

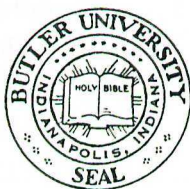
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**BUTLER UNIVERSITY**

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## The Whole and the Sum

Joseph Tether

HENRI LAMBERT halted momentarily in his flight into the tunnel and looked behind him, trying to pry through the blackness. He breathed heavily, leaning against the cold steel of one of the supports for the roof. Condensation from the girders dripped incessantly onto the catwalk and rails below in a hollow musical toccata.

"Coward!" The sound of Henri's shout echoed coldly and returned like shadows in a wind. He tried to count the echoes, but they rapidly became inseparable.

"Maybe they never really stop," thought Henri. "Maybe they just keep bouncing around in here forever."

"Jacques Blesseau!" shouted Henri. He waited for the echoes to wither.

"You-are-a-coward!" The accusation returned to him until it was no longer intelligible, just a confused mass of sounds. "I wonder if he heard me," he thought. Then above the sound of lost whispers came the shuffling, tortured clatter of the footsteps that had followed him into the tunnel. Again Henri was running, bent over to avoid the steel supports.

"Jacques is a coward," thought Henri, gasping for breath. "He could have died a whole man, but he has chosen to live half a man. He should have died. But he is a coward. And like all cowards, he will outlive the brave." Henri was becoming tired.

"Henri!" Jacques' voice swirled around Henri and in his surprise, still running, he straightened up. In an instant his head smashed against one of the supports, and in agony he was spun to the catwalk. His thoughts slipped into a depthless vertigo, falling, turning. . . .

---

Henri threw open the door of the section shack and looked inside. Jacques was asleep on a cot in the corner. His pudgy face was turned slightly toward Henri, the mouth deformed in sleep. An empty wine bottle lay on its side next to him on the cot.

Jacques was a much larger man than Henri, but Henri was too angry to worry about this.

"Wake up, you drunken pig!" screamed Henri.

"What in hell . . .?" Jacques struggled to one elbow and opened his eyes, bloodshot and fogged with wine. "What's wrong, little rooster?"

"I told you to keep your hands off Françoise, you filth!" Henri was raging.

"What, that little whore? Why, I'd as soon go to bed with you." He turned his back to Henri and lay back down.

"She's pregnant. You ought to know all about it. I talked to her brother."

"He's lying," tossed back Jacques, unconcernedly.

"You're the one who's lying! You've always been a liar. What about my last paycheck?"

"That's different. This is serious. I swear I had nothing to do with it. If you don't believe me, we will confront Françoise together. You will see."

"I've already asked her. When I mention you, all she does is cry."

Jacques laughed. "Don't you see? She has never loved you. If she did, she would have claimed you as the father."

"You know that's impossible."

"Yes, I forgot. I'm sorry. But she's a whore. Maybe it was her brother."

Henri picked up a hammer and started toward Jacques. "I'm going to kill you, Jacques."

"Oh, don't be dramatic. Everything will work out. She is nothing, Henri. Use your head."

Henri brought the heavy hammer down, just missing Jacques' face. Jacques caught the hammer on the downward swing and wrenched it from Henri's grasp.

"Now, get out of here, little fool! You don't know when you're well off. I could smash you like a termite, but you are just a fool. Get out and cool off."

Slowly, Henri backed away from Jacques, trying to hold back the tears of frustration that were welling up in his eyes.

"I'll kill you, Jacques. I don't know how yet, but scum like you should not live." He turned and ran out the door, tears now flowing freely down his face.

That night, Henri left for Strasbourg where he boarded the One A.M. Express for Paris. An idea was forming in the back of his mind. It would have to be a revenge that meant something. Nothing ordinary would do for something like Jacques. The entire affair was a play, a Greek tragedy. The punishment of Jacques would have to be symbolic, like punishment in the tragedies. As the train clacked over the Moselle bridge, the plan became clear in his mind.

It would have to involve perfect timing. Jacques was intelligent and now was wary. All would depend on the approach. If Jacques suspected anything, the plan would be ruined.

At five A.M. the train halted at Gare du ———, and Henri got off. He wandered for several hours through the quiet and lonely streets, coming to his old neighborhood where he found the solution to his problem.

Early in the morning he entered the shop of a boyhood friend, a pharmacist. His friend had grown fat with prosperity, and Henri barely recognized him as he scurried industriously around the shop.

"Bonjour, Charles," said Henri, examining an antique apothecary



cary jar and not looking at the druggist.

"Monsieur? May I . . . Henri! I did not recognize you! You have lost weight."

"Yes, I have not been as prosperous as you."

"You embarrass me, Henri. What are you doing now?"

"I am with the railroad. Sounds impressive, doesn't it? I live in a shack and repair the tracks in the Vosges between Strasbourg and Paris. You, perchance, have ridden over some of my handiwork."

"No, I have my car and . . . But what may I do for you?"

"You may sell me some sedatives, some very strong sedatives."

"Things are not that bad, Henri. Do you need money? Perhaps I could find you another job, something more suitable to your abilities."

"No, Charles. Things are not that bad. I have a dog who unfortunately has run a spike between the tendon and bone of one of his legs. He is too large for me to hold down, and I am afraid the wound will fester if the spike is not removed. As I passed by your shop, the thought occurred to me that you might have something to knock him out."

The druggist regarded Henri dubiously. Naturally, thought Henri, he would doubt that story. Only the wealthy in France can afford the luxury of dogs. Stray dogs were a delicacy for the poor during the war. Today's pet and tomorrow's potage. And not bad if one is hungry.

"Henri! A dog! And a large one at that. Certainly you can compose a more believable fable than that!"

Henri was losing his patience. "See here! Is it so unusual for a lonely man stranded on a desolate railroad siding to desire the company of a dog? Can you please give me something?"

"Pardon me, Henri. I can give you something, but I must ask that you tell no one where you got it." He disappeared into the rear of the shop and returned with a small package. "Add this powder to whatever he eats or drinks. It should take less than a minute to work."

"How long. . . ."

"It should last about three hours." The druggist handed the package to Henri, trying to catch his eye. But Henri refused to look up.

"Merci, Charles. You are very kind." Henri's hand shook with excitement. Three hours was just enough time. He turned and started to leave the shop.

"Bonjour, Henri. And please be careful. If you ever need anything. . . ."

"I know, Charles. Bonjour."

When Henri reached the shack the next morning, Jacques had already gone down the line with the rail crew. It would be late in the evening before he returned. And he would be thirsty. Henri

had brought Jacques a bottle of Moselle, his favorite. It would be a "peace offering." Henri had carefully removed the lead sheathing from the cork, pulled out the cork while heating the bottle so as not to damage the cork, added the powder, and replaced the cork and seal. It pleased Henri that everything had gone so well. It would have been difficult to have done anything else with the powder. An unsealed bottle would have made Jacques suspicious immediately.

At the back of the small storeroom attached to the shack, Henri placed a large wooden box through which he had cut two holes which would easily accommodate a man's hands. After some searching, Henri discovered half of an old circular saw blade which had originally been used to cut railroad ties. It was of good size and would serve his purposes perfectly. Henri carried it to the grinding wheel, seated himself, and proceeded to sharpen the broken edge. As he watched the sparks fly while he pumped the pedals of the rickety grinder, another idea entered Henri's mind.

Fire produces more terror in men than any other natural phenomenon. In the war Henri had seen men withstand hours of intensive bombardment without going mad. But fire. . . . No one can bear the thought of burning to death. Being blown up is quick if you die in the explosion. When contemplating suicide, many prefer an unsure death by drowning. But never fire.

Henri looked at the shack. It should burn nicely, he thought. The old timbers were very dry, like kindling, and tarpaper roofing would produce a great deal of heat. A man would be reduced to ashes in minutes by the inferno the shack would become.

The irony of the situation excited Henri. He was giving Jacques a chance to live, but if he lived it would be through cowardice. If he died, he would die a brave and a whole man having died the most horrible death to which a man can be subjected.

Henri tested the newly sharpened edge of the blade with his hand. It would do . . . with a heavy weight on it. He carried it into the storeroom, setting it down next to the box. He found five long angle-iron fence posts lying in one corner. Two of these would make an excellent track for his blade. He stood them up on either side of the box, braced them against the beams of the ceiling with blocks of wood, and placed the blade in position. For weight, he bent several sheets of soft lead over the top of the blade. The sheets, each weighing ten pounds, were used for sealing drains in the tunnel.

Henri's little guillotine was now complete except for its trigger mechanism. He first tried a small wooden prop, but the weight of the blade was too great. Finally, he discovered that two nails placed through holes in the sides of the metal posts would support the blade. He attached strings to the nails so that a man lying on the floor with his hands through the holes in the box could pull the nails out with his teeth.

Stepping back, he pulled the string. The blade rushed down its



track and bit into the floor with a satisfying slicing sound. Henri reset the mechanism and retired into the shack to wait.

