

CHAPTER ONE

Philip Larkin's Poetry: an Introduction

This research is a study of Philip Larkin's Poems: "To Write One Song", "Church Going", "Wants", "The Whitsun Weddings", "Faith Healing", "Water", "Days", "High Windows" and "The Building". All of the poems have the sacramental motifs.

The first chapter of this research is the study and survey of Larkin poems and present comments on them. The second chapter deals with theoretical tool. The tool is related to sacramental motifs. Chapter three analyzes the selected poems of Larkin. Chapter four is the conclusion.

Many poems of Philip Larkin use sacramental images. Those images show the human behaviours and ritual practices in church. Church is a symbol of sacrament. All sacramental practices are related with church. God Christ is a great sacramental image in christian society. Larkin's poems show the cultural and social ceremonies that are celebrated in church.

First sacramental image is baptism in Christian society. Every person should be baptized. In the poem "Water" the sense of baptism is carried on. All Christian people are baptized and that is sure that they are also baptized in to death. Every person in this world must die one day. Again the persons who are baptized also regain their life with the resurrection of Christ.

Another sacramental image is matrimony. Without marriage life cannot go on. In all society marriage plays great role. This sacrament is held in the church, in the presence of bishop. Larkin's poem "Whitsun Wedding" uses this image.

In the poem "Faith Healing", Larkin uses sacramental images. Those images show the belief in religion. Women in this poem believe in the sacramental power of bishop's hand. When they are touched by the hand of bishop they become well from their illness.

"To Write One Song" focuses upon a sacramental motif. The poem begins with a persona who meditates on his desire to write a song. He goes to a graveyard to "visit the dead," to gain melancholic inspiration.

"Wedding-Wind", does focus on the sacramental significance of a young women's marriage as much as wind as a powerful metaphor of her new relationship with her husband.

The persona in the poem "Church Going", by Philip Larkin is contemplating the use and purpose of going to Church and the social and sacramental functions of the practice. Echoes of the attitude, the cynicism toward Christianity. While standing in an empty Church building the persona moves through several different negative opinions until arriving, in the concluding stanza. The persona admits that there is something worth while in Church, a means for understanding life.

"High windows" is very reminiscent of the ending of "Water", particularly its emphasis upon the lack of color. Words and phrases suggesting sacramental motifs include "high windows," "sun comprehending glass," and "endless." As we examine the speaker's use of these words we can see that rather than finding paradise through a throwing off of restraints, he finds his skepticism tempered by a difficult to articulate, metaphysical longing that brings about an affirmation regarding human existence.

Reading Larkin for the first time one is struck by the characteristically glum atmosphere that pervades most of his poems. The vast majority of his verse is devoted to what is generally taken to be negative aspects of life, such as loneliness, disappointments, loss, and the terrifying prospect of impending death. Evidently, there are uplifting and humorous sides to his work as well, but for certain reasons Larkin almost invariably is identified with a downhearted, pessimistic temper and tone. This is due to two facts. Firstly, assertive or funny statements in Larkin simply occur too sparsely to effect the overall impression and make up for all the pessimistic comments in his work. The second reason is

some what more complex and has to do with the fact that, a few exceptions granted, Larkin's writing is characterized by a strikingly high degree of uniformity across individual poems, both with respect to the general mood they convey and the particular attitudes expressed. Indeed, a large part of his verse is so alike in style and content that it seems almost natural to read these individual poems together as one single text. If one does so, they appear to complement one another and work together to create the impression of a very particular state of mind -one which it seems natural to identify as that of the author.

Regarding the poetry of Philip Larkin, Anthony Thwaite posits that there is always theme of mystery and change. He says:

Larkin's themes love' change, disenchantment, the mystery and inexplicableness of the past's survival and death's finality –are unshakably major. So too, I think, are the assurance of his cadences and the inevitable rightness of his language at their best. (54)

For Thwaite, Philip Larkin's poetry expresses the past's survival, the theme of mystery and talks about death.

Commenting on Larkin's poetry Don Shjach says:

Philip Larkin is a thoughtful poet; most of his statements about the human condition are hedged with doubt and heavily qualified. This tentative tone is reflected in the rhythm of his verse and is illustrated by the variation in his use of run-on and end stopped lines. (226)

Shjach talks about human condition and technical use of Larkin's poetry.

Insofar as in Larkin's verse a certain disposition or mood is captured and expressed with an urgency unmatched before or after, it is genuinely original. Despite its obvious popularity with the general reading public indicates that although the poems are anything but

trendy, they must in some sense have hit the verse of time. Obviously, the uneasiness and discomfort expressed through them are something a great number for readers can identify with- a fact that lends general relevance to Larkin's situation. It seems that up to a certain degree his predicament is exemplary of the situation of many people in contemporary society.

Commenting on Larkin's poetry, Adrian Beard says:

Fictional names in Larkin's poetry carry connotations; in other words they create an association for the reader. These connotations do not, on first reading have anything to do with knowing the character, as they might if the name belonged to a famous actual person whose existence was well known [. . .]

Just as a title is an important part of a poem, so is the conclusion.(57)

Beard talks about characterization and other technical uses in Larkin's poetry.

There is a tendency in recent criticism to see Larkin's pessimism in some what more relative terms, and to emphasize the affirmative and humorous sides to his work as well. There are indeed a great number of passages in his poetry that seem fit to refute the image of the bleak and pessimistic writer, and thus to justify this change in perspective.

David Timms argues that Larkin's poetry as a whole "sees life as a bleak, something horrifying business" (97). Ian Hamilton agrees and adds that the biggest problem with Larkin's poetry is its "rather narrow range of negative attitudes" (102).

Commenting on Larkin's poetry, Eric Homberger calls him "the saddest heart in the post-war supermarket" (74), while Geoffrey Thurley writes about Larkin's "central dread of satisfaction (145). It must be admitted that there is a strong current of skepticism running through Larkin's poetry.

"Going" from *The less Deceived* is about death, and according to Andrew Motion, is the kind of poem for which Larkin "is often regarded as an unrelievedly pessimistic poet" (69).

Commenting on Larkin's poetry Roger Day Says:

Larkin found pleasure not in being written about by academics but in receiving letters. From members of the reading public who recognize their own experience in his poems. [. . .] his poems usually start from a recognizable, circumstantial situation and this makes them immediately accessible. His essential "Englishness" was part of his appeal to such a wide range of people from academics to the ordinary person in the street. His themes were religion, the major, inescapable issues that face us all love, loneliness, illness, of character, and, above all, death. Yet he wrote about these issues in a truly individual way in poems full of familiar, day today details which vividly evoke the world around us. (9)

Roger Day talks about themes in Larkin's poetry as religion, love, death, loneliness, spiritual depiction of character etc. he further says social environment in Larkin's poetry.

Commenting on Larkin's poetry, Robert Clark and Thomas Healy Say:

His works captures the sacramental and religious practice of character, the often unexpected preoccupations of middle –England after the war, jazz and sex lying just under the fatigued propriety of provincial gentility. Larkin often figures himself as the outsider, and his works indicate the social accommodations and divisions of contemporary Britain. (1448)

Clark and Healy talk about the state of persona in Larkin's poem. They further talk about social accommodations of his poetry.

