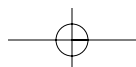
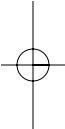
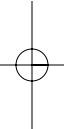


*Mormon Missionary Kids*

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.

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### *The Hour of Power*

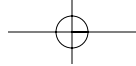
I get up every morning  
at three-thirty on the dot.  
I prep and primp and go to work.  
Early starting helps a lot.

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

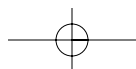
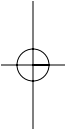
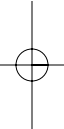
are equally effective  
in hiding truth.

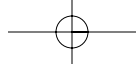
Failing to show love  
and practice love  
that our earth  
so desperately needs.

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.

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*Going to the Dark Side*

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

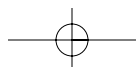
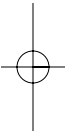
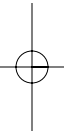
My tousled hair rises — reflex to  
the howling cry of a closing beast  
stalking my prey emulation.

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.

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### *Survival of the Flittest*

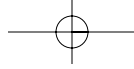
Drawn to the aroma of sweet nectar  
beckoning from the bell  
of a blood red trumpet vine blossom,  
two ruby throated, emerald green  
avian Apache helicopters  
hover warily at a petal portal  
planning inevitable preculinary combat.

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.

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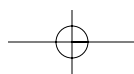
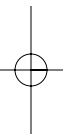
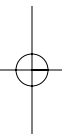


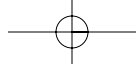
### *God's Unhandy Man*

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.

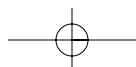
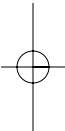
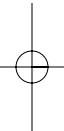
In the blue of heaven's sky  
and heaving drowning waters.

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.

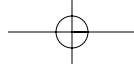
Lured toward this sun by the come hither rains  
of April through June, hand-size verdant leaves  
furl from knee-high green towers. Pleading plants  
salted with crimson centered white blooms  
strain desperately to set green boll piñatas  
filled with fall's fluffy white fiber that next  
spring's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

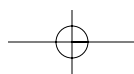
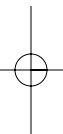
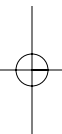
As I walk in my kitchen door  
I have done my first hundred-mile prayer.  
Soon I am flipping phone book pages  
searching for Apache Indian rain dancers  
and atmospherically astute seeders of cumulus clouds.



### *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

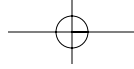
there was a chorus—  
magnificent, harmonious  
multiples of the same voice,  
the same intonation,  
the same inflection,  
the same BEING,

"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.

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