His work had taken the entire day. Through the small window Henri watched the late evening shadows spilling down the side of the hill through which the tunnel ran. Presently, he heard the coughing sound of the hand car which Jacques would be riding. It came to a halt on the tracks outside, and he heard Jacques joking with the rest of the crew. "He can tell a good story," thought Henri. "Maybe he will tell me one when he wakes up with his hands in the box. Maybe he will tell me that Françoise is a whore. But no, he will tell me that she is an angel—that she is pregnant through immaculate conception. And I will laugh and set fire to the wall."

"You are back, Henri." Jacques came through the door and threw his tool box noisily into the corner. "Did you see Françoise?"

"No. I saw an old friend I knew from my old neighborhood."

"Ah ha! Another woman! Henri, you should be more discreet in your choice of confession priests. I have a big mouth." Jacques sat down on the bed and began taking off his boots.

"Think what you will, Jacques. It makes no difference." Henri stood up and took the wine bottle from the shelf behind him. "I brought you a present from Paris, something to show you that I am sorry for the way I acted."

Jacques looked up in surprise. "Mon dieu! You do not cease to amaze me. First you are going to smash my face with a hammer, and then you are bringing me tokens of your affection. It's probably poisoned."

"Nothing but the best. It is all poison to me." Henri handed him the bottle.

"Ah, Moselle! This is good poison. Henri, you are no Frenchman." He tore off the lead seal, not noticing the nicks that Henri had put in it by taking it off. "Throw me the corkscrew."

Henri watched him intently while he removed the cork. It would be bad if he had suspected anything. Henri held his breath as Jacques took a long drink from the bottle.

"It is very good. Perhaps a bit sour, but anything would taste good. It has been a hot day." He wiped his mouth on his sleeve and took another drink. It would not be long. Henri was sweating.

"What's wrong with you, Henri? You look nervous. Why not risk it and have a drink? I don't want to make a pig of myself." He took another drink. "It must have been a worse day than I thought. I am exhausted." He lay back on the bed, holding the bottle upright on his chest.

"Yes, it has been a bad day. Very hot. I'm glad I did not have to go out with you. Paris was very beautiful."

"Paris is always beautiful. Except for the police." Jacques' voice was growing sleepy and distant.

"Remember the time they caught us throwing trash on the Avenue de l'Observatoire?"

"Yes. They are proud of their clean streets. It's good for the tourists." His voice was dimmer. He talked for a few moments, drifting from subject to subject. "He is very strong," thought Henri. Finally he was quiet, and the bottle slipped from his grasp and tumbled to the floor.

Henri watched him for a moment to make sure he was really asleep, and then hurried into the storeroom. He picked up a bag of cement, carried it outside, and poured its contents into the mixing trough. Three hours, the druggist had said. That was just enough time for the cement to set.

When the cement was mixed, Henri shoveled it into a bucket and carried it into the storeroom where he set it down next to the box. Then he dragged Jacques in and, turning him over on his face, placed his hands through the holes. There was just enough cement in the bucket to cover his hands. While Henri poured, he watched Jacques, afraid that he might come to when the cold cement hit his hands. But the powder had worked. There was nothing to worry about. All he had to do now was wait until he awakened.

Henri sat on a nail barrel in the corner and watched Jacques whose bland expression might have been that of a priest in meditation. Henri watched him intently and, although it was not cold, an occasional shiver shook the length of Henri's small body.

He glanced at his watch. Only a small oil lamp lit the room, and for a moment it was difficult to focus on the tiny hands of the watch. It was ten minutes after midnight. Jacques had gone to sleep just after nine; at least three hours had interceded. Henri stood up and walked over to the box. The cement had set and was now hard enough to hold him no matter how hard he struggled.

"Jacques?" Henri nudged Jacques' side with his shoe, but there was no response. "Wake up, you filth!" This time, he kicked him squarely in the ribs. The reaction was instantaneous.

"What . . .! Jesus God!" Jacques rolled sharply away from Henri and uttered a cry of pain. The movement had broken his left wrist. "What in Hell have you done to me? Where. . ."

Still not realizing that he could not get his hands free, he jerked back violently and again screamed with pain. This time, a piece of splintered bone forced its way through the skin of his rapidly swelling wrist. "I would advise you not to thrash around. No matter what you do, you cannot free yourself. Your hands are embedded in cement, and the box is nailed to the floor. Look above you. If you happen to hit either of those posts, the blade will fall. Although you may *want* it to fall in a few minutes."

"What do you mean? What are you going to do? Oh, God! My hand . . .! It's broken!"

"You are lying, filth! You are the scum of the gutter. And, as such, you do not deserve life. Life is for the clean, the good. But as a coward, you may live. Do you see the string? Pull it and you may live. But you will bear the mark of a coward for the rest of your



life. If you choose to die, you will have, at least, my respect—respect for a man who has died bravely. But nothing more.”

Jacques was crying, tears falling in dusty droplets to the floor. “Henri, you can’t mean this. Say it is a bad joke and get me out of here. My hand! Henri, for God’s sake have some mercy. I’ll give you anything. I’ll confess. Is that what you want? You want me to confess about Françoise? All right. It *was* me! Me and Françoise all the time. I mean, she is pregnant by me. You see, I told you. I would have told you anyway when you cooled down. But this! Get me out of this thing!”

“No, Jacques! Don’t you see? I must do it now. Even if you had not told me. But now, it is for Françoise. Did you hear me? Shut up! You are a coward, Jacques. And you will die a coward!”

“No! In the name of God! You can’t. . . . What are you doing?”

Henri had picked up a can of petrol and begun pouring it along the wall. “Do you remember in the war, Jacques, how horrible it was to hear men burning to death inside a tank? Do you remember the bombed buildings with the women and children? I can still hear them. Sometimes I wake up screaming with their voices in my ears. It was fire!”

“Mother help me! Henri, you are crazy. Stop! Don’t. . . . You can’t do it! Oh, no, no, . . .” Jacques was now lying still, weeping, with his head lowered between his outstretched arms.

When the can was empty, Henri picked up the lamp and flung it into the corner. The glass smashed and the wall was aflame immediately. “Goodbye, Jacques. Françoise and I will see you in Hell.” He turned and ran out the door, Jacques’ screams following him.

It was pitch dark outside the shack, and Henri fell down the steps, tearing his knee on a rock. He quickly recovered himself and hurried, limping slightly, toward the tunnel. Just outside the entrance of the tunnel, Henri stopped and looked back. He had to know. Through one of the windows of the shack, he could see the flickering light of the fire as it climbed slowly up the walls of the storeroom where Jacques was lying. There was no sound except the metallic crackling of the fire which was still confined to the storeroom. Henri waited.

It took some moments for the first flames to escape into the crisp night air. Henri watched as several tiny tongues of flames shot through the bird-stops under the eaves of the storeroom and licked up over the edge of the roof. As the flames quickly made an exit for themselves, Henri could almost hear the rush of air through the open door of the shack. How like men are fires, thought Henri. The more they have, the more greedy they become.

Now the flames were rapidly spreading to the shack itself, leaping along the edges of the tarpaper roof and sending dense black columns of smoke into the sky. From where he stood, almost one hundred yards away, Henri could feel the heat of the fire.

It would not be long now. Then he heard a sharp crack of wood splitting, a rending scraping sound, the smashing of glass, and a resounding crash as one of the beams of the storeroom fell to the floor. Seconds afterward, he heard another noise and then a scream. Jacques had pulled the string!

Only his intense curiosity kept Henri from running on into the tunnel. From the shack, over the roar of the flames, he heard the tortured moans of Jacques as he struggled from the burning storeroom. Finally, Jacques' form was silhouetted in the flaming doorway of the shack. Most of his clothing was on fire. Jacques paused for a moment and then plunged headlong down the steps, rolling sideways in an effort to extinguish the flames.

"Henri, where are you?" screamed Jacques. "Help me, for God's sake!" Jacques continued to roll about, obviously in agony from his burns and the loss of his hands.

To Henri, the scene was unreal. It was as if he were watching a play, a fantasy. Maybe it was all a dream.

"It's nothing but a dream, Jacques." Henri watched Jacques struggle into a standing position. "Don't you see? When you wake up, it will all have been a dream."

"Where are you?" Jacques stumbled forward, but in the wrong direction. He was blind! Henri felt a sudden wave of fear, of cold nausea. It was not a dream.

Henri could not resist. "I'm over here, Jacques. By the tunnel. Don't you see me?"

Jacques screamed and roared like an animal. He turned toward Henri, but stumbled and fell heavily to the gravel at the side of the tracks. Slowly he fought his way up and started forward again.

"I wish Françoise could see you now, Jacques," shouted Henri. "You could have died honorably, but you were a coward. You are not even half a man now. You can't even stand up." Henri laughed as Jacques once again tripped and sprawled into the gravel.

Now Jacques was close enough for Henri to see him clearly. Jacques' face was no longer a face. All the hair was gone and the features were indistinguishable. Blood was slowly oozing from the blackened stumps of his arms and spattering his smoldering clothing. It was Henri who was now afraid. In terror, he turned and ran into the dark tunnel.

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"Henri . . ." Jacques' voice was filling Henri's ears in a flood of echoes. Henri sat up and shook his head. A large oblong lump was already forming across his forehead. There was no way of telling how long he had been unconscious. Quickly he got to his feet and began hurrying along the catwalk, more carefully this time.