Stephen Regan comments Larkin's poetry in this way:

Larkin enjoyed both critical acclaim and immense popularity. Widely acknowledged as the nation's unofficial poet laureate Larkin came to be identified with an essential and enduring Englishness. His depiction of

spiritual state of persona and religious and ritual practice are major themes.

The formal achievements of his verse—its colloquial tenor, its ironic humor and its clear-sighted realism—were construed as civic virtues. Even those as poets of the poetry that some critics found wanting—its wry circumspection and parochial outlook—seemed to encapsulate the authentic experience of drab and disillusioned England. Larkin's wistful, lyrical grasp of life's shortcomings was considered in keeping with the quietistic mood of the post war years. In Larkin, the poetry and the personality were unusually compact, so that many readers claimed an intimacy in which the poet seemed to address them personally or speak on their behalf. (1)

Regan talks about enduring Englishness of Larkin's poetry. He further says that his poetry reflects the inner situation of persona and religious faith in character. He also talks about social environment in Larkin's poetry.

Commenting on Larkin's poem "Church Going" Andrew Motion says:

"Church Going" indicates, Larkin's dilemma is not Whether to believe in God but what to put in God's place; he is concerned in the poem, he has said, with going to church, not religion [. . .] . It describes in other words, a strictly secular faith, his speculations about what churches will become when they fall completely rather than partially "out of use" lead him to a conclusion in which the fear of death and the loss of religious belief are counteracted by an ineradicable faith in human and individual potential. (33)

For Motion, Larkin's poems show, the "celestial recurrences" of the natural cycle are subject to social disruption and personal disaffection. But this only confirms their importance as symbols of constancy and hope.

Similarly, Barbara Everett comments on Larkin's poetry in this way:

It can be said that though Larkin's poem does not appear to need or benefit from extraneous information which can lead a reader to find it even cleverer and funnier (or possibly sadder) than at first strikes on; and which in some sense consolidates both its almost imagistic procedure and its argument concerning vanity in both art and moral life. (59)

Commenting on Larkin's poetry David says:

Larkin believes that the task of the writer is to communicate or accurately as he can in world experience. Which is initially non-verbal: poetry is born of the tension between what (the poet) non-verbally feels and what can be got over in common word-usage to come one who has not had his experience or education or travel grant. Like most writers in the anti-modernist, or realist or readerly tradition, Larkin, is in aesthetic matters, and anti-formalist. (73)

For Lodge, Larkin's poetry expresses experience of persona by showing spiritual condition of character.

Similarly commenting on Larkin's poetry Andrew Swarbrick says:

Larkin's poems seem to come to us very appealingly as the expression of a personality disclosing it-self with self-deprecating honesty. Just how much lay hidden behind the disclosures and how self-revealing those masks were has been thoroughly explored? (211)

For Swarbrick, Larkin's poetry expresses hidden masks by disclosing them and they show the hidden spiritual state of the persona.

Firstly, that Larkin on the whole is indeed the bleak poet he is so often made out to be, secondly, that his work is homogenous enough to be treated as one single text in which of the most part the frame of mind of one peculiar character expresses itself, and thirdly that certain biographical circumstances seem to license an identification of this overall character

with the person of the author. There is a constant sense of failure and of disappointment underlying all the more specific emotions and cogitation of individual poems. Frequently, Larkin's just sad, and one is amazed then at the wide range of things and events. But Larkin can be violently energetic as well, and so deep is his embitterment at times that he believes himself to be maliciously tricked out of something he had originally been entitled to— although he is very vague about who or what it was that cheated him, or the nature of his initial hopes. An illustrative case in point is the title of his second volume of verse, *The Less Deceived*. This title is somewhat ambiguous, it that in can be understood either as a nominal or an adjectival construction, but if it is read as those who are not quite as much deceived as others it seems to substantiate Larkin's pessimistic outlook, implying that we all are cheated, only some even more so than others.

In "Best Society", a poem that Larkin has written in his late twenties, the persona's preference of solitude to the social activities he believes, to be expected of him is defended vigorously, some twenty years later he sounds far less confident. The firm conviction that he himself is his "Best Society" is eroded, and in "Verse Societe", lamenting the loss of this ability of being alone, the persona is finally driven to accept the invitation we had originally ridiculed.

There is something like an ultimate predicament coming not just individual aspects, but the totality of Larkin's situation. Bluntly put, his dilemma is that he is discontent with life, and at the same time afraid of death. While passages to substantiate his "His Horror of life" (202) can be found virtually every where in Larkin's work traces of his fear of death occur increasingly in his later volumes, and quite naturally So, because his dilemma is growing ever more severe as his life time gradually runs out. A remarkably unveiled expression of Larkin's fear of death can be found in "Aubade", one of his very last poems.

CHAPTER TWO

Sacramental

1. Church as a "Sacrament" of Unity

The church is sacramental. It is an effective sign and instrument of communion with God and of the unity of human kind. This vocation of the ecclesial community has two dimensions: first, the church itself is to be a "people made one with the unity of the father, the Son and the Holy Spirit", and second, it has the mission of restoring all people to his same unity. The source and center of this community is Jesus Christ, the word made flesh, in the power of the spirit.

The action which most fully sacramentalizes the unity of the baptized is the Eucharistic liturgy; at the table of the lord all as made one body, one spirit with him in the one bread and the common cup. In this meal the gift of christ's life on the altar of the cross the ultimate expression of self donating love, is effectively proclaimed. It is the power of this long which establishes the bonds of communion.

2. The Seven Sacraments of the Church

a) The Sacrament of Matrimony

The matrimonial covenant by which a man and woman establish between themselves, a partnership of the whole life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring: this covenant between baptized person has been raised by Christ, the lord, to the dignity of a sacrament.

According to David Timms, "Every man experiences evil around him and with in himself. This experience makes itself felt in the relationship between man and women" (244). Their union has always been threatened by discord, a spirit of domination infidelity, jealousy

and conflicts that can escalate into hatred and separation. This disorder can manifest itself more or less acutely, and can be more or less overcome according to the circumstances of cultures, ears, and individuals, but it does seem to have a universal character. According to faith the disorder we notice so painfully does not stem from the nature of man and woman, not from the nature of their relations, but from sin. As a break with God, the first sin had for its first consequence the rupture of the original communion between man and woman. Their relations were distorted by mutual recriminations; their mutual attraction, the creator's own gift, changed into a relationship of domination and just; and beautiful location of man and woman to be fruitful, multiply and subdue the earth was burdened by the pain of child birth and the toil of work. To heal the wounds of sin man and woman need to the help of the grace that God in his infinite mercy never refuses them. Without his help man and woman can not achieve the union of their lives for which God created them. In a Christian marriage the spouses are strengthened and as it were, consecrated for the duties and the dignity for their state by a special sacrament.

