

Mormon Missionary Kids

I didn't realize
how lonely
I really was tonight—

Until I almost invited
those two Mormon missionary kids
in to visit
and hear their pitch.

But I didn't.
Nobody's quite that lonely.

I am certainly
in need of companionship,
but salvation will have to wait
till I'm a little more desperate.

Puritanical Paradise

O God in heaven
believed to be remote
and safely
out of harm's way — or not.
We beseech. We implore.
We beg. We cajole Thee.

Take this conforming cup
self-poured full
of suffering, pain,
grief, and shame
from our lives—

Which in truth we
cherish so — that
even
in the lucid hour of death
our clench'ed fingers
cannot be pried from.

Though at any time,
we could choose
to pitch it in the sink
and walk away to joy
with You.
Right here. Right now.

Earth Angel

Down Butternut Street, God and I walked.
We studied the people as we talked.
Stayed out of my heart and in my head,
but God looked at me and thus He said.

"Jim — you're conscious, visible me.
Hungry, homeless so many I see.
Lots of poor sad people here in need.
I want to help but you must lead."

"Wait, God," I cried, "that's not the deal.
Weak and helpless — that's how I feel.
You have all power and awesome might;
You're the one to make this right.

"That hungry child needs bread and cheese.
Crippled lady — help for knees.
Homeless man needs shelter near.
Sad couple ought to get some cheer.

"God, this work is up to you.
You should know just what to do.
Fix it all by magic spell.
Heal and help and make all well."

God didn't bite. He said to me,
"Jim, you're my eyes. Through you I see.
Your heart's my heart — your hands are mine.
Their working order seems just fine.

A simple truth that you must know
is that through you — My work can show.
Do not refuse or seem to faint.
If you won't help — that means I can't."

A Snow Job

Slipping into early morning's darkness, I leave my toasty house.
Wet wads of snow blow stinging hard and bitter cold bites through.
A jolt of melancholy sadness strikes
between house and soon warm truck.
I know the homeless and the truck-less
today are really out of luck.

I hear phantom teeth click, chatter, and cracked, cold lips chanting brrr
though real living freezing bodies could be nowhere near my house.
I feel such sympathy and pain
as I start and drive away.
but I know that there is nothing
I can really do today.

Squinting through wipes flipping windshield snow splats
I weave the ice bound streets from house to work.
I coolly drive by neighbor, Jesus,
trudging against the wind and snow
moving opposite my progress
walking like he has no place to go.

Silhouette in hooded parka, arms folded, chin tucked down
the little person on the roadside is not covering much ground.
Instant anxiety and distress,
I should go back and offer him a ride.
Simple, simple, the solution was
he should have stayed inside.

Now to offer him this favor I would have to turn around.
Ease beside. Crack frosty window. Snow flakes in my comfy cab.
Maybe scare that little person.
Maybe endanger big brave self.
Using my imagination,
he could be a chill-proof Santa's elf?

Delaying the decision has put me much too far away. He was
walking near a bus stop sign. That must have been his goal.
The 6 a.m. sharp city bus, its lights I see,
is just back up the way.
That's the one always on time
and pulling Santa's sleigh.

Even if those lights weren't the city bus
all Christmas stories have a happy ending.
I am pretty sure that next car back
just sliding round the bend
was a Bible story man we know,
the Good Samaritan.

And since I didn't stop this morning
I was on time in Jericho
Where Zacchaeus, taxman of biblical fame,
helped an humble me make an extra money shift.
For a one time, tax deductible,
heartfelt, benevolent, year-end financial gift.

The Hour of Power

I get up every morning
at three-thirty on the dot.
I prep and primp and go to work.
Early starting helps a lot.

I start to toil, prepare the day
begin a little after four.
Balance the books. Post daily plans.
And allocate the chores.

But when the clock strikes
six o'clock it's meditation hour.
I read and pray and chant some verse.
Ask God for daily power.

This time is all that it can be
to make the perfect daily mood.
I have happy smile and cheerful heart.
Go eat oatmeal breakfast food.

The rest of the day the struggle's on
but six-to-seven hour's sublime.
Now please just tell me how to get
the other twenty-three in line.

Sinphony

(try again God)

A timid, fearful man
voicing few words, and
a politically astute man
shouting many

are equally effective
in hiding truth.

Failing to show love
and practice love
that our earth
so desperately needs.

The fearful and timid
ping a quiet hollow ring.
The politically savvy
sound a loud empty gong.

Sadly, perhaps soon—
this completely harmonic,
yet aesthetically unpleasant timbre,
may be the only sound heard
reverberating through empty eons of time
from the late creation — mankind.

Going to the Dark Side

Piercing north winds thrust
chill tipped icy spears
through my frigid body.

