

HENRY HART

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## *Cell Phone God*

After hiking the Presidentials, I stop in churches  
to rest my arthritic back, wash down three Aleves  
with a canteen of wine. Usually I don't meet a soul.

Yesterday a man in green fatigues with bandoliers  
of cell phones looped around his flak jacket  
paced by the altar. He blurted: "Got an issue

with someone yakking to ghosts in church?  
These days, everybody's got issues. That's why  
I talk twenty-four seven. I oughta be a radio

talk show host and make some serious coin.  
You wouldn't believe the junk they tell me.  
Last night a spook called from Vermont

about a zoning board trashing his plan to build  
a house modeled on a beehive. A bankrupt farmer  
cried about a homeless shelter kicking out his goat.

Next up, a school kid whined about some Nazi  
principal expelling him for not saying *God*  
in the Pledge. I told him—*Just say God.*"

A phone played Taps. He listened, cooed:  
"Look, when the cop's right there, don't eat  
your parking tickets. Be smart. Go to court."

I asked him how he got his job. He said: "I sold  
Hummers and Army surplus jeeps for a year.  
There's no future in that line of work."

He stuffed a fistful of crackers in his mouth.  
I poured wine into his folding, steel cup.  
A phone played "Ode to Joy." Full of fake

concern, he warbled: "You sure your boss reads  
your e-mail with his iPhone? If so, buy Spyware."  
Another phone hummed "Smoke on the Water."

He shoved it at my chest: "Take it.  
I've only got so much love. These people  
will drink me dry if I don't take a drink myself."

While he gulped wine, a woman confessed  
she'd stolen four iPods, sold them on EBay, bought  
a Walmart rifle to shoot her neighbor's rooster.

Not knowing what to say, I told her  
to call a lawyer. The man laughed: "See—  
all they need is a little love to set them straight."

It's like playing God. Someday I'm gonna answer  
in parables. Let the smart ones figure 'em out.  
The rest can keep calling me twenty-four seven."