

LITURGY with NATURE

This service, with some necessary additions, adaptations and subtractions, is based on a rewriting of the 'Seventh Service' in *Orders of Worship for Use in Unitarian and Free Christian Congregations*, London: the Lindsey Press, in 1932. The original 'Seventh Service' was written by James Martineau from the ninth and tenth services of his *Ten Services* (1879). The chalice lighting is added, new places are inserted for hymns, and much chanting material is removed with places for recorded or played music. The theme of nature and wider life is its content. There are five hymns and other musical sections.

Chalice Lighting

Some words from the Hindu *Culla Vagga*:

Agni, the all-knowing god of fire, hidden in two friction fire sticks of the holy sacrifice, as a seed of life in the womb of a mother, who receives the morning adoration of those who follow the path of life or the path of work: This in truth is that.

Light the chalice

What is here is also there, and what is there is also here. Who sees the many and not the One, wanders on from death to death.

Even by the mind this truth is to be learned: there are not many but only One. Who sees variety and not the unity wanders on from death to death.

[From *Culla Vagga*, verse 6]

[OR]

Some words from the Hindu *Thergatha*:

As fire - though one - takes new forms in all things that burn, the Spirit - though one - takes new forms in all things that live. Such is within all, and also outside.

Light the chalice

As the wind - though one - takes new forms in whatever it enters, the Spirit, though one, takes new forms in all things that live. Such is within all, and also outside.

As the sun that beholds the world is untouched by earthly impurities, so the Spirit that is in all things is untouched by external sufferings.

There is one Ruler, the Spirit that is in all things, who transforms its own form into many. Only the wise who see this one in their souls attain the joy eternal.

Thergatha, (1969) trans. Norman, K. R., London: The Pali Text Society.

Words

Do we not know that we are holy temples where the Spirit dwells? Each temple of God is holy, and each of us is so. Peace comes to us, and we shall pray to seek and search with all our hearts and therefore find. Turn this way and lift our bodies to receive the Spirit of peace.

Some words from the Buddha:

Speak the truth; do not yield to anger; give if you are asked. By these three steps you will become divine. Let a wise one blow off the impurities of the self, as the smith blows off the impurities of silver, one by one, little by little and from time to time.

Lead others not by violence, but by righteousness and equity. The one who possesses virtue and intelligence, who is just, speaks the truth, and minds one's own business, this one the world will hold dear. As the bee who collects nectar and departs without injuring the flower, or its colour, or scent, so let a sage dwell in the community.

[*Sayings of the Buddha*, London: Sheldon Press.]

[HYMN](#) [Suggestions: HL 028, HL 207, HL 206, SF 068]

Prayers

To each and all: the holy presence in and about us receives better than we can give, and the barrier is found in our own impurities and earthly corruptions. To overcome these, we call upon what the holy presence gives for the grace of a humble and holy spirit, to be as if alone even while together. As Jesus was inspired to walk up the mountain to pray, let us also now commune with the spirit of God in truth and peace.

O God who is, was and will be, against whom people and creatures come

and go, we seek the faithfulness offered for which there is no limit nor ending. Past generations in their pilgrimages walked in that holy faithfulness and guidance, and rested in such compassion. Here has been and is the protection of the cloud cover by day and fire lighting by night, the secure port in a storm and welcomed shadow from the heat.

Our temptations are known, our sorrow for our conditions receives pity, and only the Spirit saves our prosperity and ease from pride. Here is the source of peace and righteousness to remove the veil from each and every heart to join the many prophets and saints held in holy trust and who therefore lacked shame. Being not of our own worthiness but of God's tender mercy, we ask that we are heard in our willingness to change.

MUSIC of the Lord's Prayer [Or say it].

CANTICLE played. [For example, the *Canticle of the Weather OR Prayer of St. Francis.*]

Reading [Examples follow of creation readings]

There was at first no Being - nor blank. There was no air, nor sky beyond. What was in it? Where? In whose protection? Was water there, deep beyond measure? There was no death, nor deathless state, no night, no day.

The One breathed, without breath by its own power. There was nothing else; no, nothing else. Darkness lay wrapped in darkness. All was water; all, all over.

Love began, at first; desire was the seed of mind. Sages and poets, searching within, saw the link of Being with non-Being.

But who really knows? Who can tell - How it was born, where creation began? The gods came later. Who then knows. That from which creation came. Whether founded well or not. He who sees from heaven above. He only knows. Or, He too knows it not!

['Sikshasamuccaya' 280-281, *Vajradhvaja Sutra*]

[OR]

No one was before this One was, and no one has rule over the One; because

the One is the source of all, and this One is also the ruler of all.

May God, who is hidden in nature, even as the silkworm is hidden in the web of silk he made, lead us to union with the One's own Spirit, with Brahman.

This One is God, hidden in all beings, their inmost soul who is in us all. This One watches the works of creation, lives in all that changes, watches all things. This One is pure consciousness, beyond the three conditions of nature, the One who rules the work of silence of many, the One who transforms one seed into many. Only those who see God in their soul attain the joy eternal.

[OR]

From 'Anguttara Nikaya', *Gradual Sayings*, vol. 3, 262:

Om. In the centre of the castle of Brahman, our own body, there is a small shrine in the form of a lotus-flower, and within can be found a small space. We should find who dwells there, and we should want to know this One.

And if anyone asks, 'Who is the one who dwells in a small shrine in the form of a lotus-flower in the centre of the castle of Brahman? Whom shall we want to find and to know?' we can answer:

'The little space within the heart is as great as this vast universe. The heavens and the earth are there, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars; fire and lightning and winds are there; and all that now is and all that is not: for the whole universe is in this One and this One dwells within our heart.