"I am coming for you, Henri." The voice was all around Henri. Suddenly, Henri stopped. Am I going in the right direction, he thought. He grasped for the wall. To his horror, he could not remember. He could see nothing.



"Why did you do this. . . ." That came from the right, thought Henri. Yes, from the right. He turned around and started back the other way.

"You are a coward!" Henri shouted into the blackness. "Why don't you die? You are no better than a mole, a dirty mole. You see nothing and you . . ." Henri tripped over something and fell forward onto the catwalk. It was Jacques. With a delighted whimper, Jacques leapt on Henri as he was struggling to his feet.

"Get away from me!" Henri kicked frantically but the stumps of Jacques' arms were solidly locked around his legs. Henri pitched sideways onto the railing. The rotten wood gave way and both men tumbled to the tracks below. Henri's arm was twisted beneath him and pain shot through it immediately. He knew it was broken. The fall had not loosened Jacques' grip on his legs, and once more Henri tried to free himself.

"You are going to die with me, Henri. Listen!" But Henri had already heard it. The One A.M. Express from Strasbourg was approaching the mouth of the tunnel. Henri reached out with his one good arm and felt for the rail. Painfully, he dragged himself forward pulling Jacques with him. The train was now in the tunnel and bearing down on them rapidly. Henri heaved himself onto the rail and grasped the edge of one of the ties, pulling himself forward at the same time. The noise of the engine and the brilliancy of the flashing headlight were terrifying.

Henri reached out again but found only gravel. A few more inches and . . . But it was too late for that.

Lying beside the tracks, after the train had passed, Henri prepared himself to die. It was funny, Henri thought. Together, Jacques and he would make a whole man.

## The Courtship of Dan \*

David Dawson

\* *First place, short story division, University Writing Contest, 1963.*

DAN STEPPED slowly from the bottom step of the dingy, cracked-plaster hallway; hesitated; looked up at the door with its varnish peeling off in scaly flakes; and walked on in a slow, deliberate prod. He walked into the street which was deserted at this early hour in the morning. Who would want to get up at five o'clock in the morning if he didn't have to? He did, though. Every day—except Sunday, of course.

The street-light gave out a ghostly yellow pool of light on the corner; newspapers shuffled into the gutters with the wind's prodding; and a trash can overflowed its rusty edge with contents of green-blue edged orange peelings, tin-cans with red labels, and broken beer bottles, brown, glinting from the dew drops. Dan approached

the corner, stared at the gutter with its week-old rubbish and black, oily water with little rainbows scampering about on the top. He stepped down and walked forward with his eyes fixed on the pawn-shop window opposite. Pasty beads swung with air currents in the windows—hung, suspended by invisible cords. Old guns, the barrels a brown-red. A battered typewriter, one row of its four teeth missing, a chipped corner white, stark against the dirty blue-black. Odds and ends of jewelry—rings, necklaces, bracelets—green-gold with faint traces of carved flowers, leaves, and long-forgotten names.

A sharp blast from a horn and a hard, raspy voice made him look sideways—distracting his eyes from their focal point.

"Hey, ya dumb fool! Ya tryin' to kill yerself? Well, don't pick on me ta run over ya!"

Beady eyes; flat, bulby nose; bushy brows. Face like the color of carrots. Thick lips curled in a sneer.

"Sorry," Dan said quietly while scampering to the safety of the yellow-grey curb before the pawn-shop. The man in the old black jalopy bellowed a deep, hearty laugh and drove on. The laugh, cruel, long, reminding him of another's shook Dan from the fog. Another's when he fell, face down, while coming out of a bar with a friend.

The fog. It was like that now. Some days it was the same, never-ending. Days when he walked through all the motions of life wrapped in a protective coating of cotton—muffled, alone, quiet. It was peaceful that way—bearable. Days when he was wrapped in cellophane. Enveloped in a small case of black velvet. No more like being in a dark cave and watching everyone else. Only this cave was made by him. And he had forgotten to make an exit—his one mistake, one folly.

But some days—it seemed so long ago, far away now—when life was different. The dirty orange and yellow-grey bus, empty, its windows square, inexpressive, lit by the white lights inside, pulled up with the usual explosive blast of air brakes and the smoky smell of burning oil. He boarded the bus, dropped in the money which clanked and clinked against the metal box, and sat in a seat—oblivious of all those around him except for the small woman who jerked her narrow head, gave him a stabbing stare from faded grey eyes, and rustled her newspaper when he dislodged her tiny, soiled satin-blue hat with his elbow. The bus creaked, squeaked, and bounded like a run-away horse over the street filled with bulging squares of gritty asphalt. Dan stared out of the windows at the darkened houses—blurs before his eyes while the bus moved on without many passengers at the early hour. The lawns—small, almost neglected—stood grey-green. Here and there, a small light came on, a window lit up by yellow artificiality, glittered, and faded into other dull grey houses with white threads in the boards.

Days. Yes, there had been other days. Days when his senses



were alert—alive—waiting for the experiences life could offer. Days when a robin's high chirp could stir thoughts in his mind. Days when green summer lawns with dandelions sprinkled on them like drops of sunlight could seem inexplicably unbearable to his emotions—made him ache with just looking at them. Times when a sunset with the rose flames of gold tinting on clouds could create unwritten symphonies in his heart; when wind caught his hair and ruffled it as he watched the spray from breakers dance in the sun, could touch the strings of his soul and make soft, tinkling sounds like bells off in a distant green, shaded valley. There were some moments when he could watch sea-gulls like white etchings against blue and feel the adventure, the hope swell up inside and push against his ribs like a living, growing being. But no more. Such days had passed. He had left them behind as a child drops unwanted toys for decay, negligence, and death. Such trifles are given up for something more important. Some thing called maturity, growth, or knowledge—all ambiguous labels for destructive forces within himself.

There. He had gone one block past his stop. He rang the bell. The bus jerked to a breathy halt at the corner, and he descended into the ring of light under the stiff, scared street-lamp. He had let his mind wander again—as usual. His mind waltzed between phrases like death, life, beauty. His thoughts never congealed, formulated into a balanced shape. He had always been a good analyst—at least of himself. But even then he never knew what was true and what was invented from his own imagination. Possibly that was why he had never sold anything he ever wrote. But he still tried.

Lois had watched the figure step off the curb. She held her soft, half-uttered scream in her throat with a clenched fist and held her feet to the floor instead of rushing out to catch him in a protective embrace. She watched him, unhurt, unscathed cross to the opposite curb and wait for the bus. She watched his slow, steady stride and his thin lips curl into that small line she knew so well. His hat, he had forgotten his hat. That was like him. The bus came. The thin, slim body was hidden by the square bulk of the bus. She caught a glimpse of his strong, chiseled features at the window before they were lost in a blur of movement and smudgy smoke.

Quietly, carefully she turned to look at the room. Small, neat. A blue chair against one wall had a small tear where the white fluff mixed with strings of contorted straw were escaping. She pulled the clean but faded blue cloth over it. The ashtrays were emptied. The floor was dull, light-brown but the dust was gone now. She lay on the sofa. Adjusted her backbone so that the spring wouldn't stab her and closed her eyes.

Dan had been cold and distant at breakfast. Not that the silence was unusual, she thought. But something strained had leaped into the room with the silence—leaped like a swift, clawing animal

and clamped itself around her heart. It was all going to begin again. The jumble of the morning's events pressed against the walls of her mind. She fought to organize them.

"Will you be home at the same time this morning?" she asked.

He sat his coffee cup down and stared at her with that dull, insipid blue glaze that she had learned to ignore but not fail to acknowledge as his way of putting her out of his thoughts.

"I suppose," he muttered after clearing his throat. He picked up the chipped white mug and sipped the coffee. "Too bitter."

"I'm sorry. I hurried . . ." she trailed off for he wasn't listening. She could tell by the way he stared at the crack in the plaster. That long, jagged crack which ran from ceiling to floor. How many times had she threatened to fill it in? It was no longer a crack. It had become a symbol of all she dreaded in Dan. It was his blank, unwavering stare at that marred spot which meant he wasn't listening to her—actually refused to think of her or what she said. But he never told her his thoughts. He never told her anything about what ran around in his brain.

She arose from the couch, walked to the narrow closet, and began to rummage through the stacks of papers, boxes, and bottles. She took out a sack, grabbed a pail, and walked into the kitchen to the yellow, stained sink. She mixed a pasty, white mess in the pail; rummaged in the drawer for a large, flat spoon; walked to the wall; and began to fill in the crack with vicious stabbing sweeps of her arms.

Someday, she thought. Someday it will all end. Someday things will change.

She fell to the floor on her knees. Sobs shook her small shoulders. The effort tore at her throat, ripped into her chest. The heart began to pound, the lungs heaved, scraped. Air wheezed through the nose. She slumped to the floor and let the cold, sticky floor press against her forehead while the pink and white pattern became a grey, indistinct blur of grey.

The muscles grew tense, knotted as she staggered to her feet, the body one mass of weak nausea. The room swept around in watery swirls as she moved to the living room and fell back on the couch with a squeak of rusty springs.

