

**in catechism**

Awakened with a start  
as the congregation  
rose to its feet, my  
eight year old mind  
struggled up  
from the layers of a dream.

Hymnals and piranhas  
alternated in the pews  
and the devout must check  
before the acclamation  
or lose a finger to faith.

The word made flesh,  
bent before the altar  
like wheat in homage to wind;  
my stigmata to their eyes  
my blood for their bread—  
this homage once dance, this  
ritual soon sterile,  
beneath voices raised in song  
and cries of pain  
in every other row.  
I stood while  
fish oil anointed my brow.

*C. J. Lockett*