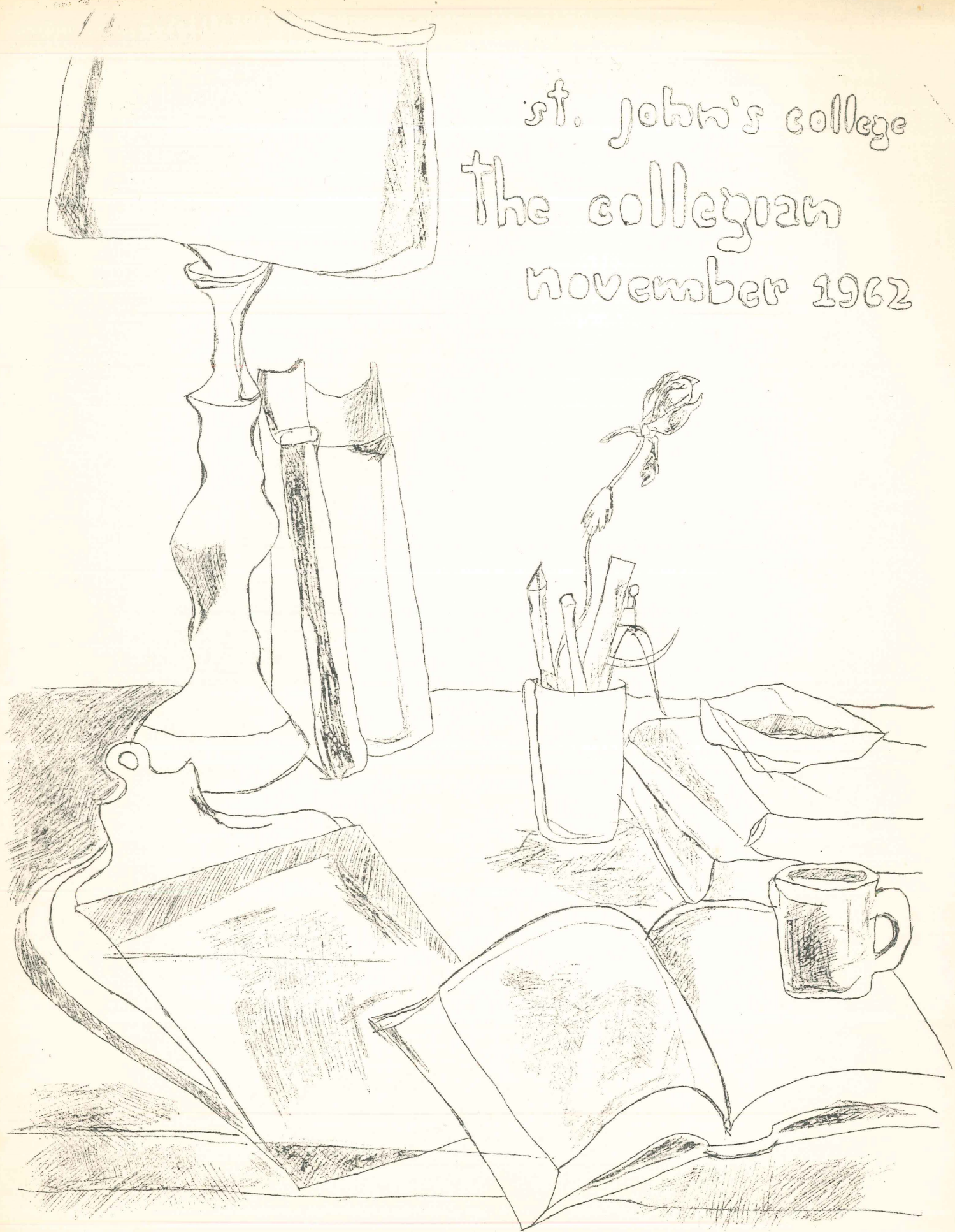


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The first printing of "The Cutting of the Canon", intended as the lead essay in this issue, has had to be discarded because of mechanical failure in the mimeograph duplication process. The essay will appear, however, within the next two weeks, under the November cover, as a supplement to the issue.

---- Editors

ADAM AND CHRIST: THE PROBLEM OF SPIRITUAL MAN

by

Mary Willa Fowler

First Prize Sophomore Essay 1962

i

In considering the question of the faith of man in God it would seem useful to observe the relationship between Adam and God, and Christ and God. Since these two men are thought to have had a direct relationship with God, (that is, whatever contact they had with God they had directly, with no intermediary between them) they might be sought as instruments to our understanding of how God is concerned with men.