Dan came out of the factory. Pressed on either side by the sweaty, musty smells of fellow workers—fellow human beings with dark, smudged faces and tired, blurred eyes.

"Hey, Dan, the bus is comin'," shouted a short, spare man.

Allen—poor Allen. Allen with the deformed mouth making him look like a fish gasping for air. Dan ran as the bus opened its doors with a swish of stale, hot air and climbed on with his lunch box sending the sound of cracking metal as it hit the metal railing. The money clinked; the bus jerked, roared, and moved.

The houses swam in a sea of hot, wavy air as Dan stared out



through the brown streaked window. He closed his eyes and forgot.

A jolt awakened him in time for his stop. He got off. Two small boys on the corner laughed as they threw pebbles which bounced against the yellow-orange sides of the bus. They danced about in unrestrained gaiety like two leaves in the wind. They ran off down the alley filled with brown-stained boxes and yellowed newspapers.

Dan watched the two boys. A glaze filled his eyes. The free, easy ways of children. New thoughts—black, oily streets; stolen pennies; sweet apples coated with a red crust; blue bruises on red, swollen arms; robbers attacked by policemen with wooden guns.

He opened the door with the scaled varnish. Lois was on the couch. Sleeping again. But she tired so easily now. The late evening sunlight came through a triangle tear in the faded blue curtains and played with the golden strands in her hair.

She was pretty that way. The lashes made little blue-black semi-circles on her pale cheeks. Her mouth pulled into that little pout with the lower lip full. She was small, thin. Really thinner than when he had first met her.

Yes, on the bridge. In the park. With white swans slipping over the pond in stately authority. And they had talked, aimlessly, easily while walking on under green maple trees in the soft, humid shade.

But so much had happened since then. Breakfast. He had been unkind again—unconsciously, of course. He loved her. Yes, especially at times like these when he watched her. But he got some strange, unrecognized pleasure from hurting her in all the little ways. As if she were to blame for his failure. Making up for his deficiencies.

But if he lost her—Dan knelt and started to kiss her gently. But his hand recoiled from her arm as if he had touched a snake. Cold. Her face was damp. And cold. The skin felt like the cool metal of his lunch pail. And small globs of white plaster had congeled on her fingertips and under the nails. One of the nails was broken. Red-brown stains of dried blood had fallen on her dress. She wasn't breathing. She wasn't—

The tears fell on her pale cotton dress leaving little dark stains of apology next to the blood spots.

## Vertigo

Jessie Cochran

THE ELEVATOR was the first thing to be endured. It was an express, all the way to the nineteenth floor, and gave Carolyn the horrifying sensation of plunging upward. She closed her eyes and tried to stop thinking that there was absolutely nothing under her. The chilly terror left only minutes after she was in her mother's hospital room.

It was a nice room, as such rooms go, with an air conditioner and the venetian blinds pulled down and adjusted so you didn't have to see how high up you were. The room was dominated, of course, by the tall iron bed and the old lady lying in it.

"Hello, Mother." She let the door close with a hospital-like shushing noise and managed a smile.

"Why Carolyn!" There was a pause . . . mustering her strength, she ventured, "Did you bring my check?"

"Yes, I remembered this time."

The old lady's head sank back to the pillows where she had craned it up in a comical fashion, though deadly serious, and she laughed. "This is costing me a whole lot, you know. My bank account is getting low. Is that another new dress you have on?"

Carolyn sat down in the one chair and lit a cigarette, noting automatically her shaking hands. *How long does it take, she wondered, to get rid of this? It's so hot I think I'll lose my mind. I haven't been down here in the summer for years and years. . . .*

"Yes, I haven't been down here in the summer for years and years and I don't have any summer clothes at all. Mostly winter. Anyway nothing for weather like this. I haven't been here in the summer for years—" she stopped, gratefully, because she knew she was beginning to babble, as her mother hawked and spat into a Kleenex.

"It's my throat, I've got to keep it clear of phlegm. All the time I have to cough and spit. You don't know what a narrow scrape I had. Did you know I was on I.V.'s for two weeks?" She opened her eyes to point up the drama and gritted her front teeth against each other. Carolyn shook her head slowly in solemn awe. "Two weeks, and nothing to eat except what they got into me through that tube. I don't know why they didn't let me go." She laughed merrily at the very idea and Carolyn laughed, too. Why, indeed.

"It all happened so funny. There I was—I had gotten up just as usual and bathed and done my hair and was going down for the paper—when I got this *funny* feeling like a heart attack, sort of black, but then I had the doctor's number right there by the phone, my darling doctor, I just love him, so I called and he said, 'Katey, you just stay right there and I'll be out—'."

*And so they put you in the hospital with your third stroke, thought Carolyn. We'd all thought you'd stop with your third stroke, as I wish you had stopped with your third baby instead of going on to four. If you had, I'd be a Maeterlinck baby now, sitting up in heaven waiting around, with at least a chance.* But the frightful, daily reiterated story of the third stroke was continuing and her mother's coughing, rasping voice couldn't be shut out.

"And when Dr. Calloway examines me I don't know where examination ends and monkey business begins, if you get what I mean." She leered out of old flat eyes, grown dead brown now and couched in wrinkles, smiling flirtatiously. Somewhere in Carolyn's



midsection a hand slowly squeezed and then let go. *Now that air conditioner*, she thought. *That's a splendid air conditioner and one that anyone would want . . . just don't think about what she says.* "He's quite free with his hands, just like my morning nurse, that what's her name. I never can think of it. Some funny name. Why, she doesn't think any more about handling my body than you would about a stick." Hawk. Spit into Kleenex.

*And then there's the elevator on the way down, too. I have to make that and I have to make the drive home, but then I can have a drink—three drinks—and then I'll eat and then take a thorazine and go to bed. Good. If it were only done.* She completed the rest of her day two times, slowly, imagining how she would do it, and her mother's voice came in again.

"I hated the Milltowns, they made me sleep all the time, but on that Thorazine I was just as happy!"

Before she thought, Carolyn said, "I take Thorazine, too."

"You. What do you need it for? You haven't had a stroke. What could possibly be the matter with you?"

"I don't know. Just nerves. I'm jumpy, I guess."

"Well, you oughtn't to dope yourself up with all those pills. When I was your age I was busy raising babies and had so much to do I was thankful just to fall into bed at night." Another comical gesture, this one indicative of falling into bed at night, was accomplished by a flailing of the skinny arms and the mouth pulled down and in.

She now began the long process of sitting up, gasping and bugging out her eyes, the gray braids tied with ribbons falling forward over her bony shoulders. She was making it, as always. "Give me some help here, Carolyn. Help your old mother."

Thinking "I won't touch you," Carolyn sprang forward and put her arm behind her mother's shoulders. They felt like the wings of chickens. "These thin, wirey women never die," her father had said, and then he'd cut out for good.

"I wish the doctor would come while you're here so you could meet him. He's so darling. Do you know how he makes me feel? He makes me feel young and desirable, and that's the way I *think* about myself. I'm not old. I'm young and desirable. All my men friends—pardon me, I have to spit, just a minute, hand me the Kleenex, will you—all my men friends—ha-ha—tell me I'm cute and have a good shape. Right before this happened the butcher told me I was his favorite customer and I know it's because he thinks my shape is nice. And it is nice, I know that. That dress you have on is a little tight across the midriff, isn't it? I hope it doesn't shrink when it's washed. I have lots of men friends, you know. The bus driver used to wait for me, and the milkman always chats on the back porch, though I have to be a leetle careful of him, such a big young buck."

For a quick, lucid moment Carolyn saw her mother as someone

else, perceived her objectively and not through the tear-drenched, fuddling years of childhood, and realized her mother was happy as a clam. All alone in the blazingly hot apartment her mother sat day after day, cozily examining her successes with milkmen and bus drivers, turning them over and over and stroking them, a Midas endlessly contemplating something more exciting than gold. After the stream of babies she had turned to babying her flourishing ego which had flourished even more, had grown and extended itself like a tropical liana and obscured the sky, leaving only itself to be nourished and tended. Devoted as a handmaiden or concubine, she performed her cherished task, lifting the brimming pitchers of hallucination proudly and really quite seriously. *The comical bit, thought Carolyn, the comical act is her only touch left with reality. It's just in case someone might guess—what?* How real it all is to her? She was getting confused again so she lit another cigarette, this time almost not making it. Her hand gave a sudden jerk and the cigarette flew into the folds of her skirt, her brand new skirt, and before she could find it the odor of scorched cloth filled the room. The old woman jerked around, sniffing the air.

"My God, don't burn me up now after what I've been through. You smoke too much anyway." She sighed. "I don't know, sometimes, I just don't know about you girls. When I think of Linda dead from drinking and Lucy coming down here to see me a nervous wreck—I really worry about her, she's so mean—and Margaret not even speaking to her mother, living right here in the same town. I just don't know."