According to Karl Jaspers:

Marriage, like Holy Orders in a sacrament that consecrates for a particular mission in building of the church and that provides grace for accomplishing that mission. This sacrament, seen as a sign of love uniting Christ and the Church, establishes between the spouses a permanent and exclusive bond sealed by God. Accordingly, a marriage between baptized persons, validly entered into and consummated, can not be dissolved. (314)

The sacrament confers on them the grace they need for attaining holiness in their married life and for responsible acceptance and upbringing of their children. The sacrament is celebrated publicly in the presence of the priests. For a valid marriage a man and woman must express

their conscious and free consent to a definitive self giving to the other excluding none of the essential properties and aims of marriage.

b) The Sacraments of Christian Initiation

The sacraments of Christian initiation Baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist lay the foundations of every Christian life According to Eric Hombeger, "The Sharing in the divine nature given to men through the grace of Christ bears a certain like his to the origin, development, and nourishing of natural life" (250). The faithful are born a new by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of confirmation and receive in the Eucharist the food of eternal life. By means of these sacraments of Christian initiation, they thus receive in increasing measure the treasures of the divine life and advance toward the perfection of charity.

c) The Sacrament of Baptism

Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the spirit and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Roger Day says:

Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; Christian people become members of Christ, are incorporated into the church and made sharers in its mission. Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water and in the word. This sacrament is called Baptism, after the central rite by which it is carried out: to Baptize means to plunge or immerse; the plunge into the water symbolizes the catechumen's burial into Christ's death, from which he raises up by resurrection with him, as a new creature. (250)

According to Geoffrey Thurluy, "The lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation. He also commands his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to every where and to baptize them" (112). Baptism is necessary for salvation for these to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament. The church

has always held the firm conviction that those who suffer death for the sake of the faith without having received Baptism are baptized by their death for and with Christ. This Baptism of blood, like the desire of baptism, brings about the fruits of Baptism without being a sacrament. Christian initiation is accomplished by three sacraments together: Baptism is the beginning of new life; confirmation which is its strengthening; and the Eucharist which nourishes the disciple with Christ's Body and Blood for his transformation in Christ.

d) The Sacrament of Confirmation

Confirmation or Chrismation is second sacrament of Christian initiation. It is conferred by anointing with Chrism, oil into which balm has been mixed, giving it a special perfume, together with a special prayer that refers, in both its western and eastern variants, to a gift of the Holy Spirit that marks the recipient as with a seal. According to Thomas Berry, through the sacrament the grace given in baptism is "Strengthened and deepened" (260). Like baptism, confirmation may be received only once, and the recipient must be in a state of grace (meaning free from any known unconfessed mortal sin) in order to receive its effects. The "originating" minister of the sacrament is a validly consecrated bishop; if a priest confers the sacrament. The link with the higher order is indicated by the use of oil (known as "Chrism" or "Myron") blessed by the bishop on Holy Thursday itself or on a day close to it. Administration is normally reserved for those who can understand its significance, it comes to be postponed until the recipient's early adulthood; but in view of the earlier age at which children are now admitted to reception of the Eucharist, it is more and more restored to the traditional order and administered before giving the third sacrament of Christian initiation.

e) Sacrament of Eucharist

The Eucharist is the sacrament, the third of Christian initiation by which Catholics take part of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ and participate in his one sacrifice. The bread and wine (which must be from grapes) used in the Eucharistic rite are, in Catholic faith,

transformed in all but appearance into the Body and Blood of Christ, a change that is called transubstantiation. Only a bishop or priest is enabled to be a minister of the Eucharist, acting in the person of Christ himself. The Eucharist is seen as "the source and summit" of Christian living, the high point of God's sanctifying action on the faithful and of their worship of God, the point of contact between them and the liturgy of heaven. So important is it that participation in the Eucharistic celebration is seen as obligatory on every Sunday and holy days of obligation and is recommended on other days. This is seen as obligatory at least once a year during Easter tide.

f) Sacraments of Healing

Penance and Reconciliation is the first of two sacraments of healing and is also called the sacrament of healing, and is also called the sacrament of confession of conversion, and of forgiveness. According to Karl Jaspers, "It is the sacrament of Spiritual healing of baptized person from the distancing from God involve in sins committed" (115). It involves four elements: the penitent's contrition for sin (without which the rite does not have its effects), confession to a priest (it may be spiritually helpful to confess to another, but only a priest has the power to administer the sacrament), absolution by the priest, and satisfaction. Many sins wrong our neighbour. One must do what is possible in order to repair the harm (e.g. return stolen goods, restore the reputation of someone slandered, pay compensation for injuries). Simple justice require as much. But sin also injures and weakens the sinner himself, as well as his relationships with God and neighbour.

Barbara Everett says:

Absolution takes away sin, but it does not remedy all the disorders sin has caused. Raised up from sin, the sinner must still recover his full spiritual health by doing something more to make amends for the sin: he must make satisfaction for or "expiate" his sins. This satisfaction is also called "penance".

In early Christian centuries, this element of satisfaction was quite onerous and generally preceded absolution, but now it usually involves a simple task for the penitent to perform to make some reparation and as a medicinal means of strengthening against further temptation. (244)

The priest is bound by the "seal of confession", which is inviolable. "Accordingly, it is absolutely wrong for a confessor in any way to betray the penitent for any reason what so ever, whether by word or in any other fashion". A confessor who directly violates the sacramental seal incurs an automatic excommunication whose lifting is reserved to the canon.

g) Sacraments of Vocation

Holy order is the sacrament by which a man is made a bishop, a priest, or a deacon and thus dedicated to be an image of Christ. Only a bishop may administer this sacrament ordination as a bishop confers the fullness of the sacrament, making the bishop a member of the body of successors of the Apostles and giving him the mission to teach, sanctify, and guide, along with the care of all the churches. Ordination as a priest configures the priest to Christ the Head of the Church and the one essential High priest, and conferring on him the power, as the bishop's assistant to celebrate in sacraments and other liturgical acts, especially the Eucharist. Ordination as a deacon configures the deacon to Christ the servant of placing him at the service of the bishop, especially in the church exercising of Christian charity towards the poor and preaching of the word of God. Aspirants to the priest hood are required by canon law to go through a seminary program that includes as well as graduate level philosophical and theological studies, a formation program that includes spiritual direction retreats, a postulate experience etc. Lynn White says, "The course of studies in preparation for ordination as a permanent deacon is decided by the Episcopal conference concerned" (350).

3. The Sacramental Paradigm of Nature

What we think this earth, this world of nature, is how we image the nature that the planet, and we as citizen of the planet, are made of. This nature constitutes the environment whose crisis is being surveyed, by some as a challenge for action. One can hardly avoid the parallel with those who insist that the holocaust of world war second is likewise a hoax. Nature is the stuff of the species who has brought us to the edge of the crisis. Nature also forms the substance of all our efforts to find a way out of this crisis. The focus is on the environmental crisis from many perspectives: racism, law, treaty rights, war and peace, the earth Summit and the role of the churches interpreted. The place Christian people went to start with our image of nature is here at the altar, where in a few minutes we will make Eucharist together Share in the supper of our lord, bread and wine, body and blood of the Jesus whose resurrection Christian people have a very definite and much-discussed idea of what a sacrament is. It has three parts: the first is a natural element, in this case bread and wine, the second is the word of God's promise that is added to the natural element, and the third is that natural element and word of promise are used by us in the confidence that the God's word will direct that nature to the purposes of grace and redemption. Nature word of God's promise, and confident use these define a sacrament in Christian tradition. And they also set forth an image of nature.

4. Validity and Liceity of Administration of the Sacraments

As stated above, the effect of the sacraments comes by the very fact of being administered. Since it is Christ who operates through them, their effectiveness does not depend on the worthiness of the minister. However, an apparent administration of a sacrament is invalid, if the person acting as minister does not have the necessary power, as if a deacon were to celebrate mass. They are also invalid if the required "matter" or "form" is lacking.

