwithstanding, we need more clericalism, not less. The therapeutic modelers and group dynamists have led us down the garden path toward chaos long enough. It is vital that we take a new look at how our structures and beliefs seem to be at odds with our behavior.

First, we are a hierarchical church in a hierarchical religion. Authority is from above. We may find truths in microscopes and telescopes, but The Truth is and has been revealed from above. We call ourselves Episcopal and that word itself is a dead giveaway. All our structures in worship, theology, and canon law are hierarchical.

We Americans have inherited some of the loose humanism of

Rousseau and Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson was all for men being free as long as they were yeoman farmers, property owners in pursuit of that will-o'-the-wisp "happiness." The idea of equality and the noble savage has been so overworked that somehow a group sitting in a circle is bound to have truth in it to be discovered. Rousseau's idea of truth being present in latent form in each individual is completely incompatible with Christian epistemology.

We Anglicans have been having authority trouble for a long time. First, it was Henry VIII and the authority of the Pope. Then, it was the Non-jurors with the authority of the Hanoverians. In this country the acceptance of bishops was a slow process after years of colonial neglect. Now our bishops are the weakest link in the chain of authority, and parish priests find themselves caught between vacuums at the top and at the bottom with confused bishops over them and a poorly educated laity in the pews.

For one, I cannot see any reason in educating clergy just to send them off as consensus seekers or ecclesiastical advisors. In the system which we espouse in prayer book and liturgy, clergy are people with authority. Canon law affirms this. The visual projection of hierarchy is seen each Sunday in the liturgy when the priest stands at the altar. To act as though the structure of authority is not there is to ask for profound disorientation.

No organization can follow two opposite paths to its goals. It used to be that we could ordain a bishop with authority in a small cathedral on a weekday morning in rochet and chimere. Now we have bagpipers, trumpets, massed choirs, and processions of bishops in cope and miter, and produce a bishop who has to create his or her own authority base.

It is the same with priests and deacons on the parish level. Members of all our orders now tiptoe about hoping not to be too "clerical," while clergy newsletters are full of fearful appeals for protection against intrusive questions for new clergy and investigations of clergy changing parishes. A clergy person who acts as though the ministry has authority is suspect.

When will we stop this nonsense? Clericalism has been overdone in the past and underdone in the present, but as long as we

are members of the church catholic clerical authority is here to stay. Yes, it should be healthy. Yes, it should be part of listening. But authority is necessary in every human grouping if it is to function at all, and clerical authority is necessary if the church is to follow its vocation.

Again, in the Summer 1993 issue of OPEN Henry rejoices that the churches are likely to lose their privileged economic and social position. He delighted each time he saw a sign that we will soon have to fall back on the basics of being Church, no longer able to rely on the prerogatives of the Establishment.

For many years it has been clear that the "church catholic" has been heading into economic disaster as its real estate holdings become left behind by demographic and cultural change. . . . As cities, counties, and states struggle to survive, the existence of large ecclesiastical holdings becomes a temptation to the citizens who feel the burden of taxation falling more heavily upon them. . . .

By 1970 when St. Thomas in Washington burned down, it was clear that D.C. did not need another gothic edifice, and anyhow no one could afford to maintain it if it were built. So, we hunkered down to an all purpose parish-eucharistic hall. We sought to set an example for the future. The silence of the response was deafening as all over the country parish after parish in our inner cities teetered on financial disaster with shrinking congregations and rising maintenance bills. . . .

Expensive real estate, subtle taxation, costly clergy benefits, and a historic mismanagement of funds seem to have come home to roost all at once. For years the church has looked and behaved like a vast real estate holding company, and our bishops, totally ill-equipped for property management, have found themselves at a loss to cope with a situation which seems to consume so much of their time. As always the church will react realistically when the pressure becomes unbearable. We seem to be reaching that point. Alleluia!

In spite of ourselves, we are entering the pre-Constantinian church. We are no longer seen as a unifying force in our society, nor are we looked upon as a source of either wisdom or tradition. The 1979 prayer book has it right with fourth-century liturgies, a revived catechumenate, and the basic assumption that everything can

be done without a church building. The God of history is sending a message: "Let those with ears, hear." We are to travel light with "neither purse nor scrip" and we shall be freed to be the church. Alleluia!