*And how about yours truly, thought Carolyn. You don't know about the analyst I went to and was too afraid to go back to for the very reason I went to him in the first place. Anxiety disorder, Mamma dear. That's me. That's me in pseudo-scientific terms. A pretty little psycho-neurosis for your prettiest little girl, the baby. Vomiting up the tanglewood tales of childhood for that cold little man, you emerged something of the ogre in the piece, the giant who lives under the bridge, the witch in the cottage, the mad queen rapaciously poisoning on a grand scale. Do you remember? The time you slapped me senseless for breaking a handmirror given free by the bakery, and you said I had supernatural powers, that I broke mirrors because there was something strange about me. I believed you, Mother!*

"I think I'll just stand up, maybe walk around for a little bit if you'll help me, Carolyn. Come on now."

*The time you listed my lovers, poor moral idiot that I was that wouldn't even kiss, including in your roster two of my girl friends. The time I turned around from the sink and saw you approaching with a milk bottle upraised to strike me from behind and all I could think of to say was "What did I do?" I wasn't a baby any more then, was I, but was that my fault? I wanted to be a baby, but I got so big.*



"Carolyn, come help me." She had braced her hands on the side of the mattress, and was shuffling with her feet for the stool. "Come bring the little stool over here so I can get up."

*Shut up, Mother, I'm remembering. The years of being told I was unpopular, "not at all like my other girls," and then finally when boys asked me out you'd be waiting up at the door, to one side of the door, and would leap out spitting venom and filth at them. The time—*

"Carolyn, help me!" The old woman was listing crazily on the side of the bed now, just hanging on, one hand dangling uselessly in paralysis. "Ring for the nurse. Quick!"

*The time you had appendicitis and refused to let me call the doctor when I wanted to, no, instead you sent me for the woman who lived across the street, and when I brought her in you said, "Would you please call the doctor? Carolyn refuses to and I think I'm dying." Remember the look of contempt on the woman's face as she dialed the doctor's number, and the smirk you gave me, even through your pain? Remember? How old was I then, thirteen or fourteen? But the woman wouldn't let me play with her daughter after that, and the daughter was my best friend.*

"Carolyn for the love of God, help me. Why are you doing this?"

Slowly and with great effort Carolyn focused her eyes and saw her mother, the braids of hair falling wildly across her face, the arm ridged with straining tendons, the veins raised huge and blue with effort. She seemed to Carolyn to become, all at once, two dimensional, flat as a photograph of some old, old, melodrama, or a painting of a religieuse, contorted in the grip of hallucination: The Agony of Ste. Someone.

It was a mystification to Carolyn, this old woman, this picture of an old woman half in and half out of bed. She just couldn't place the name. Now who? Did she work somewhere, some store that Carolyn frequented? It was like meeting the mailman out of uniform, or the milkman. She knew that she knew her, but from where? Perhaps a teacher from grade school; they always looked the same, they never changed. Oh, she wished that she knew. Her mind strained with the effort of trying to remember, strained and then felt light and peculiar, and she squinted her eyes with the effort of remembering. The peculiar, light feeling crept down from her head, along her arms and to her fingertips and she became afraid she would be engulfed and never be able to move again if she didn't remember who this old woman was. She rose from her chair to get a better look at the face but remembered—just in time—that this was forbidden. *Don't go near, don't touch!* What a narrow escape, she had almost touched her! She sat down in the chair again and looked at the figure on the bed with great pity, great regret. The poor old thing was going to fall, that much was clear, and how terribly sad that it was forbidden Carolyn to help her. She was

trying to scream now, but her energy was being exerted in holding with claw-like hands onto the sheets, which were slowly slipping. Her breath was coming in animal grunts, through lips strained back over teeth, each gasp a paroxysm of terror.

It took her about five more minutes to fall, and it was about fifteen minutes later that the nurse came in for her afternoon round of temperature-taking and found the old woman, quite dead, and her daughter sitting in the chair beside her, shaking her head ruefully over the pity of it all, smoking a cigarette.

## The Trauma of Truth

Clarice Noland

KNOWLEDGE is wondrously enlightening, throwing off the shackles of ignorance which bind man to a lowly, unimaginative life, giving him wings with which to soar to gloriously dizzy heights of understanding, and yet making him humbly appreciative of the world and what mankind has achieved with the faculties given him by a magnanimous God. Much has been said about how little man knows; much has been expressed stressing his incompetence. But, consider what he does know and what he has accomplished in a relatively short span of time on the celestial calendar. Knowledge, painfully gathered through eons upon eons, has placed man upon an ever-spiraling staircase to the stars, with each step freeing humanity from a disease, helping man to better his way of life, giving him a greater comprehension of his environment. By knowledge man is freed from the innate characteristic of fabricating a reason for everything within his capacity to conceive. To him the truths revealed by knowledge are often as fantastic as the fallacies. Knowledge may be awesome; yet this knowledge which raises man to undreamed of heights may also heave him headlong out of his blissful security into an abyss of despair and disillusionment. As a result, many beliefs of our childhood, a period in life which we view as having an impenetrable sanctity, are brutally smashed by the crushing weight of an unsuspected truth. The person, a victim of his own ignorance, wanders blindly in a cloud of disenchantment, feeling he has been forsaken by humanity and missing, perhaps for the first time, the invulnerability of childish dreams. "So clear and deep are my fancies of things I wish were true," deplores a popular song, voicing the lamentations of all men robbed of their dreams.

Several years ago I felt that the world, so loving and warm, had suddenly deserted me in the middle of a horrible nightmare. I was alone, I felt, to confront this perplexing situation. Never had I recognized how fully and unquestioningly I believed that I knew the exact whereabouts of heaven. How vividly can I yet recall, still with an involuntary shudder, the fateful words of my Sunday school teacher.



"Remember," he said, "how, when you were little, you thought that heaven was straight up above you in the sky? You never worried about where it was during the day, but at night thoughts of God came with the twinkling stars and bedtime. You could look up into the sky and point out heaven. Perhaps you never wondered what shape it is or what happens to it when the sky is light, but at night you knew exactly where your prayers went. But, now that we know that the sky is not a dome or a bowl turned upside down, but that space goes on forever, where is heaven now?"

My teacher never suggested answers, but left us all disturbed. Now that I think back, I suppose that he meant to shock us into serious reflection and review of the beliefs we had taken for granted. I wonder, though, if he knew just how shaken a few of us were. For a long time I pondered, spending nearly every wakeful moment torturing my mind—if heaven is not where I had unthinkingly expected it to be, where is it? Is there a heaven? Is it on some distant star? If so, would that not make it like another Earth, another civilization? If there is no heaven, is there a God? I was haunted by a dream that returned to torment me every night. In my hallucination God was calling me, but from where I could not discern. I stumbled on over ruts, over fiery rocks, through slimy, oily mud, but never knowing which way to turn to find Him. Alone in a desolate wasteland I screamed for Him and wailed my terror, awakening my parents with my cries. As concerned and as willing as my parents were, they were not able to help me. When I asked Mother where heaven is, she said, "Heaven is where love is." This simple answer brought me no peace, for I felt I needed a tangible heaven, and at my age and as upset as I was, I found no relief in her words. Not until a year or two later did I come to see that her answer, quieting though it was not, was more rational than my frenzied attempt to visualize a palace in the clouds.

As this search of my soul altered my religious tenets and therefore my outlook on life, I can declare with the authority of this experience that truth can shatter one's happiness and blast one's serenity. The further pursuit of truth may lead once more to peace, but unless this second apprehension of truth is much greater and overwhelming than the first, or unless the arrest leads to a deeper and purer conviction, the person may be tortured for the rest of his days. I know, for I went through several months of hellish anguish before I was able to accept an alternate course of belief on which to found my faith. Nothing is more of a shock to a person than to see the faith that has sustained him since his childhood fall apart. This outer force, truth, with its unexpected savageness casts man adrift in a sea of fear. Truth may enlighten and uplift man, but it may also distort the happiness it brings so that the beholder sees only that the belief around which he has built his life is a mere fantasy, and he feels his soul crushed by the weight of the unknown.

## Now and Then

Erma J. Miller

IT RESEMBLED most modern drugstores with its buff brick front, plate glass windows with metal sashes, and a neon sign the length of the building. As I came through the heavy door, a wave of cool air engulfed me. Could this be the same drugstore where my family traded for most of the twelve years I was in grade and high school, the one with the green paint cracking and peeling a little on its weatherboarding, the one whose windows rattled if you rapped on them, and whose screen door banged several times before closing? Was this where I ran errands for family and neighbors and where I spent many afternoons after school eating bon-bons (banana splits without bananas) or drinking lemon-lime soda, if the gang happened to be following a diet fad?

To the left of the door was the fountain and to the right was the magazine rack where I used to spend hours selecting just the right movie magazine or song-hit sheet. Next to it was the tobacco counter where I bought cigars for my dad for his birthday or Father's Day nearly every year that I was in elementary school. The cases and displays were a little more modern, but the cigars and cigarettes (with a few more brands added), key chains, coin purses, wallets, nail clippers, cigarette holders and lighters were the same as then. Next in line was the candy counter—boxed candy, bar candy, and chewing gum. I wondered how the druggist (known to all as "Doc") ever had the patience to cope with all the small children, noses pressed to the case, with their pennies for candy. The new counter conspicuously lacked the penny candy and "Doc."

