

The Harvest of Summer or The Modest Newsletter Boasting Quite Lengthy Contributions

The SpiritFest Tales

by Rachel Bauder

In late July, when the thoughts of contemporary Christians turn to summer camps, a busload of pilgrims departed from Broadway Church in Kansas City, Missouri, to travel to Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. In Detroit Lakes, Soo Pass Ranch annually hosted SpiritFest Midwest, a three-day event of Christian camps, activities, and rock concerts. The Broadway Church Youth Pastor, a middle-aged man in blue jeans and a cowboy hat, was taking his small youth group up to the SpiritFest, and to encourage interest in his church, he had offered a free bus ride to anyone else in the community who wanted to attend the celebration. His own youth group arrived first. There were Three Sophomore Girls who appeared in flowery blue jean bell-bottoms and clomped into the bus rather clumsily on sandal soles four inches high. Each of the girls wore a T-shirt with a slogan—"God's Princess," "Jesus Chick," and "When God Made Me, He was Just Showing Off." Following them were the Rich Kid and the Rich Kid's Fiancée. The Rich Kid's newest Christian T-shirt displayed a man in black leather straddling a Harley-Davidson with a scantily clad female perched behind him. A cross was superimposed on the motorcycle, and the slogan under the picture read, "Ride Free...to Eternal Life." While the Rich Kid was conspicuously referring to his gold watch to make sure he was on time, his Fiancée was showing off an enormous diamond engagement ring. To complement the diamond she wore five earrings in each ear, a tiny diamond stud in her nose, and several golden rings in her tongue, chin, and navel. The Three Sophomores looked at her in envy.

Puffing behind the Rich Kid's glittering Fiancée, the High School Dropout heaved herself onto the bus. It was a marvel that the portly girl did not burst the seams of her tight miniskirt and bikini top, above which a "WWJD"¹ pendant was dangling in considerable cleavage. Jiggling to her seat, she pulled out a compact mirror and dusted her rather pimply face until the powder ran in sprinkles off the creases of her nose. Following her was the Nerd—the eleventh-grader who always wore a suit and tie, aced all his classes, and studied classical violin. He had brought his violin with him, and as he swung it about awkwardly he revealed that he was still at the stage in puberty when every bone is the wrong size. As the Nerd peered through his thick glasses lenses at the empty seats on the bus, the High School Dropout giggled and scooted over, but the Nerd brushed past her without a word. His Concerned Mother followed with a look of relief. Her hands and forehead were wrinkled from her worries and her prayers that her son might adopt a more typical Christian lifestyle, and she had grown thin with her efforts to get him to go to the SpiritFest. The Concerned Mother's hair was turning gray prematurely, and she nervously ran her fingers through it as the Nerd unpacked his violin and began to tune it.

After the youth group had filed into the bus, the other community members began to arrive. The Teen Worship Leader from the Evangelical Free Church was a young man in his twenties, with well-bleached hair and well-tanned muscles. His tank top effectively revealed the hours he had spent at the beach and the gym, and it boasted a picture of the Bible with the saying, "When all else fails, read the instructions." This slogan was the only thing about him that hinted at his origins in a Missouri Synod Lutheran Church—an origin he had abandoned early for the E-Free crowd. Perhaps a little self-conscious of the slogan (and perhaps with an eye for the girls), the Worship Leader removed the tank top entirely upon boarding the bus. He had brought a guitar and a considerable supply of snacks and beverages, and (as he would demonstrate later on the trip) he had a voice very finely suited for elevator music.

A rather strange-looking personage in casual business dress boarded next, his bright eyes peering sharply through a pair of platinum wire-rims at the assembled young people. He carried a clipboard and a small briefcase with him, and when the Youth Pastor greeted him, the strange personage introduced himself as a Catholic Observer and a writer for

¹ "What Would Jesus Do?"

Touchstone. He seated himself unobtrusively near the back of the bus as a Christian Aerobics Instructor climbed aboard, her large nose and flat forehead shining red from her morning run. She had pulled her short hair back into a tight ponytail to show off her crucifix earrings, and on the back of her windbreaker she wore a small representation of Jesus' bleeding hands and the slogan "Body Piercing Saved My Life." The last person to board the bus was a massive biker in chains and leather. A recent convert and the leader of a newly formed biker evangelization ministry, this Converted Biker had braided his greasy black locks into stubby pigtailed that barely hid the fake scars on his jaws. He seated himself with a cheerful greeting to everybody and a teddy-bear hug for the Youth Pastor. Then the Youth Pastor, who was also the bus driver, took his own seat at the wheel and announced that the bus was departing from Kansas City.