Among liturgists there is a delight in talking shop and especially in telling stories which poke fun at liturgical practices of the past. His remembrance of Joe O'Rillion's law is one example. From the Fall 1993 issue:

In a time of transition such as ours it is perfectly normal to yearn for certainties. Some of us can remember when Newton's laws were sacrosanct, before the quantum theory took hold. . . .

In the liturgical life of the church we look for general principles, secretly hoping that we have found liturgical law: fasting has gone, tipping the biretta now seems silly, and the maniple is a candidate for the textile museum.

There was a moment in the late forties, however, when a liturgical law appeared which seemed to apply universally in all solemn masses. In 1948, a priest appeared at General Seminary for "retreading" as an Anglican. He had been a Presbyterian chaplain who converted and had been ordained suddenly in the cathedral in Paris. He was totally at sea about Anglican liturgical practice, having experienced only the rather broad church ecumenical liturgies of the American cathedral, and so was using the G.I. Bill money to bring himself up to grade.

Joe O'Rillion was a southern gentleman with a wry sense of humor. . . . It was Joe's fate to be sent to the Church of the Holy Communion in Paterson, New Jersey. The parish was a famous Anglo-Catholic place with the full post-Tridentine rite performed with great care. . . .

Joe was escorted by Jack Fredericks, the seminarian at Holy Communion and, after a longish train ride, was ushered into the sacristy and vested with a huge amice and long, full alb, only having an instant to wave good-bye to Jack who was off to do some parochial task. . . .

Joe made his way through the mass and while being conscious that there had been some confusing moments in which somehow he felt at fault, he accepted the invitation to return until a rector could

be found. One day Joe appeared with his face white and glistening announcing that he had discovered O'Rillion's Law: When in doubt kiss the altar, turn to the people, and say: "The Lord be with you." The passing of the western rite has left us lawless, but for a brief, shining moment we had one.

An issue which began to demand a lot of attention by churches in the 1990's was the long overdue acknowledgment of sexual abuse by professionals including clergy and other church workers. Henry was no defender of "sick pastors and lay people" but he was deeply concerned that in our attempts to curtail and prevent malpractice some essentials of pastoral care be lost. He reflected on this in the Fall 1994 issue of OPEN.

As the concepts of privacy and personal responsibility become more and more confused in our culture, and as we produce more and more lawyers and psychological therapists, it was bound to happen. The fear of malpractice suits seems to drive the professions. The picture of thousands of clergy, active and retired, being reprocessed for protection against sexual molestation is an alarming symptom in itself without probing for deeper meanings. But when a bishop's son sues a priest, two bishops, and two parishes (one of which was his father's at the time of the alleged crime), something has gone crazy. . . .

The most frightening aspect of all this is the destruction of pastoral relationships. If pastors must spend their time in protective behavior, if they must operate out of fear, the whole idea of nurture, support, absolution, and counsel goes into, at best, a less productive mode. We already have a medical profession paralyzed by fear, and we all have experienced the endless testing and hesitancy resulting from that.

There must be a way to protect the people of the church from sick pastors and lay leaders without destroying the basic nurturing function of the body of Christ. All of the present panic needs to be replaced with a judicious sorting out of real complaints from those induced by poor psychotherapy and the false cases opposed vigorously despite the cost. Only this will stem the flow of opportunistic lawsuits and give the church's leadership a sense of security when going about their life's work.

Henry had been a leader in advocating the ordination of women years before the Episcopal Church finally accepted it in 1976. For many years he had also advocated open and full acceptance of gay and lesbians people in the church and their ordination. Under the euphemism of human sexuality the Episcopal Church has been struggling with the issues raised by those like Henry who believe open acceptance of lesbian and gay members is necessary to the church's health. He wrote this in Spring of 1993.

The last general Convention mandated that the church study "human sexuality" in obvious response to the ruckus about homosexuality in our culture and in the ministry of the church. The gay issue has lain hidden for a long time, and it is remarkable the way it has surfaced in the last few years — so much so that we now have our President pushing for gays in the military. Of course, there are already plenty of gay persons in the military, just as there have always been homosexual clergy in the church. Now it is out, and people who usually resist change are now at the forefront of change by trying to outlaw gay and lesbian clergy.