First of all, God created man in Adam. God clearly was interested in man, for He set up laws to govern him, a working system. There were some things that he should do, and some things that he should not do. That is, he should keep the garden, and he should not eat a certain fruit. Adam's world was then set and limited; it had bounds. He himself had limits also for he had a definite job -- a responsibility, and someone to whom he should be responsible, viz. God. Clearly he was created to be a servant of God.

He and his world were limited by a force that could be tested, however. A command had been issued; it could be obeyed or not. He could accept his responsibility or he could not. Only this command stood between Adam as man and Adam as God, for Adam had no knowledge of good and evil. Yet he was forbidden to seek after this knowledge. Thus he was limited in two respects -- 1) he had no knowledge of good and evil, and 2) he was forbidden the act of seeking it.

These limitations kept Adam dependent on God -- again in two respects -- first he had to depend on God for guidance; second he had to trust that what God forbade was right. We see that Adam's basis for action was trust. Clearly if Adam chose to test the limitations of his world he would have to lose his trust in God. To understand what his new relationship will be after he seeks the knowledge of good and evil therefore we must consider why Adam lost (or abandoned) his trust in God.

Eve, the creature whom Adam called woman, was created as a companion for Adam. We wonder why God thought it necessary for his servant to have a companion. Adam seemed to be quite content in his garden before the woman arrived. He had his work and his trust in God. It might even be thought that he had God's trust in him. Was a companion a reward for his faithfulness? Or perhaps a compensation for the limitations that had been placed on him? In any event, he was given a new creature who was to be a fit companion for him (evidently God considered Eve adequate for Adam's needs, for it was only after God saw that the other creatures were not help-mates for Adam that he created Eve.) and Adam found a new interest in life. His world had been enlarged by only one more creature, but this creature he must incorporate into his trust and work. The old limitations were still in existence, but there was one more variable to be considered. God had neither given Adam more knowledge of good and evil, nor repealed the command not to seek it.

However, he changed the relationship of trust that had existed between him and the man, for the man might not think that he was now dependent on God as before. There was a new voice to be listened to. God's voice might be temporarily, at least, ignored. For this reason we might think that God also had grounds to lose His trust in Adam, for He must inevitably suspect that Eve would now occupy some of Adam's thoughts.

In most respects Eve must have had the same limits on her and her world as did Adam. She had the same restrictions on her world as Adam -- i.e., the lack of knowledge of good and evil. But the limits on her own person were not as rigid. Eve did not have the responsibilities, although she shared in Adam's deprivation of knowledge. Her sole claim to a responsibility was in being a help-mate to Adam; she was therefore responsible to Adam more directly than she was to God. Adam was her measuring stick; that is, as long as she measured up to Adam's requirement she was fulfilling the function God had given her. It is therefore not clear to what extent Eve had to share in Adam's trust in God. Was she to trust in God only insofar as she was concerned with the outer world, (i.e., the act of seeking knowledge,) and in Adam as a guide in daily life? Or was God the guide in both instances? Of course it could be said that God's idea of an help-mate for Adam and Adam's own idea about his help-mate would be different. In this case Eve clearly had as much a direct responsibility to God as Adam did (in being an help-mate according to God's idea). However, Eve was not aware of any particular direction from God, and we might say that in actuality she followed Adam's lead. Therefore since Eve's restrictions seemed less stringent, she would be more tempted to test these bounds, to see how far she could push the boundaries of her world.

Evidently the God-Adam ties were stronger than the God-Eve ties. Adam knew what was expected of him; Eve did not. Adam accepted his role, Eve cried out -- "Not enough!" It could be that Eve would have desired to serve God directly too. Perhaps she resented having to serve God through Adam. (If this be the case, however, we must observe that her imagination must have been lacking, for God gave her the chance to make her responsibility, viz. companionship for Adam, as full and rich an occupation as her own capabilities could achieve. If this bored her, she could not have brought her full person to bear on the problem, for there is no evidence that Eve was deficient as a woman. That is, she must have had the capabilities of womanhood, even if she didn't use them well.)

We therefore see that God created imperfect beings from whom he expected trust, trust in things of which they had no knowledge and which they could not understand. To insure that He had their faith, God withheld from them knowledge of good and evil. This lack of knowledge was then the grounds of their faith.

