

I am doomed to remember a boy with a wrecked voice – not because of his voice, or because he was the smallest person I ever knew, or even because he was the instrument of my mother's death, but because he is the reason I believe in God; I am a Christian because of Owen Meany. I make no claims to have a life in Christ, or with Christ – and certainly not for Christ, which I've heard some zealots claim. I'm not very sophisticated in my knowledge of the Old Testament, and I've not read the New Testament since my Sunday school days, except for those passages that I hear read aloud to me when I go to church. I'm somewhat more familiar with the passages from the Bible that appear in The Book of Common Prayer; I read my prayer book often, and my Bible only on holy days – the prayer book is so much more orderly.

I've always been a pretty regular churchgoer. I used to be a Congregationalist – I was baptized in the Congregational Church, and after some years of fraternity with Episcopalians (I was confirmed in the Episcopal Church, too), I became rather vague in my religion: in my teens I attended a 'non-denominational' church. Then I became an Anglican; the Anglican Church of Canada has been my church – ever since I left the United States, about twenty years ago. Being an Anglican is a lot like being an Episcopalian – so much so that being an Anglican occasionally impresses upon me the suspicion that I have simply become an Episcopalian again. Anyway, I left the Congregationalists and the Episcopalians – and my country once and for all.

When I die, I shall attempt to be buried in New Hampshire – alongside my mother – but the Anglican Church will perform the necessary service *before* my body suffers the indignity of trying to be sneaked through U.S. Customs. My selections from the Order for the Burial of the Dead are entirely conventional and can be found, in the order that I

shall have them read – *not* sung – in The Book of Common Prayer. Almost everyone I know will be familiar with the passages from John, beginning with ' . . . whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.' And then there's ' . . . in my Father's house are many mansions: If it were not so, I would have told you.' And I have always appreciated the frankness expressed in that passage from Timothy, the one that goes ' . . . we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.' It will be a by-the-book Anglican service, the kind that would make my former fellow Congregationalists fidget in their pews. I am an Anglican now, and I shall die an Anglican. But I skip a Sunday service now and then; I make no claims to be especially pious; I have a church-rummage faith – the kind that needs patching up every weekend. What faith I have I owe to Owen Meany, a boy I grew up with. It is Owen who made me a believer.

John Irving, *A Prayer for Owen Meany* (1989)