Cultural time lags are always with us. The other day I was interviewed on the local radio station, and my interviewer gasped audibly when I said that I had tried to minister to the homosexual population of Dupont Circle. It reminded me of an Associated Parishes meeting some years ago in Sewanee where an angry session of "gay-bashing" went on its messy way. . . .

. . . I was deeply shocked that a progressive group would indulge in such outrageously callous behavior to its own members. This was only twenty years ago, so we must not be surprised to find the same phenomenon occurring in the Joint Chiefs of Staffs and the House of Bishops. . . .

It may be that we are at the end of a culture when taboos have disappeared and old rules of behavior have loosened. If so, it is a glorious time to be alive — when we can deal honestly and above board about such issues. We have been avoiding our sex lives for years, leaving much that is natural in a dingy gutter of nastiness. Condemning entire segments of society to a sort of moral limbo where things are not noticed. We are left with trying to love each other over an abyss of fear and suspicion that cannot be named. Surely we are on the threshold of dealing honestly, if painfully, with

one of the central concerns of human existence. The pain of the Sewanee meeting will not happen again in Associated Parishes. Let us hope it will be ended in the church at large.

In 1994 the argument about ordination of gay and lesbian church members led to a group of 10 bishops bringing charges against a retired bishop, Walter Righter, demanding he be tried by the House of Bishops. Henry, of course, had no patience with this action and wrote this in the Spring 1995 issue of OPEN.

We seem to be living in an age of terrorism: Japan, Northern Ireland, Egypt, Algeria, Pakistan, you name the country. Even in our ghettos the young killers represent a kind of nihilistic terror to the people who live there.

Real terrorists are those with a sacred cause blindly followed and most often their actions are acts of despair against what they see as one overwhelming enemy. Terrorists can be found throughout history. They are essentially amoral people with a "great goal," the destabilization of society so they can take over. We admire some terrorists here in this country; the "Sons of Liberty" did despicable acts in order to force the American Revolution. They burned homes and farms, whipped, tarred, and feathered those who disagreed with them. . . .

Reason and context are given up, demons are released from the mob to destroy and pillage the lives of others. Terrorism is so morally corrupting to those who terrorize, that if they win they release terror on the whole state. . . .

Those members of the House of Bishops seeking to put Bishop Righter on trial fit all the definitions of terrorists. They are in despair; they have tunnel vision; they seek to destabilize the House of Bishops in the name of God and biblical naivete (it is not fundamentally anything). A strange coalition of the sons of the diocese of Sydney and the last charge of the old Anglo-Catholic right, saving the church from itself. A "Crusade for Christ," back to the Bible against all those "perverted homosexuals who do unspeakable things to each other everywhere, all the time." In their blind fury they have picked on a fall guy acting as an assistant bishop, retired with no lay constituency to support him. They have avoided the bishop of Newark who would tear them to shreds with

logic.

I, for one, am disgusted when I read about the "Sons of Liberty" in New England and have always felt that they did the revolutionary cause a great deal of harm. It is to be hoped that this may be true of the actions of the ten bishops; in the meantime, the House of Bishops must stop being squishy and sentimental about "collegiality" and be ready to throw "the terrorists" out for "conduct unbecoming a minister of the church."

This piece from the Winter 1995 issue was inspired when Henry read an issue of the *National Catholic Reporter* which included articles about the controversies in the Roman Catholic Church over the ordination of women and the use of inclusive language in the liturgy. Along side was an article about retired Episcopal bishop, Clarence Pope, having joined the Roman Catholic Church. After noting that "Mr. Pope (as I assume he is now called) seems to have stepped out of the frying pan," Henry had this to say.

. . . We live in a time of great cultural upheaval with shifting values and perceptions of truth, and it is not surprising to find the churches up to their ears in controversy. The question is: Where do you flee? The Presbyterians are in turmoil after the Re-imaging Conference; the Southern Baptists are torn in two over scripture; the Missouri Synod reverberates with the fundamental controversy that broke up the seminary faculties. Even the Seventh Day Adventists seem to be stewing over what authority to give the writings of Ellen White, which in the past had the authority of scripture. And the Mormons have just quashed an attempt to analyze the writings and veracity of Joseph Smith. There is always fundamentalism, but whose fundamentalism? Jim Bakker? Jerry Falwell? Karl McIntyre? Pat Robertson? There is simply no place to hide from the tremors that are shaking western culture, nor should there be. If there is a church that is sailing through these rough seas without a lurch or two, it must be totally encapsulated from reality.