"It's a nine-hour drive," he said, "and to pass the time and glorify God, I suggest that we begin with a testimony time as we travel. If anyone has a story of God's blessing in their life, we'd all be happy to hear it. The mics are in the front seats." A few of the youth group kids groaned, but the pilgrims in general thought it was a good idea. The Converted Biker, nearly bursting with spiritual enthusiasm, seized the first mic and began his tale.²

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Prologue to the Worship Leader's Tale

As the Catholic Observer was nearing the end of his tale, the Teen Worship Leader began to drum his fingers on the neck of his guitar in irritation. When the Observer finished, the young man quickly reached over, took the mic from him, and began to say something like this:

"You know, I think that was a totally weird tale! I never read any hocus pocus like that in the Bible—"³

"I know, you believe in Sola Scriptura," the Observer broke in quickly.

"I do not," the Worship Leader responded with an offended air. "I don't know beans about the Latin mass. I believe in Scripture alone. None of this business of farmyard councils or the latest word from the Head Rooster—"

"Now, brothers," the Youth Pastor called back. "We're here to fellowship, not to quarrel over old differences. We're all very eager to hear your tale. Perhaps you'd better get started."

"Alright, alright," the Worship Leader said, and he cleared his throat.

Here Begins the Tale of the Worship Leader

"You know what, a hen's pretty cool for a bird. Think about how she sits on her eggs before they hatch and then does all that extra work of finding corn for them. When her little chicks are scared, she gathers them all up under her wings, warm and snug, to protect them.

A little red hen like this lived long ago in a small cottage in a farmyard. The hen shared the farmyard with three other animals: a pig, a cat, and a goose. One day the hen was walking around the farmyard when she noticed several tall stalks of wheat that were white to the harvest.

'Who wants to harvest and thresh this wheat?' the little red hen called to the pig, the cat, and the goose.

'Not me,' said the pig.

'Not me,' said the cat.

'Not me,' said the goose.

'Then I'll do it myself,' said the little red hen. And she did.

When the little red hen had harvested and threshed all the wheat, she poured the golden grains into a large sack.

'Who wants to take this wheat to the mill to be ground into flour?' she asked.

'Not me,' said the pig.

²As in most testimony times, the tales do not go in any particular order. However, in this case the tales quickly degenerate from "testimonies" to more (or less) sophisticated stories that "quit" or critique other pilgrims and absent persons (such as parents and political figures). The Worship Leader's Tale is the seventh.

³The Catholic Observer has just told the story of the Little Red Hen, in which the bread comes to symbolize the Eucharist. The tale ends with the uncooperative farm animals eventually going hungry while the hen and her obedient chicks eat the bread.

‘Not me,’ said the cat.

‘Not me,’ said the goose.

‘Then I’ll do it myself,’ said the little red hen. And she did.

After the wheat had been ground into flour, the little red hen took it back to her little cottage. From her porch she called out to her farmyard friends.

‘Who wants to bake this flour into a loaf of bread?’

‘Not me,’ said the pig.

‘Not me,’ said the cat.

‘Not me,’ said the goose.

‘Then I’ll do it myself,’ said the little red hen.

Now, if you think that the little red hen made her bread and then ate it all herself, you obviously don’t know how totally awesome this bird is. She knew that the pig, the cat, and the goose would get hungry sooner or later, so she found her friend the bumblebee and sent him to get the three animals to come help her with her baking. The bumblebee buzzed slowly toward the animals and began to drone something like this:

‘Beloved, the hen bids you to come help her prepare her feast of fine bread. This bread, as I take it, is a living bread on account of which, if you eat it, you will never hunger. For it is written, “Man shall live by bread alone, by every word that cometh out of the mouth of God.” Now, children, the meaning of this word is...’⁴

But you know, nobody heard the bee. The goose went on cackling to herself; the cat went on snoozing; the pig went on digging corncocks out of the mud. The bee droned a little longer and then returned to the hen.

When the hen saw that the bee didn’t work, she found a pit bull and sent him to get her friends to come help her with her baking. The pit bull hurled himself furiously at the three animals and began snapping out a very sharp barrage of words like this:

‘Repent! Now is the time to work! The night is approaching fast, when no man can work and when only those who have worked will be fed. Work now, wretched backsliders, for he who does not work shall not eat! Repent and tremble, for the hunger pains of those who do not have the bread are terrible—’

With a snort the pig seized the pit bull by the tail and flung him into a barrel of cold water. The pit bull floundered, jumped out, snarled, and returned to the little red hen.