Let us start again. It is said that Adam had reason. He must have understood in some sense himself and his limitations. Indeed, the man had spent much of his time alone, pouring over the creations of God in order to understand what they were and to name them accordingly. Adam was capable of this kind of intelligence. He clearly possessed an

intuitive recognition of these substances, for God had given him a function which he presumably was capable of fulfilling, or carrying out. A man who spends any substantial amount of time thus observing his environment inevitably thinks about himself and his relationship to that environment. It is quite likely, therefore, that Adam understood God as no other man has understood Him. His understanding, however, was from an entirely different viewpoint than that of which we normally think, for Adam's cognizance of God was an elementary response. His awareness of existence was no awareness of the intellect, but a primary response of the spirit. He was a gardener; he handled the earth, and was very much a part of it. His relationship to God was similar to his relationship to his environment in that he was aware of God's presence and no doubt felt a certain kinship to Him, for Adam was the spiritual man, having the breath of God within him.

Eve, on the other hand, is already (that is, as soon as she is created) less spiritual, for she is once removed from God, as it were. Although she is a creature of God, made by the hand of God, she is not a NEW creature. Formed from the rib of Adam as she is, she does not have the breath of Life breathed into her directly from God, but insofar as she partakes of the breath of Life she inherits it from Adam. Her awareness of God might therefore be less acute. This awareness is again decreased by the very nature of her function. Her concern is not with the earth; she therefore does not possess the feeling for the earth that Adam does. Her concern is entirely for the man, and her sensitivity is directed towards the man and his needs. Consequently her inclinations are away from God. Eve is the first person we see who in order to have a relationship with God would have to make a personal effort towards Him. Adam's response is automatic and requires no direction from the will. Eve's response, if she has one, must be motivated by the will.

If she could have made an effort towards God (which in her case would probably have been a closer association with Adam as gardener so that his inspiration could have been communicated to her) we would expect that she could have achieved the same degree of spirituality that Adam had. That is, she had only the breath of Life which she inherited from Adam. This amount could be nourished through further association with Adam, the source of her spirituality. (In this light one can think of Adam as a mediator to the rest of mankind, not of sin, but of true spirituality. We see therefore that there was sufficient potential in the beginnings of creation for mankind never to have strayed (or to put it more positively, for the good in creation to have been transmitted continuously), for it might have been in God's plan that Adam should communicate his own nearness to God to his descendants.)

However, disregarding the If's, we know that Eve didn't take this step. She was not a contemplative person, but a woman of action. Somehow not seeing beyond the substances of the earth, she wanted to build a world on the basis of what she could touch.

These things excited her imagination not towards God, but towards herself. She saw God's creatures as something she herself could manipulate, and was completely unaware of her position as servant of God, of her duty to keep these creatures for Him. Thus when the serpent led her to the tree of knowledge of good and evil she saw it as an instrument that would further her ability to build for herself a meaningful existence. She was not consciously rebelling against God's commandment, but more like the wilful child who can't understand the limitations of his world, and simply wants to assert his own genius, she couldn't understand the creatures of her world and wanted to add something of her own to it.

It is perhaps strange that Eve, when she had eaten the apple and had thus gained the tool that she desired, did not keep the knowledge to herself, but gave the apple to Adam so that he too could eat. One might think that with her inclination towards manipulation and creativity that she would want to mold Adam to her uses and truly reign over her world. But we see that this could not have happened, first because her sensitivity truly was towards the man, and that at least in her understanding of what it was to be a help-mate she did feel a responsibility to help him, and second because God had bound the two so closely together that He could not have punished Eve alone. Adam must have been involved had he eaten the apple or not.

Thus when Adam was offered the apple he did not completely lose his trust in God, but along with his trust in God he listened to the new voice (for he knew that God had given him the woman as an help-mate), perhaps saw in her eye the new knowledge which she now possessed, and simply ate. Of all the creatures Adam had in his charge, he neglected the woman, forgot that she too was a creature in the garden who needed his care, and failed to apply his intelligence to her to be aware of her needs. Thus only after he has eaten the fruit and sees with new eyes, does he name the woman Eve, the mother of all living. Then is the separation between Adam and Eve completed.

Accordingly, when God approaches Adam and says, "Why did you eat of the tree which I forbade?", Adam still in his trust of God answers, "The woman which Thou gavest to be with me gave it to me and I did eat." God must then punish his servants as He has said He would, and banishes them from the garden, condemning them to a life of toil and pain. Trust now has been lost on both sides, and in its place has been put suffering and pain. Faith must now be built on rocky ground, and any new relationships with God must first pass over the threshold of pain.