Mr. Pope will find just as much pressure in Rome to ordain women as he encountered in ECUSA along with a questioning of authority which is much more disruptive in a rigid, highly authoritarian body. He will find at the local parish level modern translations of the mass and scripture, freestanding altars, and sad,

tacky pseudo-folk music.

Those of us who scan *The Living Church* with anxiety every week would do well to get a dose of the *National Catholic Reporter* or *Presbyterian Life* once in a while. We will discover that we are not in as much trouble, comparatively, as we thought. The message is, "We are not alone," and that can save us from some of the masochistic alarms put forward by often zany letters-to-the-editor. Trying to put the toothpaste back in the tube is a hobby for some and a profession for others in all our churches, indeed in all of society, but even Newt Gingrich won't be able to accomplish it.

Shortly after mailing in this "Afterthoughts" article for the Winter 1996 issue of OPEN Henry died. In this article he again holds up some of his deepest concerns and calls prophetically for the church to wake up.

It is time for all of us to read *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* again. The Rev. Mr. Dodgson had traveled through higher mathematics and the nonlinear future in which we now wallow like Alice in the pool of tears. Playing croquet with hedgehogs and flamingos is a perfect analogy for our present dilemma. The old mallets and balls are no longer there for us. Alice's response to all this was to be resolute and logical in the face of absurdities. Finally she wins by shaking the Red Queen into being her kitten Dinah.

There was a time when many of us entered the church to preserve it as a stabilizing force in the midst of chaos. After World War II the monasteries filled with men who had experienced chaos on the battlefield and saw the church as making sense to them. Many of us saw the church as the saving remnant of western society — the biblical "bit of an ear," but then gradually we were seduced into a "trendiness" of thinking one could accommodate the church to society. The mega churches with great auditoriums and grand entertainments are the present representatives of that movement. The Bakkers, Tammy and Jim, domesticated Christianity in a ranch style house and permissiveness. Tammy's makeup was a signal for thousands of women to drop the puritanical face and lay on makeup with a trowel, making a kind of natural mask against the evil eye.

The Episcopal Church did its "thing" with balloons and tie-dyed

vestments, along with "cute" music to attract the young, only to be hung up on the real moral issues of the godliness of homosexuality and the status of women. The last two items are essential, but have hit us by surprise. The battles in the church are often being fought over the wrong ground. We don't have to adapt to the individualism of the modern world with its selfish motives and its denial of death in order to put forward the truth we bear. The message that Christ's love is for all, male-female, straight or gay, does not depend on our conforming to a corrupt society's demands upon us. We don't need to be popular or look good in a Gallup Poll.

The church catholic at its best has traditionally stood apart from the society around it. When it has conformed, it has soon lost its way. The post-Constantine church found itself inundated by the trappings and structures of the Roman Empire. The medieval church was caught in the toils of supporting feudal oppression and absolute monarchy. We have been trapped by democracy and radical egalitarianism, both of which are failing. Aristotle pointed out that democracy when corrupted became timocracy, the rule of the unqualified majority. We are in danger of falling into that pit, both as a society and as a church.

We must speak rational theology to the selfish chaos of our church and our society and shake it into order as Alice did to the Red Queen.

We conclude this brief collection with the sermon preached by James C. Holmes, Henry's successor at St. Thomas' Parish, for Henry's requiem eucharist on February 28, 1996.

Ware gathered here this morning in the way that the people of God normally gather together. We have heard the scriptures read, we will share our prayers, and we will come to the holy table to break bread, to be nourished with the body of Christ. This action is called eucharist. It is the central act of Christian worship on the Lord's Day, and it is the context for the celebration of the most important occasions in our common life.

The eucharist is normative in the life of the Christian community. Henry Breul taught us that this event on Sundays and other occasions is derivative of the defining service of the year: The Easter

Vigil. In that gathering the Christian community, desolate, bereft, gathers to hear once again the great promises of God, and it waits expectantly for the proclamation that they have been fulfilled: "The Lord is risen indeed."

Today we give thanks to God, make eucharist, on the occasion of the death of one who was vigilant, in so many ways an active, expectant vigilante. We are here to celebrate God's gift to us of Henry Breul, a larger-than-life figure who was for us a husband and father, a teacher and preacher, a colleague, friend, neighbor and guide, and to be truthful, at times a thorn in the side.