Seamus Heaney says:

The matter is the perceptible material object, such as water (not wine) in baptism or wheaten bread and grape wine (not potatoes and beer) for the Eucharist, or the visible action. The form is the verbal statement that specifies the signification of the matter, such as, in the western church. Furthermore, if the minister positively excludes some essential aspect of the sacrament, the sacrament is invalid. (221)

A sacrament may be administered validly, but illicitly if a condition imposed by law is not observed; obvious cases are administration of a sacrament by a priest under a penalty of excommunication or suspension, and an Episcopal ordination without a mandate from the pope. Canon law specifies impediments to reception of the sacraments of orders and marriage. Those concerning the first of these two sacraments only concern liceity but "a different impediment renders a person incapable of validly contracting a marriage canon.

5. Sacrament as a Way of Life

A key insight in the contemporary understanding of marriage is that the sacrament does not consist primarily in the Christian marriage liturgy. Marriage is a life long process, and the wedding celebration marks only one point in that journey. The sacramental aspect of marriage is not confined to that moment. Rather, it is the whole way a Christian man and woman live their life together that makes their marriage a sacrament. Understanding how this is so depends on a realization of what a sacrament is and does.

When we speak of sacrament, we generally think first of the seven ritual sacraments such as baptism, Eucharist, and matrimony itself. These sacraments all signify what they present. Baptism initiates us into the Christian community by uniting the Christian people with the death and resurrection of Christ as we go down into the waters and are drawn out again. Eucharist deepens our union with Christ and the members of his

ecclesial body as we share in the broken bread and the wine. In every sacrament something visible – water, oil, bread and wine - - signifies what is invisible, the gracious presence of God.

However, the notion of sacrament includes not only these seven signs, but two more basic levels of sacramentality Christ himself is a sacrament, the primordial sacrament. The church also is sacrament. Christ is the primary sacrament since he makes visibly present in the fullest way the love of God for Christian people. He is "the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation". Just as Christ is born the sacrament of God, making visible and effective God's love for us, so the church is the sacrament of Christ. Church here does not refer to an institution or a building, but to the people of God, the whole body of Christ. Christian in their lives is a revelation of God to people. Those who belong to Christ are the incarnation of the risen Christ in the world today. They reveal and make present the healing, forgiveness, and compassion of God. Married life is sacramental because the love of God is revealed through the married couples love for one another. Whether we look at the marriage ceremony or the life that unfolds from it, the man and woman's gift of self to each other is the sacrament. It is the place where God appears. Many married couples believe in the sacramentality of their marriages, and are convinced that they are meant to give God's love to one another.

6. The Sacramental Aspect

Environmentally speaking, the sacramental aspect of religion would be the most important. As said earlier, religion is sacramental in the sense that it has to resort to concrete symbols and sacraments in order to speak of God or mystery. But historically these symbols and sacraments have been derived either directly or indirectly from the natural world so it would follow that if the natural basis of our religious symbolism becomes eroded or destroyed because of our negligence then religion simply can not do its work. The very

richness of our reference to God and to mystery requires, on our part, an attitude of sustained concern for the integrity of the environment. As Thomas Berry says, "if we lose the environment, we loss God' it's as simple as that" (221). Thomas Berry; a famous Catholic environmentalist, also asks us "to imagine what our religions would be like, sacramentally speaking if our abode were something like the lunar landscape" (222).

Karl Jaspers says:

The sacramental aspect seem to be essential in order to give intrinsic value to nature. It's an axiom of environmental ethics, that if we are to value the environment, we have to see it as having intrinsic, and not just instrumental value. It is think that what religion can contribute is a sacramental vision in which nature is intrinsically valued. So it would say, therefore, that the most distinctive contribution that religion can make to the environmental crisis is to support and promote as vigorously as possible, its own intrinsic sacramentalism. (552)

It can not do so, given the logic of sacramentalism, without at the same time supporting the welfare of the environment. Why have not religions promoted this environmentally wholesome sacramentalism. It is partly because religion has other three aspects, mystical, silent and active, and that they can sometimes split off from the sacramental.

a) The Mystical Aspect

Taking the mystical aspect of religion, a mystical leaning towards something beyond the sacrament is indispensable to religion. And how without this mystical dimension, sacramentalism would collapse into idolatry, or into a pure naturalism, the view, that nature is all there. So religion requires a mystical component. However, since sometime around the middle centuries of the first millennium BC, since what Karl Jaspers calls the "axial age" (222). Some of the great religious tradition, including biblical religion, developed

in a way that seem to realize, and perhaps even demote, the significance of natural experience. Liberation salvation and fulfillment seem to these tradition to lie much more radically beyond the natural world than perhaps they had before. Both mysticism and sacramentalism are necessary, but they would have to be balanced. Mysticism is environmentally acceptable only if it says close to the sacramental aspect of religion.

b) The Silent Aspect

The second aspect of religion is the apophatic, or the silent, aspect. religion also requires an attitude of reserve of silence, such as we find in the via negative ("the way of denial") theology. Religion is healthy, in other words, only if it confesses that no single sacramental image or sacrament can adequately put us in touch with mystery. Authentic religion demands that we not become fixated on any particular symbol or set of symbols For Christian, for example this might mean that we would have to acknowledge that Jesus is not only sacrament of our encounter with mystery, or that the male of the species is not the exclusively normative representation of deity. In other words, all of nature is potentially sacramental.

c) The Active Aspect

Finally, the third aspect of religion is called the active aspect, by it mean that religion is concerned not just with contemplating, but also with transforming the world. We might say that the sacramental attitude enjoys the world, and gives thanks for it.

Andrew Motion says:

The mystical attitude relativizes the natural world. The active way, however, seeks to transform, to change the world, and here in there might lie a problem, or there seems to have arisen a problem, environmentally speaking. Some religious environmentalists, for example Thomas Berry and Lynn White, are of the opinion that the religious origins of our environmental crisis lie in the

biblical, prophetic, activist impulse, which, has unleashed a spirit of progress that has wrought environmental havoc. (222)

This is a thesis that has been discussed a good bit. It would prefer as it indicated earlier, to nuance it a bit and to suggest that it is not prophetic or biblical religion, as such but it is the active component of religion in as much as it has lost touch with the sacramental and the mystical side of religion.

7. Sacramental Theology

a) Hanbleciya and Confirmation

In Hanbleciya, we find some ritualistic practice as in confirmation of Baptism. Just as the newly baptized person was brought to the chair of the Bishop within the sanctuary, so also was the Indian vision-seeker brought to a closed area marked by sacred stakes as a holy place up to the center pole, which marked the place of the descent of the vision. While walking in the specified manner in relationship to the central pole or sleeping with his head next to it, he would pray perhaps with the pipe. The prayer with the pipe is analogous to the singing of the cross. It is traditional to the point of necessity or obligation. This vision received by the crier indicates to him his role in life, perhaps in relationship to immediate community to be a leader, a teacher, or a warrior with certain characteristics. As in the Christian community the visions and dreams have an official interpreter: the shaman or the bishop, but the unique power of the spirit is also there.

b) Sundance and Easter

The Sundance ritual is comparable to the Easter rituals, particularly in the early church. In the many books that have been written on the Sundance, there is a lot of variety of rituals associated with its long and wide spread history. So too the Easter liturgy has had many ceremonies which have sprung up in various places throughout the history of the church. However, certain elements seem to stand out in both. The Sundance was the time of

ultimate gathering of the Lakota people for council and for worship. These too were social occasion, but this was of secondary purpose. So too, in the early church the Easter Services drew together the entire Christian community in a given area in a unique and religious way. The basic physical element of the rising of the sun is common to both. The sun for the Sioux represented the supreme waken while for the Christian it symbolized the final glory of the son of God.

c) Yuwipi and the Mass

The Mass in its present form shows a later first century incorporation of the synagogue service and the elaboration of the Eucharistic. Similarly the Yuwipi service was an early reservational form with the addition of a spirit service and the solemnizing of the agape of wild meat and water.

