## The Approaching Sky

by James Baker Hall

I told the story of a child in a big place of wandering from window to tall window fearful of the approaching sky and then forgot I ever told it until I heard the story again today on the news

There were two of them Boys A settlement the Israelis called it Spring 2001 Both in the joy of their bodies thirteen and fourteen playing hooky in a nearby power place known for its caves

The younger bolder by nature got closer

Once his eyes adjusted what did he see inside looking back at him How many were there

Or did they come up behind heard before seen How many were there picking up stones

Imagine a conversation There may have been one

Can I stop now Isn't this enough

Who wants to see what happened next which Arab wielded how many stones in what fashion

As he had had
done unto him no beginning
To see the skulls broken
and bleeding at the cave entrance and witness
the exultation of children hand-painting in blood

the walls and the exaltation of the elders before these new cave paintings Get back get back get back

you leaders in Tel Aviv Jerusalem Ramala History is upon you as it always has been Your children are in the bargain and now mine

What would we teach them in thought and in deed beyond our hatreds

Our tactics and strategies
Our sense of history our pride
What is it we're proud of
Is it love or something less
than love

Has our power driven us crazy so crazy we don't know what crazy is any longer

Or is it our pride Or is it our money Can it be our money

Who wants to know what our money has done to us what we have done to others under its spell

Let's teach our children
to pray why not
we could use the challenge
In the presence of eternity
how do we present ourselves
Do we pray in thoughts
or in deed only
off camera
the rest bullshit
Is it easy to pray
I was taught that it's easy
to pray but not taught what prayer is
Loss taught me that
And then again

Here's one of its lessons Pray to yourself only and often Pray for love in your heart Enough for your thoughts to clarify

Here's what we have to look at The floors give way within the towers White dust settles over the city Wandering loss holds its pictures up begging for us to look please please look Has anyone seen the loved ones

I'm only a guy another guy off here in the boondocks thousands of miles away How can anyone formulate the challenge

Oh

we leaders
Some day
one of us
or more
will put an end
to this madness
Clear the way
for the next
Is that what we have to offer
Love forgotten ignored lost