My tousled hair rises — reflex to
the howling cry of a closing beast
stalking my prey emulation.

Planted deep in the fertility of
night's blinding darkness
my fear flower unfolds.

God-created Nature
processed by
God-given human senses

transformed
by the imaginary power
of The Other Force.

Survival of the Flittest

Drawn to the aroma of sweet nectar
beckoning from the bell
of a blood red trumpet vine blossom,
two ruby throated, emerald green
avian Apache helicopters
hover warily at a petal portal
planning inevitable pre-culinary combat.

Desire — anger — aggression—
violence — fear — retreat — then
with all others subdued or bluffed,
victor's lust for self-indulgence
is smugly satisfied.

Natural traits
of the animal kingdom.
Don't deny them.
Don't apply them.

With a whir and a flit and a "love you,"
rise above them. Admire the grace
of the single hummingbird spectacle.
Find another of God's creatures
to exemplify proper social interaction.

God's Unhandy Man

Is it only vanity to think
that I must earn the money
to buy the grain
to fill the feeder
that feeds the birds?

Is it only vanity to think
that they would have died
had I done otherwise?

I am a first chair member
of God's
fragile orchestra world—
but I know very little
of my instrument and
am totally ignorant
as to how hard or
how long to blow.

So comes my mournful solo,
trying to harmonize,
but sticking out
like a sore thumb—
only vaguely suspicious
of the bloody hammer
in my other hand.

Spectrum Theology

You are there—

In the red of a Lincoln rose
and a livid tyrant's face.

In the orange of a sweet fruit
and a slashing, clawing tiger.

In the yellow of our saving sun
and sallow jaundiced skin.

In the green of rolling grasslands
and the rot of bloodless dying flesh.

In the blue of heaven's sky
and heaving drowning waters.

In the violet of the pansy petal fan
and the poison nightshade flower.

But it is my choice to see You there,
to point You out to others.

For us to deal with You
and fathom Your true colors.

Hundred Mile Prayer

It is noon in August 2006. Cruising east
on I-20, I am blurring through Big Spring
on a speed limit plus stroll aimed for Abilene and home.
Not realizing that for the next hundred miles
I will run a hundred thousand acre gauntlet
of thirst-crazed naked cotton plant bodies
symmetrically row rooted and abandoned to die
in the merciless blazing summer Texas sun.

Lured toward this sun by the come hither rains
of April through June, hand-size verdant leaves
furl from knee-high green towers. Pleading plants
salted with crimson centered white blooms
strain desperately to set green boll piñatas
filled with fall's fluffy white fiber that next
spring's spin magically weaves to soft pimo polos.

But God's faucet is off. Not a trickle since June
and a destined dehydration death
is less than two weeks away.

Helpless farmers afield and we fans of fabric
have no more control over a rainless today
than April's magic seed sprout,
the spontaneous spring rain
or the magnificent growth until now.

All Joe farmer can do is eye upward hope,
take his best umbrella to church
and keep his parched fields uncovered.

As I walk in my kitchen door
I have done my first hundred-mile prayer.
Soon I am flipping phone book pages
searching for Apache Indian rain dancers
and atmospherically astute seeders of cumulus clouds.

Going Ballistic

My sacred self bit into an apple
trying to recreate the fall.
Thinking that I needed to do that
to get back to where Jesus
could try again.

In a typical psychotic egotistical explosion
I only wanted to be responsible
for something important.
I didn't want to settle
for a common university campus massacre
or a been-there-done-that regional genocide.

In the Beginning God

I thought that I thought to myself,

"Today is a new day.

You should see the sunrise.

It is so wonderfully usual."

But later I heard God say,

"Wasn't that a wonderfully usual sunrise?"

Then Brahman expressed,

"Wasn't that a wonderfully usual sunrise?"

And Jehovah declared,

"Wasn't that a wonderfully usual sunrise?"

Soon Allah added,

"Wasn't that a wonderfully usual sunrise?"

And Spirit echoed,

"Wasn't that a wonderfully usual sunrise?"

And then from the North Pole to the South,

from the Far East to the Near West,

from the depths of history

to the eons of the future

there was a chorus—

magnificent, harmonious

multiples of the same voice,

the same intonation,

the same inflection,

the same BEING,

"Wasn't that a wonderfully usual sunrise?"

You are one people.

Love each other.

I am one God."

Graceful Communication

On this icy
early Big Bend morning
I absolutely believe—
that if I couldn't see
Your magnificent
Milky Way parade,
that if I couldn't hear
Your distant dogs' bark,
and treetop birds' banter,
that if I couldn't feel
my freezing cold
nose and toes,
I would still know
that You are here,
because You
would find a way
to let me know
you were,
that required
only acceptance
from me.