According to Don Shjach:

The Indian prayer service, Yuwipi begins with a gathering of people. Each person upon entering is given a sprig of sage to put behind his right ear to purify it so that the good spirits will be heard through it. Sage is often hung about the whole room. This is analogous to the blessing of each Christian as he enters the church with holy water and the special blessing of the Church. Various things are blessed with incense to indicate the holiness and prayerful purpose of them; similarly things are blessed with sweet grass to bring forth the Good spirits and show that it is worthy of attention. (525)

At the far end or in the middle of the Yuwipi room the Shaman builds an altar. This is done in the confines of a holy place marked by sticks bearing the sacred colors. The center stick is then placed to and the center of the sanctuary the center stick or pole is related to the candle. On the ground or on paper dirt is ritualistically leveled with an eagle feather and the sacred signs of the circle and the cross are made. In this holy place, bordered with sage

the peace pipe is placed on sage. As one can see this is analogous to the sacred artifacts of the sanctuary of a Christian Church. The dirt with its sacred markings is related to the altar with its sacred markings.

CHAPTER THREE

Philip Larkin's Sacramental Images in Poems

A survey of Larkin poems will show his skeptical persona has his cynicism modified by visionary insights. Each volume deals progressively more directly with sacramental motifs culminate in three poems in *The Whitsun Weddings* that are explicitly religiously focused. His last volume *High Windows* appears initially to retreat to a persona touched by sacramental motifs, a closer examination shows that the visionary insight still impacts significantly on the persona and tempers his skepticism.

In *The North Ship* sacramental motifs appear frequently. Words like "angel," "grace," "miracle," "Paradise," "saint," "and" "seraphim" dot the volume. "To Write One Song" focuses upon a sacramental motif. The poem begins with a persona who meditates on his desire to write a song "As sad as the sad wind/ that walks around my bed" (441). He goes to a graveyard to "visit the dead," perhaps to gain melancholic inspiration. At first his visit to "headstone and wet cross/Paths where the mourners tread" (441) works to produce the sadness he desires; the graves help to "call up the shade of loss." But then, unexpectedly, the morning sun floods the scene and the graveyard is no longer a place of sadness:

That stones would shine like gold
Above each sodden grave,
This, I had not foretold,
Nor the birds' clamour, nor
The image morning gave
Of more and ever more,
As some vast seven-piled wave,
Mane-flinging, manifold,

Streams at an endless shore. (441)

Here, Larkin's persona is clearly surprised: "This, I had not foretold." Furthermore, that this image gathers itself up into a "seven-piled wave" to stream "at an endless shore" is an apt ending to a paradoxically visionary moment: affirmation in a graveyard. Although it would be stretching things to say that this affirmation may carry with it traditional Christian overtones. It is possible to say that a mysterious, unexpected transaction occurs catching the persona off-guard in this short meditation.

The other poem "Church Going," his most anthologized poem, is, according to Larkin, about "going to church, not religion". R.N. Parkinson says that "the whole tone of the poem expresses doubts about the validity of atheism either as a creed or as an attitude" (224). In this meditation a persona is taken completely by surprise by the strong feelings of identification he has with a rather mundane, perhaps seldom used, church. The visionary moment occurs when he tries to articulate this identification.

The meditation begins as a passing bicyclist pauses for a few moments inside small, empty church. At first his thoughts make it just "another church" filled with religious relics: "little books," a "small neat organ," some brass and stuff/Up at the holy end," "parchment, plate, and pyx"(1058). Although there is nothing special or noteworthy about the church, the fact it is a religious place filled with sacramental associations leads him into a whimsical act of respect: "Hatless, I take off/My cycle-clips in reverence" (1058). His whimsy continues as he touches the baptismal font, looks about at the church's successful renovation project, and then mounts the lectern.

For instance, it is clear the persona enjoys, for a reason he has difficulty articulating, church going. As he leaves the church he offers an Irish sixpence (worthless or "funny" money). As he drops in his token offering he reflects:

The place was not worth stopping for

Yet stop I did: in fact I often do,
And always end much at a loss like this,
Wondering what to look for. (1058)

Not only has he stopped this one time, it is clear he often stops at churches. Each time, however, he admits to being similarly frustrated: though churches apparently have on traditionally Christian sacramental significance for him, they do have some significance that he longs to understand. At this point in his meditation, he yearns for a visionary moment (that is why he has stopped once again at this particular church) but he remains unenlightened. Thus his musings continue as he struggles to explore what it is that draws him to stop and to visit churches.

As he plumbs the depths of his ecclesiastical attraction, he begins to wonder; actually for much of the rest of this meditation he is wondering about churches. Larkin's use of wonder and wondering is instructive since both words support the notion of the person's admiration, astonishment, surprise, and amazement at the incommunicable yearning he feels in churches. His wonder, his curiosity perhaps mingled with doubt, characterizes the poem until the very end. So it is that he wonders what will happen once "churches fall completely out of use" (453). Will they gradually become museum pieces deserted shells, animal stables haunted houses or magical fortress? What will happen churches pass away? "But superstition, like belief, must die, /And what remains when disbelief has gone? (1058) "To his rhetorical question he answers. "Grass, weedy pavement, brambles, buttress, sky, /A shape less recognizable each week, /A purpose more obscure" (1058). At this point his skepticism deflects his wonder and the possibility for a visionary moment appears unlikely.

But then he wonders again: who will be the last people to visit churches? His first answer suggests with sustained irony that the final visitors to the church will be ecclesiastical anthropologists, antique collectors, or "Christmas-addict[s]" who will scatter through the

church intent on carting off whatever they deem worthy of reclamation, in the process stripping the church of its now forgotten religious dignity. However, his second answer is very revealing since he wonders if the final visitors will include someone like himself.

Or will he be my representative,
Bored, uninformed, knowing the ghostly silt
Dispersed, yet tending to this cross of ground
Through suburb scrub because it held unspilt
So long and equably what since is found
Only in separation-marriage, and birth,
And death, and thoughts of these-for which was built
This special shell? (1059)

His wondering here clearly indicates a longing for the visionary; though believing the traditional religious significance of churches has been dispersed, he still finds himself "tending to this cross of ground" because of what it once represented and affirmed, at least on the ceremonial level-birth, marriage, and death. Churches are important to him because they are "the visible sign of devout contemplation, bringing into focus the bearing of ethics, philosophy, and history upon human nature" (Parkinson 229).

After this pre-visionary thought, the mediation ends in as close to a fully realized visionary moment as can be found in Larkin:

For though I've no idea
What this accoutered frosty barn is worth,
It pleases me to stand in silence here:
A serious house on serious earth it is,
In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,
Are recognized, and robed as destinies.