ii

God again shows his concern for man when he creates Christ. God is still attracted to man and cannot leave him alone. Such is the nature of His love that He must attempt to re-unite Himself with man. Here again God steps into the affairs of man and ever so subtly interrupts the order of things, places his stamp on the earth, and tries to re-establish a relationship with man. To do this He must create something new, something

on the same level as man, with the same restrictions as man has, but something which is restored to the sensibility of God that the man Adam had had. Consequently by creating in Mary the seed of man, God gave the new creature the form and limitations of man, and yet because he is not of man, but of God, the man has a new potential. This new potential is, in effect, the breathing into the seed the Breath of Life. In this manner God imparts Himself into the man, as He did in Adam. This is somewhat similar to the creation of Eve from the rib of Adam. God takes from the present creature and adds His own creativity to it. In both cases the creation is nothing which man himself could do. In both cases something new is added. In Adam's case the result was a creature of less spirituality; nevertheless it was a creation which had been intended to be an addition to the creatures already in existence. In Mary's case it was a creature which contained the hope that the former spirituality would be at least regained, if not added to. We see then that Christ must be a man, since otherwise no relationship could be established. If God should come Himself to reside on earth He would be setting up a rather meaningless relationship between Himself and Himself. We therefore believe that Christ was a man, which is to say that in his essence he was not God.

The creations of Eve and Christ are strikingly different, however. God took the woman from the man in the first instance, breathing Life into the man who was in turn to give it to the woman. When she failed to understand it there came a separation between first the woman and the man, and then between the man and God. In the birth of Christ the order was the reverse. God created Christ in the seed, imparting to him the breath of Life, then he caused Mary to bear the seed, so that now the woman is the medium. In this case no separation came about between the man and the woman, because Mary accepted God's will and allowed her son to be the communicator of the breath of Life. God gave this woman the chance to serve Him directly, and she accepted the challenge. Now, instead of woman coming from man, man comes from woman, an ordering which gives the woman the responsibility to God which she formerly lacked.

It is significant that Christ was placed in the home of a carpenter. This is his environment, and on the new level (which is different than Adam's because now there is not man alone, but many men) it is parallel to Adam's environment. It is an environment wherein man works alone, working with his hands, and has time to contemplate himself and his existence. The creatures with which Christ works are different than Adam's, however. The creatures to which Adam applied his intelligence were the primary creations, which because of his work are now understood by man as simply given. The creatures which have not yet been ordered are people. Christ's intelligence must be directed towards understanding people and finding an order in which men can have relationships between themselves as well as with God. Thus Christ, in working in a simple environment, came to understand, in the same way that Adam did, his function as being a keeper of men. In the years that he worked as a carpenter, he observed the actions of men, and saw their good as well as

their bad.

As the new man with the breath of Life renewed in him, Christ, again because of his position of working alone, came also to be aware of God's presence and to feel a kinship with Him. Thus he possessed a double sensitivity, one to God, and one to men. His problem was to bring the two together.

The new man was alone in facing his problem. He was not allowed to have an help-mate, for God did not permit the former mistake to re-occur. In this effort He made sure that there would be no other voice to which Christ might listen. In this manner an attempt was made to re-establish the trust between God and man. Thus the voice to which God would listen was Christ's, and the voice to which Christ must listen was God's. Here is the first correction of the other, weaker, system.

Accordingly, as Christ has no woman, there cannot be further generations stemming from him. Christ is then placed in the position of mediator which Adam lost. That is, it is a further responsibility of Christ to communicate to man the breath of Life. Since this cannot be through physical means it must occur in some other manner. Man must learn to associate with Christ first as a keeper of men in order to understand his feeling for God's creatures. Then must he further communicate the spirituality obtained through the breath of Life which he received directly from God. We must wait until later to see how this is achieved.

We know also that there were limits or boundaries to Christ's world and his person. The only limits on his world were those left by Adam. That is, Adam broke the bounds of the lack of knowledge of good and evil, but in its place he left the bounds of death. Thus every man after Adam was limited by death, and Christ, even though he was a new creature, was shaped in the form of man and was thus subject to man's restrictions. Death then is the limitation of Christ's world. The limits on Christ's person were two in number, one set up by Adam, and the other required by God. First, Christ again falls into the category of all men in having to suffer pain in order to have a relationship with God, for these are the conditions of faith left to mankind by Adam. Second, Christ has a responsibility to God to be a keeper of men. This too puts limitations on his person. It is clear that Christ, as well as Adam, can test these limitations to see how far he can go beyond them. Simply by refusing to suffer, or by refusing men, he can destroy the new spirituality which he was created to establish.

Do these limitations on Christ's world make him dependent on God? They must, for if man is to overcome death it must be through God. Consequently man must hope that God Himself will break the limitations of death; in this respect is man dependent on God.