At a meeting of the St. Thomas vestry on Monday night I asked some of the people who were members of the parish when Henry was rector to recall him for those of us who had not been there. One person described growing up knowing the stories of the faith, but hearing Henry preach about them made them new, radically new, for her week after week. Another said Henry enabled her to move from having the faith of a child to having the faith of an adult, while another said that Henry gave him permission to doubt.

St. Thomas Parish has much cause to give thanks to God for Henry Breul. He spent twenty-six years as rector of that parish in Washington, D.C. They were tumultuous years. He arrived at the lovely gothic church of FDR where a well-heeled, well-coiffed congregation gathered for morning prayer just as the civil rights movement was heating up and the war in Vietnam was escalating. Those topics became part of the life of the parish, not always to the comfort of the pew-sitters, who in turn made life difficult for a strong and determined rector. Six years into the Breul regime, the Victorian church was torched, and the remaining walls had to be bulldozed. Not long thereafter Grace Breul died of cancer.

It is often said that the defining moment for St. Thomas was the fire. In truth it was not the fire but the rising from the fire. The parish, led by Henry, literally gathered in the ashes to keep vigil, not knowing what the future would bring, but trusting that the promises of God are true. And they watched, prayed, talked, acted, and a new community did rise, phoenix like, from those ashes. Many of those who kept vigil with Henry are here today, and they join in thanking

God for that new parish, one far fewer in number but more strongly than ever committed to ministry in its neighborhood. The parish was redefined by its people, and the garden which was put in over the piled up ruins was and remains a gift of new life to the neighborhood. And in the midst of that Henry and Sally were married, companions in an exciting later part of life's journey.

The whole church has cause to give thanks to God for Henry Breul. The fire enabled Henry to put into practice the liturgical ideas which he and his colleagues in Associated Parishes had been formulating over the years. St. Thomas became a liturgical workshop with a space marvelously transformed not only to gather for the Great Vigil of Easter, but to reflect the new emphases on the eucharist, on Holy Baptism, and on the role of deacons. All of this bore fruit as one liturgical scholar noted, "In the 1980s when I went to Father Breul's St. Thomas, the liturgy of the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* was prayed with great dignity. St. Thomas was a place where you could see how wonderful the new book is."

On a more personal note, I have great reason to give thanks to God for Henry Breul. Not only was his parish a gift to me, but he was for me the perfect predecessor. In a church in which it seems hard for retired rectors to keep their fingers out of the pie, Henry absented himself from the corporate life of St. Thomas to let me become the rector, but he was, as he had been in my earlier years in Washington, there as a supportive friend and colleague. It was my joy to invite him back for a wonderful celebration two years after he retired. It gave longtime parishioners a chance to tell Henry how things were going, and for newcomers to see and hear this man whom one parishioner had told me "could preach the wallpaper off the wall."

Many of you gathered here this morning have reasons to thank God for Henry Breul which I cannot begin to number, for you became his new community upon his retirement from St. Thomas. By all accounts this vigilante became a beloved figure here at Emmanuel Church and in Chestertown, but I know he stirred the pot more than a little. From his teaching and participating in the life of the college to his opposition to Wal-Mart to, as I noticed last

summer, his being the first at Heron point to have a Clinton-Gore in '96 poster on his front door, Henry entered fully into this new and last phase of his life, and in so doing remained the larger-than-life figure people in Washington and throughout the Episcopal Church have come to know.

It was a figure of one who kept the vigil. All of this is not to say that Henry could not be bullheaded, stubborn, or that he always received criticism graciously. He was not always charitable in his opinions of others, even, believe it or not, of bishops. But we are able to move beyond that because the Henry Breul we knew, the Henry Breul who will continue to live in our hearts and in our minds, is one who made known to us the expansive love of God, and showed a way to watch and to act, trusting that the promises of God are true.

In the end, Henry believed that "in my Father's house are many mansions," for he believed that there was room within the love of God for him. And his belief helps me to believe that there is room for me, too, and I bet it does for many of you as well. Let us now continue this celebration of the Holy Eucharist, even as we continue to keep vigil, waiting, watching, acting until the promise of God is fulfilled and we are reunited with Henry around the banquet table in the Lord's house.

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