And that much never can be obsolete,
Since someone will forever be surprising
A hunger in himself to be more serious,
And gravitating with it to this ground,
Which he once heard, was proper to grow wise in,
If only that so many dead lie round. (1059)

The speaker, able to believe in the transforming power of traditional Christian faith, affirms the sacramental power churches hold on human imagination. In them he finds his hunger or yearning for the mysterious and the secret most nearly answered: "some will forever be surprising /A hunger in himself to be more serious" (1059). Parkinson goes too far when he argues that the poem "is a typically mid-twentieth century negative-seeming affirmation of the need for faith and of the existence of faith under the most unexpected guises and circumstances" (229). However, he is closer to the truth when he adds: "The connotations of the words in Larkin's poem are used to disarm the skeptical reader of his own skepticism for long enough to persuade him to admit the necessity and legitimacy of metaphysical speculation" (231). Thus, "Church Going" is one of Larkin's poems where the visionary moment is most nearly realized and least tempered by skepticism.

In "Faith Healing" the emphasis is on a sacramental event as Larkin investigates the phenomenon of faith healing. Both Biblical authority and traditional Christian practice recognize the relationship between physical healing and personal faith. There are numerous examples of Jesus and his disciples healing people based on faith, the most notable being the woman who had been bleeding for twelve years; after she managed to touch Jesus. In addition since outbreaks of revival within the church have often been accompanied by physical manifestations including physical healings, and other emotional phenomena. Other reports note "emotionalized men and women weeping, groaning, shouting, jerking, and

dancing, or falling into trance and torpors" (Lacy 75). More recently some television evangelists among others have carried on this tradition. In "Faith Healing" a detached yet interested persona describes a contemporary faith healing service. "Mostached" women "in flowered frocks" are pictured as being persuaded forward during such a service by the healer's gentle voice, "within whose warm spring rain loving care/each dwells some twenty seconds," (222). The irony of this brief twenty seconds of compassion is sustained by the persona throughout as the healer, with his "deep, voice," ask "*Now, dear child, What's wrong*" and directs "God about this eye, that knee" (222). "Infaith Healing", some of the women are so affected by the healer's apparent concern and spiritual power that they linger and

Stay stiff, twitching and loud
With deep hoarse tears, as if a kind of dumb
And idiot child within them still survives
To re-awake at kindness, thinking a voice
At last calls them alone, that hands have come
To lift and lighten. (222)

In these convulsed, moaning, and pathetic women Larkin explores the desperate human need for love and affection, especially the way in which many of us tend to individualize a stranger's generalized affection, thinking it is intended for us alone. However, the poem creates a different kind of tension regarding the way the persona and the women respond to the healer's offer of a visionary moment. While the women freely embrace his touch, anxious to experience the sacramental power of his hand, the persona is suspicious, willing to see in their reactions nothing but a kind of wish fulfillment. The women find comfort in their emotional and physical exertions.

For instance, when he shifts from description to mediation in the last stanza, he rhetorically echoes the healer's question "What's wrong?" His answer is "all's wrong." That is, he believes that what moves these women forward to the healer is not faith, neither theirs nor the healer's (they do not even appear to have physical infirmities that need correction), but instead what moves them and "What's wrong" is that "in everyone there sleeps/ a sense of life lived according to love" (224). He says that some people's lives gain meaning "by loving others" (these are few) while others (the many, like these mustached women) imagine "all they might have done had they been loved." If only they had been loved, they would have been well and not ripe for the healer's temporary solace. What's wrong, he goes on to intimate, is that no amount of faith, no touch from the healer, is enough to cure or heal that inner damage—a deep, lasting, and measureless awareness of life lived unloved. "That nothing cures." He believes that the sacramental impact of the healer's touch then is only momentary:

An immense slackening ache,
As when, thawing, the rigid landscape weeps,
Spreads slowly through them—that, and the voice above
Saying *Dear child*, and all time has disproved. (224)

The simile comparing the stiff, twitching women as they slump into their renewed life of pain (their "ache") to the weeping of the thawing "rigid landscape" is very effective in that it suggests both the coldness of a life lived without love and the fleeting nature of the healer's supposed personal affection. These women look for a sacramental, visionary moment in the healer.

Consequently, Larkin's interest in faith healing has to do with traditional Christian thought or practice; indeed, the poem seems almost to mock that tradition. Unlike "Church Going" where there was a real yearning to get behind the sacramental, the mysterious, the secret, "Faith Healing" the persona can only describe what he sees. When he mediates on the

sacramental meaning of the moment, he dismisses it as, at best the desperate attempts of lonely women to experience human love, or at worst, as a sham concocted to manipulate them. Yet his skepticism is not complete. In the poem Larkin captures the innate human need to look for love and compassion in others, even if the object of such hope is a religious con man.

In "Water" Larkin takes one of the most sacred motifs of traditional Christianity and speculates on how he would give a different sacramental meaning to water if he "were called in/ To construct a religion"(250). In this poem, his persona meditates on how he would change the meaning of this sacramental element. He says that "going to church/ would entail a fording/ To dry, different clothes" (250). Implicit in these lines are at least two Christian allusions. The first is the notion that all Christians must metaphorically ford the river of death.

The second allusion is to the sacrament of baptism. Larkin is recalling traditional Christianity's teaching that baptism is a necessary symbolic identification each believer must make with Christ: "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?(250). Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. The meaning of baptism is in itself mysterious; Christians do not really die when they are baptized, but instead they die to the power of sin in their lives. This does not mean that they no longer sin, but that they are no longer slaves to sin. And baptism is not the start of this death to sin (it begins at the moment of spiritual conversion or regeneration), but rather a sign that this process of dying to sin has begun. Even for Christians this doctrine is mysterious so it is not surprising that Larkin attempts to invest it with new meaning; baptism is mysterious and as he seeks to understand it, he creates a new, personal interpretation of its meaning as a visionary moment.

For the persona in this poem water does function as a metaphor either for death or for Christian baptism; one paradoxically fords the water "to dry, different clothes." It is a symbol of how necessary it is for believers to be immersed in a faith requiring self-sacrifice and self-denial; rather, he says one must pass through water to attain a completely new and different physical condition. Perhaps his attitudes are meant to compare with the traditional Christian notion of a being washed clean by the blood of Christ's body. Yet water in his new religion does have \Biblical associations: "My liturgy would employ/Images of sousing,/ A furious devout drench" (254). Here there are echoes from the creation; the deluge of rain that led to the Great Flood; the parting of the Red Sea; John's baptism of Jesus (where the word-the ultimate liturgy-was literally soused); Christ himself, the living well; and the river of the water of life in the final chapter of Revelation. His liturgical service would emphasize water primarily on the literal level as a vigorous cleaning agent; indeed, the violence suggested by the "furious, devout drench" resonates with the idea of water as an abrasive, eroding, blistering physical agent.