I ordered a coke at the fountain and started to carry it to a table in the back, but there were no tables, just metal display cases with tooth paste, shaving cream, deoderant, hand lotion, tissues, bubble bath, and other items which are necessary for modern living. They added no glamour to the memories of the small round tables and chairs with wire backs and legs which formerly occupied the space. I sat down on a stool at the fountain to drink my coke and noticed the boy behind the counter. He was young, awkward, unkempt, and certainly could not fill the shoes of the boy who worked there when I was a sophomore. The boy I remembered was tall, but not too tall. His lovely blue eyes and blond wavy hair matched a grin that could melt any girl's heart and did, even though my father did not share this opinion with me or my friends. If this particular boy were working at the fountain when Daddy went into the store, he would not order anything because he said the boy left dishwater in the glassware.

New metal cabinets with glass sliding doors had replaced the old wooden ones along one side of the store. However, the same



assortment of patented medicines stood neatly on the upper shelves, and the lower shelves held everything from bright colored crayons to hot water bottles. The back of the store still houses the pharmacy with its rows of apothecary jars full of miracle potions.

A flickering light attracted my attention to the ceiling where acoustical tile and fluorescent fixtures had taken the place of the large incandescent lights with chain pulls and the overhead suspension fans that cast shadows like great winged birds.

I finished my coke and noticed that the squeaking wooden floors that I used to walk on had been covered with gray asphalt tile. As I walked out the door, I saw my reflection in a mirror and knew, wistfully, that not only the store had changed.

## Snow

David Fruits

THE TRUE measure of an individual can be determined by the number of people who are sorry when he passes away. Snow was not widely known, but all who knew her were grieved, even the undertaker.

Snow was blind and partially deaf, but her hands were both her eyes and ears. When she reached out to touch, it seemed as if she were reaching for sight. By putting her finger tips on one's lips, she could understand every word that was said. Being blind was no handicap to Snow.

Snow lived alone and she had to take care of her home. One never saw a house as clean, shiny and nice as Snow's. To test the flame of her gas stove, she would stick her hand directly over the fire. If it was too high she would turn it down, and if it was too low she would turn it up, and test the flame again. The flame never made her cry out or show any pain.

Her smile never told one that she was blind. Her white hair and wrinkled skin showed that she was aging, but her voice was still as cheerful as a child's.

Snow knew every inch of her home, even the exact location of every piece of furniture, and she could reach her destination without running into anything. Her blindness never stopped her from going to church, and on church holidays she would decorate her walking cane. If there was a knock at her door for volunteers or for any type of aid, she always helped in any way she could. As she became more hard of hearing, she could not even hear the knock on the door, and there was the time that she was knocking on a door herself.

When Snow was born, her mother wanted to call her Snow Frost, but her father thought that Snow was bad enough. She lived up to her name, a name that most found charming. Winter in her hair, and summer in her heart, Snow was to her family, what Helen Keller is to the entire world.

# What My Church Actually Teaches About God

Glen Clarkson

“**W**E BELIEVE in God the Father, infinite in wisdom, power, and love, whose mercy is over all His works, and whose will is ever directed to His children's good. . . .” This is the opening statement of an Affirmation of Faith that is often used during services in Methodist churches. This sets forth in very brief form the basic beliefs of the people known as Methodists; though this affirmation states quite simply these professed beliefs, its use does not insure the application of these truths. To really understand the implications of this affirmation, we must have a knowledge of God and the effects of His controls over all of His creation. To know the relationship of man to God and to all of creation, we must seek an understanding of the existence and nature of God. Although it would take several volumes to record everything that the Methodist Church teaches about God, in the succeeding paragraphs I shall attempt to set forth briefly what we teach about God in my church.

The very nature of man points toward the existence of God. To say that man is an animal is a statement of the truth, but to say that man is just an animal is an absurdity, even though we may sometimes desire the lazy life of a cow. Man in his quest for perfection tends to exemplify those traits which the Christian faith ascribes to God—the capacity for love and goodness, wisdom, and the power to create. The theory of evolution of man is acceptable only if there is a supreme power, a mind, spirit, or personality to direct the formation of man. This power, mind, spirit or personality is that which we call “God.” In Genesis we find it written, “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish . . . fowl . . . cattle, and over all the earth. . . .” Man has been placed in the position of ruler here on earth; man has jurisdiction over the birds and beasts and over the crops that he raises. But even though man has attained great knowledge, he can never acquire the powers of God. Man through all his manifold powers can never create life. Even as the old proverb, “Water cannot rise higher than its source,” man cannot rise above God.

In the discussion of the existence of God as it is indicated through the nature of man, some things have been mentioned concerning the nature of God. Who or what is God? This is one of the oldest questions of mankind. God as the power or spirit that controls our world does not need a physical body; in order to be a personal God unto each man, there is a need for means of expression but not



necessarily for a visible nature. This expression of the wondrous power of God can be found in all of nature, history, and human experience. The greatest revelation of God to man was through the appearance of Jesus Christ on earth. If God is personal, this means that man can have a personal fellowship with God; this brings the prayer, life, and service of each individual to God and others into a sublimely meaningful position. This relationship imparts a challenge to all to strive toward the goal of Christian perfection that was taught by Christ, "Be ye therefore perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect."

The religious strivings of man indicate that God, although capable of complete support, does make demands upon the lives of men. God has given man all that he possesses, even life itself. Our God in His boundless mercy is not a vindictive God; He is a God of compassion and love. The character of God is both the warrant for and the standard of all Christian behavior. In the tenth verse of the Fifty-ninth Psalm, we find the words, "The God of my mercy shall prevent me." The word *prevent*, according to Webster, once meant to make impossible by prior action; by prior action means to go before. In the light of this definition, this passage could be interpreted, "My God in His loving kindness shall meet me at every corner." This is God's world, and He can be trusted to exercise His divine leadership. When things go wrong we can still look to God and know that we can trust in His love and mercy; as Paul said, "All things work together for good to them that love God." The man of faith knows that God is going to have the last word in our world, and he rests the future in God's hands.

## His Father's World

Linda Seidle

**T**HAT MORNING Billy awoke long before dawn. He lay motionless, his wide-open eyes staring into the familiar darkness of his room. Today he was to be initiated into that mysterious brotherhood to which his father belonged and of which he so longed to be a part. Today his father, the tallest, bravest, strongest man in Billy's world, was to take him hunting. In spite of the promise of a week ago and the numerous reassurances since, Billy tensely awaited the masculine sound of his father's voice summoning him. Maybe he'd forgotten or even changed his mind; maybe he'd decided that a boy of nine was too young to participate in such an adventure. But I'm ready, thought Billy fiercely, I'm ready to go with the men. I won't stay home again this time! I won't! Through the window Billy watched the East lighten into grayness and saw the pale sun begin to appear in the bleak November sky; and, as the sky grew brighter, his hopes grew dimmer. The sun had shown its full circumference above the horizon, and Billy had resigned himself to

disappointment, when the heavy sound of a man's footsteps caused his heart to leap. Somewhat ashamed of his previous doubt, Billy silently scolded himself. Why, he should have known that his father would never lie or break a promise or do anything wrong—never.

Being full of a nameless joy and pride, Billy strode manfully beside his father, taking two steps to his father's one in order to keep pace. Although he longed to take his father's hand, fear of being thought childish restrained him. Wasn't he a part of his father's world now—the world of men and of guns? The gun in his father's hand fascinated him; it seemed to symbolize all that he wanted to know and be. And Billy knew with exultant certainty that the essence of this world would be his with the first firing of the gun. Then he would share the secret with his father and all the other men.

With his eyes Billy followed the direction of his father's pointing finger. He could barely distinguish the small, brown, furry object that was perched upon a limb of the tree. The sharp crack of the gun sounded, and the squirrel fell. Without waiting for his father Billy ran to the place where he had seen the squirrel fall. He stopped short and knelt beside the bundle of fur that lay so still on the brittle, dead leaves. Was this the secret? Was this what made his father a man? Gently Billy lifted the squirrel from the cold ground and, holding it against himself, he wept.

## SHE SLEEPS NOW

She sleeps now

Silent

With a soft smile on her mouth

Which never felt the touch of redness.

Her white skin and dark hair form

Beauty upon the sheets.

Nothing disturbs the gentle curves of her

Young body

Which knew only the innocent pleasures of

Life.

She stirs not though her

Silent soul shares this grave

With one who should have died.

A living grave is neither

Silent nor Beautiful.

Only emptiness would make it thus.

But with awareness the

Void becomes Wretchedness

Writhing within and without.

—BARB RUTHERFORD



## The Lament of Little Orphan Annie

William Morrison

FOR OVER forty years the comic strip of "Little Orphan Annie" with her dog "Sandy" has graced the comic page of newspapers from coast to coast. Almost every week Annie, aided only by her perpetual virtue and her total ignorance of worldly ways, casually blunders into a seething pit of human misery, decadence, and pathos. Carefully, she analyzes all involved with the entanglement, and then comes up with a solution that delights everyone except the "bad guys," who, revolted by her radiant goodness, flee the scene and are later eliminated by her guardian, "Daddy Warbucks."

