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A Long Prayer for Thanksgiving

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A LONG PRAYER FOR THANKSGIVING

Thank you, Lord, for a holy militant church
for soldiers armed with a two-edged tongue
for a draft card that is non-flammable
to protect us against fire and brimstone storms
which slide down our asbestos skins anyway.

Thank you for motor cyclists
racing all the way from Heidelberg to Dordt
and from Westminster to Amsterdam

A recent pulpit opinion poll has revealed
that your whole council now has been reduced
to stories about heathens in pagan lands
to green faith promise offerings
for the purpose of giving aspirins
to sick Mexicans in clay huts
Lord, you knew all the time
that the Africans and the Japanese
are preparing missionaries to be sent
to this part of the world.

Lord, thank you for speaking through
the mouths of asses
for pastors
who never come around much
and when they do, wonder about
my spiritual muscles
at a time when I don't have any in the house
except for some *spiritus ager* (a swig of whiskey)
for which I thank you
I don't know why I had to bring them in
they give me a pain in the distrophy
divided into 3 points
and the feeling that I need a bath.

For the pulpit editors
 who keep cutting the love songs
 out of your manuscript
 I thank you.
 they say they don't understand poetry
 and have no talent for it
 I'd say – they manage the News
 Lord, even an ass knows what to do
 when his mate is in heat
 and you said it yourself:
 "Eat, friends, and drink,
 until you are drunk with love."
 why then are we put on a starvation diet?
 Are they really on your Newsstaff, Lord?
 When we ask, they say: Careful,
 there are little children here, you know!
 But where *are* they?
 we've planned only two members per family
 to be born into your church for the next 20 years
 so everyone now living can replace only himself
 – it is, after all quality of life you're after,
 isn't it Lord? – not just people like sand at the beach
 or like drops in the ocean?
 In 1980 there will be
 about 285 thousand Christian Reformeds
 not counting the ones which left
 for other denominations,
 26½ million Baptists
 12 million Methodists
 17 million Lutherans
 4 million Presbyterians
 for tomorrow's militant church
 and about 3 million more saints
 for a latter day
 Thank you for the militant church
 of tomorrow, Lord
 And thank you people, for your contribution.

As for you, Christian soldiers,
show me your battle wounds
or tell me about your sudden flash
on the night of December 24
when not a soul was stirring
except yours
Just you, watching your own rebirth
through a wrinkled mirror
suspended from heaven
and your umbilical cord attached to
the church of all ages
for which you have little use
because you have a direct line
to heaven
with prepaid answers
for all your problems.

Excuse me, I think I've got to puke
I feel sick / it's probably just a bug
hits me every time this time of the year
it couldn't be last year's turkey
whose bowel bone I mounted on driftwood
after cooking the blood out of it
but it could be the power of blood
cooked out of the soul of a people
vegetating on meager steel wire crosses
and tired of anti-intellectualism
rubbing elbows with a pulpit bible.
Thank you, Lord, for physicians
who aren't afraid to calm us down
with anti-depressants
when we get sick at the sight of blood
dripping from your many faces
in stained glass windows
and booby traps
and church pews

— they didn't mean it, Lord,
— they never do —
they just use you for a hangup
like I do, and the others here
— not because you had imagination,
but because *they* didn't have any.
Thank you for the human mind
crowned with invention and imagination
— how else can we defend
our many ways
of killing each other?

O yes, thank you for life insurance
I'm now worth \$125 thousand
and nobody has to worry anymore
— even bought a little plot
in what's his name memorial gardens
with the folded hands
sticking out of a hill.

Thank you for 365 days that passed
by the gregorian calendar
since we last said: thank you
It's been a gluttonous year
a no-visible means of support year
but we managed to outdrink ourselves
broke the beer consumption record
and were constipated for 57 days

Lord, I don't know much about sheep
or planting corn or manure spreading
and nothing about horses
I don't even own a barn or land
so this is my thanksgiving:
the fruit of my hands
and of your other hands
around here:

1263 pages of a writer's journal
one V-8 reconditioned Ford engine
a bushel of gravel
a garbage can
a 2 x 4
a pork roast USDA Choice grade 1
one WFUR radio station
a six-pack of Heidelberg
a carton of Benson & Hedges
10 cans of mixed fruit and vegetables
chloroform mixed with dry deodorant
one congregation of mental patients
a tool and die stamp
a vote NO on proposal A bumper sticker
ten christian fingers marching as to war
and a program for everyone in the church

For all of these
in spite of these
I thank you, Lord.

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