Christ, through his nearness to God and his dependency on God, does not try to test these bounds. In his aloneness, he listens to God's voice, continually being mindful of God's will and praying, "Thy will be done." God's will is not always immediately obvious to him, but he makes the effort to discover what it is and even more to understand

17. (Eve, not understanding God's will, automatically rejected it, didn't consider it, and followed the lead of her own will.) Christ spends forty days in a wilderness, further extricating himself from voices which might confuse him in order to understand himself and his place in creation. When Satan offers him the means to break the bounds, he is not seeking a means to enlarge his world as Eve was, but he knows he must listen for only God's voice, and says, "Get thee behind me, Satan." (We suspect that had the serpent approached Adam, and not Eve, that his response would have been the same, for the same reasons.) Thus Christ learns what God's will is; he returns to the world of men and attempts to bring about the reconciliation of God and man. He now begins to directly communicate the breath of Life to men. He interprets the breath of Life as being Love, which he says is the most potent power of God, which is His means of drawing men to Him.

Men, however, do not understand what Christ's love is. He chooses twelve men on whom to concentrate his efforts in the hope that they will be able to communicate to other men the breath of Life, but even they misunderstand and fight among themselves for the honors which Christ has promised, desiring to exclude other men from Christ's favors, wishing to keep him for themselves. In all his efforts to give them Adam's spirituality it becomes more and more clear to Christ that he must SHOW men that God loves and God suffers. Ever more alone, and yet ever closer to God, Christ willingly chooses the cross, understanding that in order to complete his relationship with God he must suffer pain and death through love. Everything in Christ responds to this attraction to God and the equal attraction to men. He must draw the two attractions together, allow the love of God to pass through him to men. This is the pain that wrenches him apart. Christ then becomes a true mediator between men and God, a true communicator of the breath of Life. Man's trust in God, and God's trust in man is firmly established in the death of the man, who in dying in response to God's will, breaks through the limitations of his world. If Christ, when on the cross and taunted to show his power and save himself, had been able to descend from the cross he would have been breaking the bounds of death by himself. This act would have destroyed the relationship he had thus far attained, and would have condemned man to eternal death. But by accepting the limitations on his person he achieves a reconciliation with God which breaks the bounds of death and raises him back to the level of God, a level which is beyond Adam since he now possesses both knowledge of good and evil and eternal life.

iii

The problem now arises of spiritual man today. That is, is there a relationship of man today with God as a result of Adam and Christ? First, man can recognize God's concern and love for him which has been evident throughout the events of creation and salvation. When God breathed the breath of Life into Adam He imparted His life into the man. This was a commitment which, once made, could not be broken without destroying God too. Thus when Adam loses his status as spiritual man and is taken from God's presence,

God cannot simply deny man's existence and forget him. He is continually aware of man, and of the pain which man endures apparently to no avail. Evidently pain is too stringent a requirement for faith, and God, loving man, and desiring to regain a close relationship with him, tries to overcome the necessity for pain and re-imparts the breath of Life into man in the body of Christ. It therefore becomes clear that the birth of Christ was absolutely necessary for man to overcome the bounds of pain, for only in him is it possible to find the new breath of Life which can survive pain. Yet it is also clear that Christ was a unique person in that only he possessed this breath of Life. Consequently his birth does not automatically set up a new mankind, i.e., every man does not henceforth gain the breath of Life.

The mystery of Christ, therefore, is in his capacity to give to all men the breath of Life which he has had given to him, and has been able to keep. As son of God, he is given the role of mediator, first because he has to find the way for himself, and second since he must lead other men along that same path. Thus Christ's accomplishment is double; he achieves his own victory, and also promises to be the middle man through which the rest of mankind can walk. He says, "I and my Father are one," meaning, "I have established a single relationship with God." Then he invites mankind to follow him as "the way, the truth, the life," meaning that he offers the only key to the breath of Life. How is man to grasp this key? Through the blood and body of Christ; by a new faith that embodies the love and concern of God; by partaking of the spirituality and responsibilities of this new man, re-united with God, Christ.

Déjà Vu

At ten, dishonor was to disbelieve:
Behind those trees of childhood,
When smutty voices in smudged faces told
Of forest lives we lived before,
I was (or had been once) a cat
Howling and roaming on pre-Caucasian plains,
Or an equally uncanny feline bundle
Soft in the lap of an unknown Cleopatra.

O, Pythagoras's metempsychosis!
At fifteen history takes on surer form
And we communicate to re-assure a kinship.
Thus friends are asked if they had ever done
Something they felt they'd done sometime before,
Perhaps in a previous unspeakable incarnation?

Once, when he stuffed his pockets with stale bread
And stopped to feed the pale and stupid swans,
I watched him shake his head
And say "There's one that always wins!"
And toss the bread to that particular swan.

That was at twenty. Watching this re-enactment
Of a moment lived before but unremembered
I stood on that stone bridge, as if enclosed
Forever in a garden of yellow roses.