[*Digha-Nikaya* (1965), trans. Rhys Davids, T. W., vol. 3, London: The Pali Text Society, 81-82.]

[Te Deum Laudamus](#) [Play suitable piece or other meditative music.]

[HYMN](#) [Suggestions: HL 230, HL 237]

[Readings](#) [Examples follow of creation and related readings:]

See you how not Allah has created the seven heavens one above another,
And made the moon a light in their midst, and made the sun as a (Glorious)

Lamp;
And Allah has produced you from the earth, growing (gradually),
And in the end he will return you into the earth, and raise you forth (again at
the Resurrection)?
And Allah has made the earth for you as a carpet (spread out),
That you may go about Therein, in spacious roads.

Qur'an, Surah LXXI, 15-20.

[AND]

Then let humankind look at the food (and how We provide it):
For that We pour water in abundance,
And we split the earth in fragments,
And produce therein Corn,
And Grapes and nutritious Plants,
And Olives and Dates,
And enclosed Gardens, dense with lofty trees,
And Fruits and Fodder, -
For use and convenience to you and your cattle.

Qur'an, Surah LXXX, 24-32.

[OR]

William Blake had the vision to write:

A robin redbreast in a cage
Puts all Heaven in a rage.
A dove-house filled with doves and pigeons
Shudders Hell through all its regions.
A dog starved at his master's gate
Predicts the ruin of the State.
A horse misused upon the road
Calls to heaven for human blood.
Each outcry of the hunted hare
A fibre from the brain does tear.
A skylark wounded in the wing
A cherubim does cease to sing.
The gamecock clipped and armed for fight
Does the rising sun affright.
Every wolf's and lion's howl
Raises from Hell a human soul.

The wild deer wandering here and there
Keeps the human soul from care...
Kill not the moth nor butterfly,
For the Last Judgement draweth nigh.

[Blake, W. (1805), *Auguries of Innocence*.]

[AND/ OR]

Laurens van der Post stated that: We must turn back to what we have left of the capacity to wonder; only reverence for life can deliver us from our inhumanity, and from the cataclysm of violence awaiting us at the end of the present road. [Unknown]

[AND/ OR]

William Wordsworth wrote:

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts ...
A motion, and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore I am still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains, and of all that we behold
From this green earth.

[*Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*]

[AND]

Francis Hugh Maycock wrote: The lavishness and endlessness of natural beauty is a thing to be wondered at. Sunsets and sunrises are going on all the time, and sunlight is running through trees and blades of grass, and shining on great icebergs and caverns all through the day; a few seconds of this multitudinous riot of colour and light and beauty are noticed occasionally by a few human beings, but it is good to see how utterly irrelevant we are to these displays ... It is good to realise that God has other interests besides [human beings].

['Borneo Diary' in Allchin, A. M. et al. (1981), *Francis Hugh Maycock: A Tribute*, Oxford: SLG Press.]

[OR]

From the Jewish Tanakh:

How the beasts groan! The herds of cattle are perplexed because there is no pasture for them; even the flocks of sheep are dismayed.

'Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the Lord has done great things!
Fear not, you beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness are green;
the tree bears its fruit, the fig tree and the vine give their full yield.

[Joel 1:18, 2.21-2.22]

[AND]

From the Sikh Adi Granth:

In the age of Truth, the formless One resides. He, the Creator, beholds his creation and looks upon it with grace. Here there are continents, worlds and universes. Who can describe a boundless bound? Here there are worlds within worlds and endless forms. Whatever God wills, that they do freely. God beholds his creation and rejoices.

['Japji' 4: 1: 21 in (1978), trans. Thomas D. A. T., *Selection of Hymns of Guru Nanak from Adi Granth*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press.]

[HYMN](#) [Suggestions: HL 282, HL 241, HL 233, HL 180, SF 189]

[The Beatitudes](#) (Matthew 5: 1-12, NRSV):

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.'

'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.'

'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.'

'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.'

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.'

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.'

'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

'Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.'

Prayers including Intercessions

Committed as we are to the swift and solemn trust of life, let us take our responsibilities seriously regarding all of evolved life in its pains and longings. Let us not wait for this, but act from today. Our journey in this direction is a consecrated one, relying upon holy will and intent, patient with disappointment and ready for danger, but with the highest goals in mind.

We walk where the holy and the martyred have been, and those who have offered themselves for the highest. We crucify our own will, save for that to achieve the purpose in service to the other.

We pray for the people of faith, in their struggles, that they may generate the means to peace and harmony. We think especially of...

We pray for the world, and that its conflicts may come to the end, as one day the lion may lie down with the lamb. We think especially of...

We pray for those unwell, including those known to us. We think especially of...

We also pray for those who came before us, either in this place or in our own ancestors.

We pray in the light of the one whose eye we consider is over all the people and animals, who reveals as a King of Peace, sending forth this energy of intention all through those who can respond. Overcome oppression, overcome all the strife and tumult. For this we pray, on earth, as in the vision of heaven.

[HYMN](#) [Suggestions: HL 245, HL 247, HL 239]

Sermon

May the words spoken be acceptable and positive in the cause of harmony and peace.

COLLECTION and Notices

HYMN [Suggestions: HL 071, HL 186, SF 066, SF 205]

Benediction

Blessing God, giving strength to those who struggle and to those who endure, bless us with a compassionate heart that so also feels the injustice of the world, and help us strive towards that peaceable kingdom in which all your creatures shall be free from pain.

Liberate us from earthly despair and help us to see your transforming power even in what appears most devastating to us. Most especially we pray for the grace to live and believe so that one day all creation shall be set free from pain and live well in all eternity.

[After Andrew Linzey (1999), *Animal Rites: Liturgies of Animal Care*, London SCM Press, 107 and 118.]