



Thinking Outside the Box (While Loving the Box)

July 25, 2022

† We sing these lines in the Sanctus each Sunday, "The whole earth is full of his glory." Often, at that moment, I find myself recalling the first two lines from Gerard Manley Hopkins's poem, "God's Grandeur":

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;*

We do carry around a number of texts in memory and those texts do their work within us. Poetry has been a source of encouragement, light, and strength for me. God has spoken repeatedly through verse, and poetic strophes have illumined dark inner corners and congealed fluxing emotions. Even if the lines get a bit mangled in recall, the rhythm, rhyme, and imagery of poetry penetrate in ways that prose does not.

The biblical prophets resorted to poetry in their ongoing confrontations with the political power structures spewing forth their propaganda in prose. Poetry subverted that prose and sparked the imaginations and faith of the hearers. Some of the most significant Scripture in the Anglican tradition is cast in poetic symmetry, for example the *Magnificat of Mary* (Luke 1:46-55; *BCP*, 119) and the *Nunc Dimitis* of Simeon (Luke 2:29-32; *BCP*, 135).

Poets like Hopkins, with his unique "sprung rhythm," present the imagining reader with vivid, illusive imagery and pattern, stretching one's ability to conceive and forcing reflection and rereading. Those same skills stand the reader in good stead in the reading of the biblical texts. For a culture forced into scanning and skimming to assimilate a small fraction of the pulp streaming at us in print, the discipline of slow, inquisitive deep reading pushes against our already diminished sense of time and taps our shallowing wells of energy. Yet, the springs of the soul must be kept open by tending and digging, lest they clog and the soul go dry.

Some have asked that I share poems cited in homilies. You will find the complete text of one of those poems attached to this email. Stanley Kunitz's poem "The Layers" continues to haunt me with its complex, poignant imagery and textured messages about grief. + I've cited portions of it in homilies.

Peace,

David+

David W. Perkins+, Interim Rector

*Gerard Manley Hopkins, "God's Grandeur," *The Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins: With an Introduction and Bibliography*. (Ware, UK: Wordsworth, 1994), p. 26

+ Stanley Kunitz, *The Collected Poems* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), pp. 217-218.