This is a typical example of stereotyping in a comic strip, because Annie must be good, sweet, and pure—she has no choice. Over the years the American public has drawn a mental picture of Annie, and anything that would destroy their image of her would also cause the circulation of the strip to decrease. That is why Annie is a forty-year-old teenager, because the cartoonist has been forbidden by the public to let her grow up and have real eyes instead of a pair of empty sockets. That is why Annie cannot walk down a street with a cigarette in one hand and a beer in the other, kicking warm, cuddly, sad-eyed puppies out of her way. She is so stereotyped that she cannot move out of her image without the permission of the public, and they like her the way she is.

"Little Orphan Annie," then, must continue in her role as a pure, sweet, homeless urchin whose only mission in life is to perpetuate the ideas of goodness, temperance, pluck, and mother.

## Civil Disobedience, or Obeisance . . . ?

Joy Steinmetz

WHEN THOREAU stated that, "There is but little virtue in the action of masses of men," he displayed an intellectual kinship with Socrates who said, ". . . they (the many) can do neither good nor evil. . . ." When Socrates said that a man "ought to do what he thinks right," he established the principle of individual freedom of conscience which Thoreau defended so magnificently 2,200 years later. In their disdain for the expedient—whether expediency meant to save one's life or pay one's tax—when principle was the issue, both men's opinions coincided. Both were true philosophers in their concern for Truth and Justice, Right and Wrong. But Justice and Truth and Wrong and Right did not always wear the same faces for each of them.

It is interesting to observe how two wise men—geniuses if you will, albeit from widely different ages—can start with basic prem-

ises so much alike and, reasoning logically, draw conclusions so vastly different. "Philosophy is nothing but discretion," as John Selden said.

In the mind of Socrates the Laws, the State, were supreme; a man was "child and slave" of the State, and this was an agreeable condition to be preserved and cherished. He listed laws along with virtue and justice and institutions as "being the best things among men." He proclaimed love of country as holier and nobler than love of parents. "Doing wrong is always evil," he said, and clearly he implied that defying the law is the highest wrong. A man must obey the law, obey it with his life if necessary, even if it appears to him unjust, Socrates thought.

Thoreau, on the other hand, regarded the law and the government as "only the mode which the people have chosen to execute their will . . . we should be men first and subjects afterward." The poet of Walden Pond also employed the analogy of patriotism and parental honor. True love for either must be a "matter of conscience and religion, and not desire of rule or benefit." Thus, he equated neither love of parents nor country with love of the *law*. On the contrary, defying the law, if justice and conscience dictate, might be the highest good. While Socrates apparently conceived of justice first in terms of the body politic, and of law as the proper instrument of justice, Thoreau understood justice as a matter for individual conscience when he expressed the thought that, "Law never made men a whit more just."

Civil disobedience, or obeisance—which shall we choose? "Every intellectual product must be judged from the point of view of the age and the people in which it was produced," said Walter Pater. He might have added that its *application* must be judged within the context of each present moment. Every man sees truth from a different angle and every man's own conscience must form his perspective.

## On Worlds Apart

Gretchen Rhett

IT WAS A hot, muggy day, and I was more than a little tired of sight-seeing. Swinging my camera over my shoulder, I began the walk toward the monument steps. As I approached I mentally noted that the outward appearance of the building was similar to that of buildings I had been looking at all day. It was white, limestone I believe, with pillars encircling its main walls. It is a statue I thought, only a monument to a dead man. The time is dead too, dead and forgotten. Brushing my hair back from my face, I started upward, toward the entrance of the building. The steps seemed endless, and my camera grew heavier while the stark whiteness of the building reflected the sun's rays, making an almost bearable glare.



Shading my eyes, I could see the outline of the statue, and pausing, I gazed at it. It was as if a great weight had been lifted from my back. I felt drawn to the statue and, without thinking, I began to approach it. The room was cool and dark inside, and no one seemed to be around me. I reached the base of the statue, and silently, reverently, I looked up into the marble face of Abraham Lincoln. There was a vastness of space, an immensity of emotion, and I felt close to the man who had been dead for almost one hundred years. "Mine eyes have seen the glory . . .," the words rang in my ears. Government of the people, that was glory, wasn't it? "His righteous sentence" was the Gettysburg Address or the Emancipation Proclamation. "He died to make men free." Yes, in his own way Lincoln too had died for that reason. The noise was deafening to my ears; I started to cover them, to run away from their thundering truth and away from the depth of emotion raging through me. I turned and found myself staring into the face of a Negro girl. Again I faced the statue; it had seemed to grow larger; its brilliancy was blinding, and yet I saw what my mind and my heart had known. "His truth is marching on." Yes, his truth still goes on—in the city where his mortal body has been reproduced in marble, and his speeches hewn into granite and placed for all the world to see. Slowly I turned around and walked across the grey floor to the bright sunlight outside.

## Is God So Small?

Mary Louise Spicer

**M**Y CHURCH actually teaches that God is small. Oh yes, we quote scriptures such as, "God created the heavens and the earth," and, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son." I could write on and on about the great things we say about God, but the old cliché, "actions speak louder than words," applies to the church, too. Perhaps a good place to see some of the actions of my church is to listen to a meeting of the Official Board, which is the governing body of the church.

This meeting is in progress, and it is a bit unusual, for there is a "special" guest who has slipped into a back corner of the room. None of the board members are aware of Christ's presence.

The financial chairman is making a report of the proposed budget for the next year. "Our statistics show us that we have a membership of two hundred and eight-five persons. Of these two hundred and eighty-five members, more than one hundred and fifty are employed, and they are making an average salary of \$6,500. Our total budget is \$13,014.20. This is approximately 1.3% of the total income of our members. We hope that we can meet this great challenge."

The Board Director asks for comments.

An elder speaks, "We would like to hear a breakdown of the budget."

The finance chairman proceeds, "Our minister's salary is \$5,254.44."

A deacon quickly asks, "Is this an increase over last year's salary?"

The chairman replies that it is not an increase, and he continues with his report. "The next item is Christian Education. Last year, we spent \$1,200 for this purpose, but due to an increase in the cost of supplies and a slight increase in attendance, we are asking for \$1,400 for this next year."

An elder speaks up, "This seems mighty expensive for a bunch of leaflets and books that will never be read."

After much discussion, a compromise is reached for \$1,300 for Christian Education.

The finance chairman continues, "Third on our list is church maintenance. We estimate a need for \$3,409 for this purpose. We have a few problems in this category. All of you know that our door facings need to be replaced. We have two estimates regarding the cost of this project. Jones' Lumber Company will install them for \$600. Sam's Hardware will sell them for \$560, but he will not install them."

The Director asks for discussion.

The clerk speaks, "I don't think that we should get them at Sam's. He's a member of the church across town, and he gives his church a discount. He won't do the same for us."

Hastily a deaconess replies, "Well, Sam's wife has attended some of our women's meetings, and I like her. I think we should get them at Sam's."

An elder suggests, "It seems to me that we should save \$40 and ask some of our members to install the facings."

The church's secretary jumps up. "No, not that! Every time we attempt such a project, I have to call about fifty persons before I can find one that is willing to do the job."

What's this? Slowly, Christ walks to the front of the room. A mysterious hush falls over the group. Trembling, the Director slides into his chair. Christ shakes his head slowly and says, "You fools! You poor, poor, foolish children! You sit here and squabble over dollars and door facings when you have within you the power and spirit of love, which is of greater force than all of the atomic energy in the world. How often must you be told that the greatest tragedy of the world today is weak-minded, weak-spirited men?"

The thinking of my church and other churches is small because the thinking of the individuals within the church is small. However, though it is weak, I believe that the church does more to exemplify God than any other institution in the world today. Perhaps, someday, the church will surmount this weakness and truly reveal that God is Almighty.



## For Evan's Sake

Judy Erskine

“PARDON me, did you drop this?” asked a soft, gentle voice behind me.

I was sitting in the Philadelphia International Airport lounge waiting for the next plane to Boston, Massachusetts. Turning to look in the direction of the voice, I saw a short stocky woman in her sixties holding up my billfold. “Why yes, I did! Thank you.” I replied gratefully. The woman sat down beside me and began to question me: “Where are you from? Where are you going? Are you traveling alone?”

Instantly suspicious of her intentions, I glanced around the airport for a policeman. Seeing none, I turned and looked squarely at the stranger for the first time. I saw grey hair, thin spectacles, an old fox stole, and deep pleading eyes. Relaxing somewhat, I began to chat with this woman who apparently only wanted a companion.

We discovered that we were both heading for Boston, Massachusetts, and had tickets for the same flight. Thus we decided to travel together. Miss Evans—that was her name. “You can’t forget it,” she remarked. “Just remember ‘For Evan’s sake!’” She told me that she was a retired school teacher, and by conversing with her I learned that she had traveled all over the world.

As she spoke, I crawled with her in the pyramids of Egypt, danced at the Mardi Gras, was escorted to the West Point Military Ball, and dined with important political officials and television personalities. Through her words I saw the starving people in China, rested in the shade of a sidewalk café in Italy, and romped in the snow on a Switzerland mountain top.