In the concluding lines of his mediation, he tries to provide a hint of the new visionary moment water will produce in his religion:

And I should rise in the east
A glass of water
Where any-angled light
Would congregate endlessly. (254)

These lines picture the high priest of this newly constructed religion as raising the traditional communion cup of Eucharist (perhaps the most spiritually significant sacramental image of traditional Christianity), instead a glass of water that functions as a prism. The wine of Eucharist that represents on Multiple levels the blood of Christ, including both its outpouring and its renewing power, the water of this new religion works as an affirming, refractory

medium. As a prism, water might be expected to bend the light and produce the colors of the spectrum. What congregates here is "any-angled light," endlessly; that is, though the new religion lacks the color and vibrancy of Christianity, it too is eternal, endless, offering a secular affirmation for living. Andrew Motion argues that the glass of water is "an imaginative apprehension of endlessness, in which knowledge of them and its constraints, and its shortcomings, is set aside" (78). Though as with "Church Going" the sacramental meaning of "Water" remains slightly beyond the persona's ability to express, it is certain that he approaches the visionary moment in this mediation.

The poem "The Whitsun Wedding" employs sacramental motifs in the title. Pentecost (from the Greek *Pentekostos*, meaning fifteenth) celebrates in the Christian church the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. Pentecost Sunday or Whitsunday (from the tradition of wearing white clothes on that day) is the seventh Sunday after Easter and in the Anglican Church is observed by feasts; it is also a favorite day of baptism and joining the church. A more subtle allusion may be to the "wit" that the Holy Spirit bestows (knowledge and wisdom) to worshippers on that Sunday. Marriage, a sacrament in the Roman Catholic Church (and other Protestant churches), clearly carries with it sacramental associations in that a man and woman agree to set themselves apart for each other and no one else; it is kind of holy pact between individuals sanctioned by the church. While for Larkin these particular sacramental associations may have been important, in his poem he explores how marriage can be seen as both powerful and renewing. In the poem a detached rail traveler begins by saying:

The Whitsun, I was late getting away:

Not till about

One-twenty on the sunlit Saturday

Did my three-quarter-empty train pull out. (116)

As he travels along he notices both the heat and the lovely landscape, at first unaware of the people. "At first, I didn't notice what a noise/The weddings made/Each station that we stopped at" (116). Once aware, however, he takes careful interest in all of the people connected with the wedding parties. He meditates on the grinning girls with hair, "parodies of fashion," standing on the station platform; on fathers with "seamy foreheads;" on "mothers loud and fat;" and on "an uncle shouting smut." To this he notes the cheap and tawdry dress that marks off "the girls un-really from the rest."

Yet rather than adopt a skeptical view of these weddings, the traveler finds in them affirmation. He muses that for the fathers weddings are "huge and wholly farcical." While the women share "the secret like a happy funeral." The girls grip their handbags tighter and stare at a "religious wounding." Such expressions, according to David Timms, "express the importance, even the sacredness, of marriage-days" (119). As his train rushes toward London, the traveler feels that the train is bringing in these newlyweds a redemptive, life giving power, and the visionary moment is realized:" And what it held/Stood ready to be loosed and with all the power/That being changed can give" (116). In spite of his skepticism, he cannot help but see in these marriages power and renewal-power in the sense that human love which is the basis of marriage is implicit in these new brides and grooms and renewal in the sense that these fresh new wives and husbands may produce children and thus re-energize the population. The poem ends with this visionary moment extended:

We slowed again,
And as the tightened brakes took hold, there swelled
A sense of falling, like an arrow-shower
Sent out of sight, somewhere becoming rain. (526)

There is a subtle sacramental invocation of the descent of the Holy Spirit associated with Whitsunday, particularly as the life-giving image of rain waters the idea that these marriages

may provide the basis for renewal in the great city. Larkin, as in "Church Going," uses sacramental resonances of marriage in "The Whitsun Weddings" to affirm human life by promoting "what is enduring rather than what is decaying" (116). Additionally, like "Church Going" this poem is more overt in its presentation of the possibility of visionary moment connected to a sacramental motif.

"The Building" Larkin explores the role of a modern hospital as a church substitute. Barbara Everett notes that "the poem's undertones of allusion are so ecclesiastical or metaphysical that, even at the literal level, "The Building" could almost as easily be a church as a hospital" (43). The poem opens with a very somber, sober persona who mediates deeply on death. As he thinks and observes patients in a hospital, he begins to use traditional sacramental language. For instance, people come to the hospital "to confess that something has gone wrong" (525). Others come "to join/The unseen congregations whose white rows/Lie set apart above" (525). The great metaphysical question ("What happens to me when I die?") is every present in the minds of the patients, yet they labor to keep their fears below the surface of daily life, even in a hospital where such questions must often be honestly faced.

As the patients await their own diagnosis, "their eyes' Go to each other, guessing." Though they wear a veneer of normalcy, they know that "past these doors are rooms, and rooms past those, /And more rooms yet, each one further off/And harder to return from." (526). As they fight back their fears, they try to while a way the time reading torn magazines, drinking tea, or looking out the windows of this high-rise hospital. Ironically, from the windows of this hospital they can see "a locked church." However, unlike the locked church, the hospital is open to all; in fact, there is easy access. "All know they are going to die. /Not yet, perhaps not here, but in the end /And somewhere like this" (526).

The poem ends with a subtle shift as the patients become parishioners seeking a visionary moment:

That is what it means
This clean-sliced cliff; a struggle to transcend
The thought of dying, for unless its power
Out build cathedrals nothing contravenes
The coming dark, though crowds each evening try
With wasteful, weak, propitiatory flowers. (526)

Unfortunately, these lines do not suggest that they find one. Instead, the hospital is a shabby, dreary, unsatisfactory substitute for a church. Words like "transcend", "cathedrals", and "propitiatory" are ironic markers; that is, they indicate that while there is a real need for the sacramental, for a visionary moment when facing death, what the hospital offers is not sufficient. Though perhaps more accessible than a church (after all the nearby church is locked), the hospital cannot "contravene the coming dark" of death, and the final lines intimate a pathetic, almost futile effort to oppose this coming darkness: "though crowds each evening try/ With wasteful, weak, propitiatory flowers" (526). As a church substitute, the hospital is inadequate, and, at the same time, the local church is shut. Yet Everett writes that "for all its realism, the poem grows towards and into something as little of time and place as any symbol is, a noble metaphysical construct built out of the present's concrete- and-glass" (44).

"High windows" is very reminiscent of the ending of "Water", particularly its emphasis upon the lack of color:

And immediately
Rather than words come the thought of high windows:
The sun-comprehending glass,

And beyond it, the deep blue air, that shows
Nothing, and is nowhere, and is endless. (223)

Words and phrases suggesting sacramental motifs include "high windows," "sun comprehending glass," and "endless." As we examine the speaker's use of these words we can see that rather than finding paradise through a throwing off of restraints, he finds his skepticism tempered by a difficult to articulate, metaphysical longing that brings about an affirmation regarding human existence.

The first of these phrases, "high windows," perhaps alludes to stained glass windows in churches where we find scenes of religious life and duty gloriously depicted. In Larkin's poem these high windows, perhaps those in a modern skyscraper, do they are stained by religious art. They are transparent, silent, and crystal clear, functioning as "sun-comprehending glass." These windows see only the bright reality of the sun (not the son) and beyond it to the vastness of space. Accordingly, these windows see through the artificiality of traditional religion and its sacramental image, suggestion a "new" secular truth: that human life is without transcendent purpose and is "nothing, and is no where, and is endless." The return to the word "endless" is ironic. Religious and sexual freedom are sought "endlessly" as ways to achieve purpose. The truth, Larkin suggests, is that neither is able to do so. The "endless" truth is that human purpose and religious belief are possible. What we are left with in the poem, however, is not despair, since the final tone of the poem is affirmative. One critic has noted about the ending of "High Windows" that though human life is ultimately a void, it is "not altogether an unfriendly void; indeed, it sounds attractive, though dizzying" (Lindop 50). The image of the high windows ironically affirms the speaker's longing for the sacramental: they are symbols that "manage to transcend the flow for contingent time altogether" (Motion 59).