The phrase supplied, at twenty-five we speak
Succinctly of this mystery, allude
To a well-known teacake, and describe
The haunts and huntsmen of indescribable dreams.
Dishonor now is not to document,
Record the notes of half-forgotten tunes
And photograph those sights already seen.

Elliott Zuckerman

AUTUMN MEAL

Adrift in her kitchen she cooks wild animals:

She steams the rice-stuffed artichoke, a monster

Of dragon scales with dark constricted heart.

While raving asparagus writhe their boiling tails,

The chicken-beast subsides under the roaster

That clicks the reluctant power of her art.

O happy mother, serve your somber son

Brown and amber, gold, and black-tipped green!

Elliott Zuckerman

METAMORPHOSES

I

"she has deserted me" the poet cried
and leapt exultant from his chains
he gladly slept - abandoned pad and pen
for that short end of pain, - surcease of
flashing images upon his brain, the
dance of fire across his spine. he turned
his mind to men, resumed reality.

they say somehow he chained himself
proud upright to his wall.
they say somehow he lit the pyre.

II

the two gold leaves you hold,
flame-tipped
were once youth's virile green.
once, growing in the wind
they shared the joys of nature unconfined
as man within his youth must
seek his source and power.
spring's verdant promises are only kept
until the desert draught of summer flares,
as vows of children - law until approaching
manhood tries the blood.
look now upon your golden leaves
with older eyes.
like you they tasted nature in its full,
and having lived with beauty, beauty
have become.

D. Bond

AUTUMN

Gold is shouting in the eye
And orange-red-vermillion bursts in the brain
Like dolphins leaping at sun-bait.
Pumpkins line the lanes of thought;
Yellow echoes spread to trees
And handsome meadow grass
From pulpy caverns, seeded with dreams
Of autumns fixed on their frames forever.

John Kiley

RELATIVITY

The sky is fitted out in blue
Stretched on the ribs of a pitched parasol of sight,
The optic nerve, sprung from its brain root,
Mainposts this star-high conjunctiva of sky.
Birds and dragonflies wing by, cerebrum-shot,
To nest in eyebrows at the edge of light,
A tree, caressed, licks the sun
and tearducts empty in the riverbeds.
Night the camel tires then of sun-cud
And munching at the stave ropes of the eye
Unsockets day
To leave behind reedy after-images of dreams
Which haunt the retinal marshes of the night.

John Kiley

POEM WRITTEN BY A COMPUTER

Can you tell, really, my slick alliteration
The shallow echoes of my tape-wound feelings
Cruising down the soldered circuits
Quicker than quick-silvered thought?
These words that ring, you say, like slugs on a stoop
And scan like tomorrow to a dead man;
The meter washed of life and stuck up
Like mouldy mattresses to dry.
Mechanical, you say?
Stiff as the rusty joint of January's woods?
Wooden as the splinters in a cooped up Argive?
Remember! I never saw a lake hone down the sky!
A river gallivant a countryside
A bird, mad to get away from itself, slice the blue into a
thousand quill pieces!
A daisy on a dull day warm the sun.
Lifeless? But I never saw a raindrop tickle the armpits of a
leaf to laughter,
A baby flash from its fleshy clam that brilliant pearl,
Heard some slender throat pluck to song the axis of this dead world,
The echoes of it gild my metal memory forever.

John Kiley

The sand sifts under my feet,
And there is no ground to stand on.
I remember similar evenings, when we
Would come to the beach
And lie together in the lap of the waves.
And when we were through,
We would go to the corridor, the corridor that runs along
Any beach and is neither sand nor sea.
Here in the backwash and last grab of the waves
We would lie, and the water would comb your hair as it returned.
I suppose it was the pressure of our bodies
That compressed the sand we rested on and made it remain
Under us as the sand around us slipped away,
And left us locked in love on a small crumbling pedestal.

John F. White

THE VISITOR

A Comedy In One Scene

By BenHenry Berger*

Marius sits in his study, half asleep. He starts occasionally, as though he were being periodically awakened by a loud noise. He is both sleepy and restless: though he tries to sleep he is too nervous to do so. There is a knock at the door. Marius starts, then closes his eyes again as though he has realized that the sound was only another dream-noise. The knock at the door is repeated. Marius again opens his eyes and waits, listening for a third knock at the door to confirm his awakening conviction that it is not a dream. A third knock. Marius gets up from his chair and goes to the door; he opens it and looks out, still half asleep.

The Visitor: (from the wings) May I come in?

Marius: (abstracted and puzzled) Why yes...yes; come in.