A loud voice over the P.A. system told us that it was time to board our plane. We found seats beside each other and after the excitement of rising into the air, began talking again. I begged her to continue with more of her experiences, but she insisted that I talk for a while. I told her that I was on my way to spend a college weekend at Harvard University at the invitation of a very special friend. A high school senior, I was very excited about this, and could barely speak of it in an even voice.

Sensing my apparent youth and inexperience, she proceeded to lecture and advise me about how to behave during the visit. Although I did not resent her advice, I did not encourage it, for I wanted to hear about more of her fascinating travels and experiences.

All at once, she squeezed my hand and said in a voice so low that I barely could hear, “Have a good time, sweetie, but always act like a lady. Gentlemen marry ladies, you know.” I nodded my head to indicate that I understood what she meant, but I knew I didn’t

understand fully when she added, "Did I tell you? My name is *Miss Evans*." Then she turned towards the plane window and said no more until we landed at Boston.

As we walked down the ramp together, she smiled and thanked me for listening to her. Suddenly I became very sad. "Have a good time, sweetie," I heard her say. "You look like a dream—good-bye now!" I turned to mumble a good-bye to her, but she had gone.

## "Veni, Vidi, . . ."

Michele Burns

**I**T WAS A gray, dreary, rainy afternoon when even the buildings seemed sad. As Jessica sat looking through the window of her dark hotel room at the misty city below, a flashing, blue neon sign cast grotesque shadows on a tear-stained, lonely young face. Jessica had a decision to make, one which could change her life in a matter of moments. She relived the hours of the preceding day with the faint hope that something would help her. . . .

A small, dark-haired dancer stood at the foot of cement steps leading to one of New York's most eminent theatres. As she stood clutching her dance bag, the words "AUDITION TODAY" screamed at her from a massive, oak-paneled door. When she mounted the steps and closed a trembling hand over the doorknob, the cold brass shocked her senses. She wanted to run.

"Now just a minute," a little voice said to her, "why are you afraid? You haven't studied dance for ten years just to run away from what might be your big chance!"

Jessica took a deep breath and opened the door. The rich majesty of red, gold, and white met her eyes. Hundreds of girls seemed to be milling around in the spacious lobby. Some were laughing nervously; some were sitting quietly; some were standing confidently as cigarettes dangled languidly from their mouths. Suddenly a handsome, young man swept into the room. He was clad in tennis shoes, jeans, and a tee shirt. Much to everyone's surprise he announced that he was Donald Gardener, choreographer of the show for which the audition was being held.

"All right, ladies, leave your names at this table, draw a number, change into practice clothes in the dressing rooms downstairs, and meet on the stage in fifteen minutes." With these words he vanished as quickly as he had appeared.

Many shapes and sizes of girls, dressed in every color of the rainbow stood in awe of the mammoth stage. Jessica stared beyond the footlights into the blackness of the theater. It seemed like a gaping mouth waiting to swallow her up. When the audition began, she retreated into a corner until number fifty-eight was called. . . .



Jessica suddenly realized how long she had been sitting in front of the window. It was nearly 6:00 P.M. At 6:30 the girls were supposed to return to the theatre to hear the results of the audition.

Why should I go back, she thought to herself. When my number was called, I froze. I know everyone was laughing at me. After seeing my "wooden soldier" exhibition I'll bet they thought that I'd never had a lesson in my life. My teacher told me that some people just couldn't take this kind of life, but I never thought I'd be one of the quitters. What else can I do? I've been here one year and where am I? I give up; I'm going home.

At 6:45 a hush fell as Donald Gardener strutted into the lobby. After hurriedly arranging papers he began reading names:

"Jessica Winters . . . is Miss Winters here?" Silence.

That evening at dinner Donald Gardener sat toying with his food. A puzzled, disappointed look had captured his youthful features.

"Hey, Don, you haven't heard one word I've said," his friend exclaimed impatiently. "What's the matter with you tonight?"

"I'm sorry, Trav. I keep thinking about that audition today. This real talented kid didn't show up for the results. I had a special number in the third act in mind for her. Isn't it strange? Some talented people who really could get somewhere just don't seem to care."

## "Soul Power" and "Sun Blood"

Colleen Wiggs

### I

" . . . and are responsible for eighty-five per cent of the crime committed in Indianapolis. Of course, these people are the very ones who have a complete mental list of their rights as citizens; they understand the law better than most of us do, and they take advantage of every rule and loophole ever instituted. If by any quirk of fate they should be sentenced to jail, they are 'punished' by a roof over their heads and square meals each day! When I think of my tax money being used for those. . . ."

At a loss for an appropriate word, the inspector clenched a beefy fist and wearily closed his eyes. Two hundred and twenty-five pounds of bones and flesh sank back heavily into the armchair. Opening dark eyes that swam heavily in their colorless fluid, he continued.

"These guys don't usually try much of anything until they're drunk. After all, it takes courage and the right kind of spirits to get these fellas to beat up a woman, snatch a purse, or maybe steal

a car. Anyway, they get their liquor in that tavern I mentioned earlier. We've got proof that about twenty-five per cent of the crime gets its initial push right there; citizens have sent in petitions to have the place closed, but somebody is getting his big fat palm crossed with silver. Nothing will ever come of that hole in the wall except more crimes and more silver-lined pockets. . . ."

Half an hour later the policeman was gone. Having risen ponderously to his feet, he was of impressive size—six feet at least—and lumbering gait. But something in his stature betrayed him, and in his eyes there was a brooding emptiness. His carriage was not befitting the broad frame and long body. His shoulders sagged; two great arms hung listlessly from them, and one could not be certain that, if the inspector were slapped heartily on the back, he would remain upright.

## II

The young seedling was five inches tall, and its first true leaves had appeared. Like star-shaped webs they caught the early morning sunbeams in their green mesh. But the mother tree of twenty-two feet in height was also thirsty for "sun-blood," and it cast its mantle of shadow upon its offspring early each day.

Water was another thing. As the young plant struggled, its roots intertwined with those of its parent; it was dry that year, and the smaller plant was weaker. Within two weeks the seedling lay shriveled and lifeless, and the mother tree hovered ignorantly over its dead child.

## III

To sustain life a plant needs food. It makes food from several basic materials, and, if it is denied any of these material, such as sun or water, the plant dies. A man also needs food to sustain life, and I speak of a man's inner life. Like the seedling a man is influenced by his environment. When one must daily be in surroundings where-in he sees men at their worst, as the inspector does, he may lose what sensitivitiy and zest he has for the refined aspects of life. A portion of his nature is starved by a lack of contact with beauty; his spirit's aesthetic sense is unstimulated, and thus a quality separating man from animal is lost. Unlike the plant, a man will often survive in this semi-deprived state and will become the most terrifying of corpses, for he continues to exist even though his "soul power" is lost, and he has died a spiritual death. "If a plant cannot live according to its nature, it dies; and so a man."



## Nervousness

Dave Schweitzer

THERE he was in the room by himself. His thinning brown hair was disarrayed; his high forehead was streaked with jagged lines running almost from temple to temple and large beads of perspiration slid from his brow down his cheek and neck. The pupils of his crystal blue eyes were small and started at objects without registering any reaction. The whites of his eyeballs were pink from their bloodshot condition and the excessive flicking of his eyelids produced tears in the corner of each eye. Heavy, dark, wrinkled bags were visible under each eye and these wrinkles worked their way down to the corners of each nostril, thus forming a path that steered the streams of sweat down to his tightly closed lips. His unbuttoned collar and slackened tie knot revealed a prominent Adam's apple which was in constant motion from the man's forced swallows. His suit jacket was slung on the arm of a chair and his white shirt revealed a large circle of perspiration under each armpit. The back of his shirt exposed his flesh as it clung tightly to the sweat accumulated on his back; the front of his shirt was puffed out, hanging over and hiding his belt. His left sleeve was rolled up to the forearm and his right sleeve, unbuttoned at the wrist, stretched full length on his arm.

He did not seem to be able to control his vibrating, tense hands. He clasped them behind his back, tugged and pulled at his fingers, placed his hands in and out of his pockets, and wiped his forehead with a handkerchief. He paced the floor back and forth, keeping the exact meter of his steps each time he pivoted around and began again. Heavy breathing and deep sighs were the only sounds that broke the silence of the room except for the inhaling and exhaling of the cigarettes which he smoked one after another. He picked small bits of tobacco from his tongue, rattled the wrappings from the package of cigarettes, picked his teeth with the plain end of a match, and scrambled his hair some more. Finally he sat down, but he still did not relax. He rolled his cigarettes in the ash tray, tugged at his ear for a while, rubbed his nose with the back of his hand a number of times, pulled at his socks until the threads began to unwind, and squirmed in his seat every five or ten seconds. He tried to leaf through some magazines but his shaky fingers only ripped the pages. He started to scratch the back of his head, arm and chest. Then he paced the floor again. Abruptly the door opened. He jumped up and his eyes widened as he was told by a nurse, "It's a boy."