Indeed, the strong undercurrent of skepticism running through his poetry precludes that possibility. Still, Larkin's poems that employ sacramental motifs are instructive in several ways. First, although Larkin's audience is primarily secular, it shares with him a familiarity, weak and distant though it may be with any of the sacramental motifs he evokes. Consequently, to paraphrase Parkinson, Larkin uses sacramental motifs to show his audience that while for them the ceremonies, rituals, terms, and forms of traditional Christianity have not lost their transcendent meaning, they retain an affirmative, secular reality. That is, they are touchstones for an investigation of meaning and purpose. Although "he clearly has faith in inherit and reliable absolutes," the fact "that individuals must discover and develop their own internal resources" gives these mediations "a powerful sense of affirmation" (Motion 60).

Second, in spite of his own rejection of religious faith on a personal level, Larkin understands the human need for affirmation. As he examines various sacramental motifs, he muses on how they once provided humanity with ideas and objects invoking the reality of transcended meaning. In a poem like "Church Going" Larkin values the nostalgia of days when belief in traditional Christianity was easier; indeed, "it is the mortal [sic] ongoing revealed by the supposed atheism of Larkin's awareness of morality, which continues to keep his metaphysics warm in his best known poem" (Parkinson 233).

Third, Larkin's attitude toward traditional Christian belief is really bitter or satirical' his characteristic tone regarding the difficulty or impossibility of religious faith for modern, secular man is sadness. In a poem such as "Days" from *The Whitsun Weddings* Larkin captures this sadness poignantly:

What are days for?
Days are where we life.
They come, they wake us

Time and time over.
They are to be happy in:
Where can we live but days?
Ah, solving that question
Brings the priest and the doctor
In their long coats
Running over the fields. (252)

While we all struggle with the question of meaning, Larkin suggest that neither traditional Christian belief nor modern psychiatry can supply the answer, even though each is eager to make the attempt.

At the same time, Larkin's use of sacramental motifs indicates that whether we believe in God or not, we tend to think and conceptualize about something or someone outside of ourselves. This is too dark, too bleak, too empty a world otherwise. Thus, in his use of sacramental motifs, Larkin tempers his characteristic skepticism found in a poem "Wants":

Beyond all this, the wish to be alone:
However the sky grows dark with invitation-cards
However we follow the printed directions of sex
However the family is photographed under the flagstaff
Beyond all this, the wish to be alone.
Beneath it all, desire of oblivion runs:
Despite the artful tensions of the calendar,
The life insurance, the tabled fertility rites,
The costly aversion of the eyes from the death
Beneath it all, desire of oblivion runs. (423)

Though the visionary moments his sacramental motifs produce, he communicates the innate human tendency to seek affirmation and to look outward at a meaning larger than one's self. For Larkin this sense of communion is often linked to sacramental motifs and the semi-mystical is often approached by way of a visionary moment. In the poems or meditations where this occurs, his typically skeptical view of human existence is partially tempered and he "opens stops that he usually cares to keep muted" (Heaney134). Although these gestures toward the eternal land of the spirit are infrequent, their presence at all argues against a reading of Larkin that is limited to skepticism. At the very least there is often a tension in his poetry between his desire for a quasi-religious experience and his sense that life is a mess. This tension is essentially that of many modern and explains why Larkin speaks so powerfully to them. His is a secular voice crying in the wilderness, suspicious yet longing for the mysteries, the mystical, and the sacramental.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

The celebrant of the sacramental liturgy is the whole community, the Body of Christ united with its Head that celebrates. Liturgical services are not private functions but are celebrations of the church which is the sacrament of unity, namely, the holy people united and organized under the authority of the bishops. Therefore liturgical services pertain to the whole Body of the church. Christian manifests it, and has effects upon it. But they touch individual member of the church in different ways depending on their orders, their role in the liturgical services, and their actual participation in them. For this reason rites which are meant to be celebrated in common, with the faithful present and actively participating, should as far as possible be celebrated in that way rather than by an individual and quasi- privately. The celebrating assembly is the community of the baptized who, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated to be a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, that they may offer spiritual sacrifices. This common priesthood is that of Christ the sole priest, in which all of his members participate. Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full. Conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and to which the Christian people, a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people, have a right and an obligation by reason of their Baptism.

As if to highlight Larkin's sacramental, many of his poems are meditations deep, thoughtful reflections on personal experience. Typically a persona begins by contemplating a character setting or idea-often with in a secular context-and then as he processes his thoughts he shifts to a new and unexpected perspective. In his musings on the experience its sacramental significance thrusts itself momentarily to the surface and challenges his skepticism. Many of these mediations contain rhetorical questions (a common occurrence in

Larkin's poetry) that the persona appears to answer in a skeptical way while gesturing in a hesitant, fleeting way toward a metaphysical one. Frequently the persona is surprised at the dissonance this experience his long held skepticism is briefly undercut and the glimpse of something mysterious and secret is intensely alluring. Larkin's skeptical persona has his cynicism modified by these visionary insights.

There are many poems where sacramental motifs-ambulances like closed confessional, baptism, churches, church-substitutes, the substitutes, faith healings, grave yards weddings, and paradise-once used to expose visionary moments. The value of rescuing the affirmative aspects of his work from neglect is not to make him seem a covertly optimistic poet but to expose the typical structure of his poems as a debate between hope and hopelessness, between fulfillment and disappointment. More importantly, the argument here is that Larkin's use of sacramental motifs demonstrates his latent Christian belief, it is that his essentially skeptical view of life is tempered by religious motifs that suggest his durable respect for the Christianity of the past. His poems reveal an inarticulate longing for the visionary gleam once linked to metaphysical belief. It is as if these sacramental motifs, while stripped of their traditional Christian meanings, are used by Larkin to show a yearning or longing for a visionary moment.

In Larkin's poems that employ sacramental motifs are instructive in several ways. First, although Larkin's audience is primarily secular, it shares with him a familiarity, tenuous and distant though it may be, with many of the sacramental motifs he evokes. Consequently, Larkin uses religious motifs to show his audience that while for them the ceremonies, rituals, terms, and forms of traditional Christianity have not lost their transcendent meaning, they retain an affirmative, secular reality. That is, they are touch stones for an investigation of meaning and purpose. Although he clearly has no faith in inherit and reliable absolutes, the fact that individuals must discover and develop their own

internal resources gives these meditations a powerful sense of affirmation. Second, in spite of his own rejection of religious faith on a personal level, Larkin understands the human need for affirmation. As he examines various sacramental motifs, he muses on how they once provide humanity with ideas and objects invoking the reality of transcendent meaning. Larkin values the nostalgia of days when belief in traditional Christianity was easier, indeed, it is the immortal longing revealed by the supposed atheism of Larkin's awareness of mortality, which continues to keep his metaphysics warm in his poems.

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