The Visitor: enters and seats himself in the chair from which Marius has arisen. Marius follows him closely with his eyes, still standing at the door.

Marius: (casually) Uhm, would you mind telling me who you are before you make yourself too comfortable? And; by the way, how did you get into my house?

The Visitor: Such terribly direct, almost rude questions to put to a guest. And someone who intends to be with you for a very long time. But they're really not important questions. Take the one about how I got in: I don't intend to answer it. Even if I could (and I can't: I've forgotten the answer) I don't think that I

*Behind this cautious pseudonym hides a recent alumnus of the college.

would. (The Visitor turns to Marius and looks at him almost glaringly.) As for the other question, the first one...you know who I am, don't you?

Marius: I thought...for a moment...but...I don't believe it's you.

The Visitor: Yes, that seems to be the trouble lately: no one seems to believe that it is I. But it is...I. Now then, what is your price?

Marius: My price?

The Visitor: Yes, of course; what is it?

Marius: I'm not sure I understand. My price for what?

The Visitor: Why for your soul, of course. What other reason could possibly have brought me here? I've heard you, dozens of times, beg, from this very chair, for a chance to sell your soul to the devil; that's why I'm here. I certainly don't want such an energetic soul to get away from me. Now, come quickly, before I change my mind: what's your price?

Marius remains silent, incredulous and dazed.

The Visitor: For someone who has looked forward to a transaction so eagerly, you certainly don't seem prepared for it. I should have thought that you would have a hundred things at your fingertips that you could advance as a fair price. Don't you? I'm sure you do: so name one of them and let's get this thing over with.

Marius: This is a joke.

The Visitor: Of course it's a joke! There's something deeply ridiculous about this buying and selling of souls. I'm glad you see that; it pleases me that you see that. Most people only see the serious or the seductive or the fascinating aspects of it: but you see the humor involved. That's good; that's very good. It speaks

well for you. But I do have other appointments, so please name your price and we'll get the whole thing settled right off.

Marius: (slyly) How do I know that it's really you? Where are your credentials?

The Visitor: Why the moment I laid eyes on you, you knew who I was, didn't you? On that account alone there should be no doubt. What kind of credentials would you want? My card? A miracle or two? A few immortals conjured up? That really is rather childish. You shall know me entirely by my works. (pause) Just set the terms of the contract, and when I fulfill my end of the bargain there will be no doubt as to who I am.

Marius: (slowly) Perhaps I'm beginning to believe you. But if you aren't...Well, I suppose you're right: I should just get the thing over with. Even if you're only a lunatic, I'm told that it's safest to humor lunatics. Will you go as soon as I've named my price?

The Visitor: Of course; in a manner of speaking.

Marius: What do you mean, "in a manner of speaking?"

The Visitor: Well, once we've formalized our agreement, I shall always be with you in a sense. You know what I mean.

Marius: Yes, of course...And how is the agreement to be "formalized?" Do I sign something in blood?

The Visitor: (laughing) No, of course not. My, you are young. Everyone knows that that's not how it's done. It never has been done that way. That's an ugly, tasteless myth generated and perpetuated by the opposition. But let's not talk about him; it makes me a bit ill.

Marius: You didn't answer my question.

The Visitor: Oh, the formalization. It's just a matter of your giving me your word, nothing more, nothing less. That's enough to commit you permanently, cosmically, irrevocably. Things are arranged that way somehow: your word will be enough to do the trick.

Marius: And about what do I give my word?

The Visitor: Oh, you just say that, after you have received whatever you demand of me, you commit your soul to my hands, or something like that. Although I would prefer a precise formulation of your word, it will, necessarily, be imprecise. But I can accept that. It's the Spirit of the thing that counts.

At this last line, The Visitor rises from the chair and walks to the opposite side of the room from which he entered. Marius watches him, but remains silent. The Visitor looks out a window, fidgets, twiddles his thumbs and, in general, does all he can to appear impatient. Marius begins to pace slowly, nervously and thoughtfully.

Marius: (slyly) What if my wish is such that you are unable to collect?

The Visitor: (still looking out the window, half bored, half amused) What do you mean?

Marius: For example, suppose I say that it is my wish that you leave me alone for the rest of my life? Doesn't that automatically place me in the hands of...the opposition?

The Visitor: (turning to face Marius) Mmmmm, No, I'm afraid not. Things don't work that way. You see, I'm with you so long as you live, almost of necessity; and the other fellow is also, necessarily, with you. The only way I might be able to rid you of me would be to kill you immediately. And I'm sure you don't want that, do you? I must admit though, on second thought, that I wouldn't mind it.

Marius: And why wouldn't you? I haven't made the bargain yet.

The Visitor: Haven't you? I'm not so sure: it seems to me that anyone who wants to make a deal with the devil is in my hands. Everything else is a formality in which I participate out of sheer Graciousness. Now, let us bargain: what do you want from me?

Marius: Alright, I'm persuaded that it is you. I accept the contract; I have waited for you for a long time. You know what I shall ask, I'm sure. I want to be as close as possible to you. I want you to help me to explore every part of my soul that is disguised and restrained because of...that other fellow. I want to nurture and expand and explode every instinct, every passion, every pulsation of energy that exists in me. I want to unleash all the energy I possess. Action: complete and total activity, every moment of every waking day. I want to be so filled with action that it seems as though I'm moving out of a thundercloud. Possession: of everything. With my eyes, my ears, my sense of taste and touch and smell. Every sense drunk with living things, with life. And I never want to stop; I want to be in motion as long as I live. (he comes closer to the Visitor)

Do you know why I stay in this study every night and every day I can? Why I sleep and sleep and sleep this dead dreamless sleep until I can no longer close my eyes? Because, no matter what I did do, there was always some new restraint for my energies: rules, masks, order; deceptions, "decencies," superficialities. All the "wisdom" and prudence of a well composed, reticulated society forced upon me. And since I couldn't do everything, I decided to do nothing, and became afraid of every minute of awareness. I was afraid of them because I knew that each one would show me some new restraint, some new way of not being able to discharge my energy, of having to modify it, distort it, suppress it, "channel it intelligently," according to the rules.

So I continually called for you. I felt that you were the only one who could help me. You would know how I was sick of the non-living; You would know what restlessness is. Perhaps you are fighting the same battle I want to fight: I want to use all my energy.

And now I can; now I can be free. Now I can unleash every force that struggles for release in my soul. Whatever is left after I've

done that I shall gladly give to you...To begin with, I think that we ought to start with a long, long voyage. To the Orient per...

The Visitor: Wait a minute! Hold on! You must first give me your word. State, as clearly and precisely as possible, what it is that you want from me and what you shall give me in return. Then we can attend to the details.

Marius: I want to explore and use, with you, every aspect of my soul that is in your power, in return for which I shall give to you the whole of my soul upon my death...through natural causes. And I pledge to you that I shall willingly give up my soul then.

The Visitor: Bravo! Well said! Exactly said. We won't quibble over details such as what you mean by "natural causes." We are sure that that was added out of sheer, lovable distrust. The bargain is done, completed. And now We must go. (he starts toward the door) Goodnight!

Marius: Wait! Wait, it isn't completed yet. You haven't told me how you intend to carry out your end of it.

The Visitor: (absent-mindedly) We haven't? Oh, yes, that is a detail that must be attended to. But the answer is so short and simple. We shall grant your request by allowing you to...return to sleep. Goodnight.

Marius: (an overwhelming shout) WHHAAATTT??

The Visitor: (hands on his ears) Please, Marius, don't be too violent. It distresses Us to see you becoming too violent for these last few minutes. We say "last few minutes" because the bargain doesn't take effect until after We have left the room.

Marius: What do you mean, you'll grant my request by allowing me to return to sleep? That's exactly what I don't want to do now!

The Visitor: Perhaps not. But, My dear boy, that is exactly what you asked for. You see, apparently We are not who you think We are. You asked to be able to explore and use every aspect of your soul over which We have the power, in return for which you promised Us your complete soul. (thoughtfully) Perhaps you ought to have ascertained, just a little more carefully, Who We Are. You see, it is only Oneness and Rest and civilized meditation, and law-abidingness and such things that We are concerned about.

Marius: I don't understand...you mean that you are...the...the Opposition?

The Visitor: (opening the door) Precisely. Goodnight.

Marius: But you tricked me. How can that be? How can HE deceive?

The Visitor: We didn't deceive you in any direct way: We dislike lies We only allowed you to arrive at your own conclusions. No, my boy, We believe that you have lost your soul, and, what is more, you have lost something equally important: your ability to bargain with that other fellow. You have committed yourself to Us, and We shall not allow you to escape that commitment.

We shall go now, and allow you to sleep, to rest, docilely, dreamlessly. (laughing) It's strange, isn't it, that this is to be your reward? But We are fond of Irony and you were not clever. That was your problem all along: you were too clever to want to play the game, and not clever enough to win it. Few men are clever enough: they are far too accustomed to believing that only the devil is capable of striking a bargain.

It has been a good day's work; We are pleased. May We bid you...
...Adieu?

The VISITOR exits. Marius begins to weep violently. Gradually his sobs subside, and he falls quietly into a dead and dreamless sleep.

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