‘Oh, dear!’ cried the hen when she saw him. ‘My friends won’t listen to any of my messengers. How will I get them to come?’

At that moment the little red hen looked out of her window and saw a circus caravan winding its way along the road. Suddenly getting a fabulous idea, she immediately ran out and invited the caravan into the farmyard. I absolutely cannot tell you half of the awesomeness of that circus, or of the stir they created when they arrived at the hen’s cottage porch. There were snake charmers and fire-swallowers; there were acrobatic monkeys that could juggle hoops and play bongo-drums at the same time; there was a singing troupe of parakeets; and there was an elephant that could belly dance. The gang was headed up by a magpie in a cowboy hat who pranced up and down, doing one-bird skits and giving totally cool ten-second inspirational. When the farmyard animals heard the commotion at the little hen’s cottage, they all came running together to check it out—not only the pig, the cat, and the goose, but all their relatives and friends in the entire neighborhood. The monkeys struck up a beat on the bongo drums and the elephant began to dance. The fire-swallowers lit their torches and the parakeets burst into a rousing chorus of “Cum-ba-ya.” When the goose heard this, she was so moved in her heart that she fell down weeping on the porch steps. The pig was so filled with spiritual power by the elephant’s dancing that he jumped up on stage with her and began the Macarena. The cat, meanwhile, watched as the magpie reenacted a gunfight between himself and the Demon of Hunger. The skit was so dramatic that the crowd not only encored the victorious magpie enthusiastically but began showering him with large sums of money to help him carry out his program. And, you know, I don’t have the time to tell you everything else that went on that afternoon, but the goose wept and swooned and swayed to the parakeets’ singing, and the pig and the elephant shook the ground, and the magpie raked in the big bucks to support the ministry. Near the end of the evening,

⁴This misquotation is intentional.

the little red hen herself came to the door of her cottage and joined in the celebration. The animals all gave her a rousing applause for her ingenuity and the high quality of the evening's entertainment.

"I've gotten a real big blessing here tonight," the pig and the elephant shouted together.

"I've never been so touched in all my life," the goose sobbed.

"A mighty work is being done here," the cat declared, counting the magpie's profits.

And everyone was so satisfied with the evening that they decided to hold a circus regularly and incorporate more belly dancers and demon fights. So, having been so blessed, they returned to their homes in peace.

Lucy, the Professor, and Inerrancy

by Ryan Martin

While recently returning to C. S. Lewis' first creation of the *Chronicles of Narnia, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, I stumbled across a delightful passage, the significance of which I had completely missed in many previous readings many years ago. The part of the story to which I am referring is fairly inconsequential to the broader plot, but its contemporary relevance struck me, maybe even more than the story's more familiar Christological allegory.

Perhaps you remember it. The four children Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy, had been sent away from London so that they would be protected from the air-raids during the war. They had been staying with an old professor in a large house with many rooms. Lucy, the youngest, was the first to stumble into a spare room's wardrobe and find the land of Narnia. Upon her return, she told her siblings of her adventures; they were skeptical. Next, it is both Edmund and Lucy who stumble into the wardrobe's mysterious other-world. Lucy was thrilled to see Edmund had found the country, knowing that he would corroborate her story. Yet, when they find their way out of Narnia, Lucy is crushed when her older brother denies ever being there.

The older two children, Peter and Susan, do not know what to think of Lucy's persistent story, so they visit the Professor with whom they are staying during the summer. Now this is the conversation I want to point you to. To make this easier (and more enjoyable) for all of us, I am simply going to let Mr. Lewis retell his own story:

The result was that next morning they decided that they really would go and tell the whole thing to the Professor. "He'll write to Father if he thinks there is really something wrong with Lu," said Peter; "it's getting beyond us." So they went and knocked at the study door, and the Professor said "Come in," and got up and found chairs for them and said he was quite at their disposal. Then he sat listening to them with the tips of his fingers pressed together and never interrupting, till they had finished their whole story. After that he said nothing for quite a long time. Then he cleared his throat and said the last thing either of them expected.

"How do you know?" he asked, "that your sister's story is not true?"

"Oh, but—" began Susan, and then stopped. Anyone could see from the old man's face that he was perfectly serious. Then Susan pulled herself together and said, "But Edmund said they had only been pretending."

"That is a point," said the Professor, "which certainly deserves consideration; very careful consideration. For instance—if you will excuse me for asking the question—does your experience lead you to regard your brother or your sister as the more reliable? I mean, which is the more truthful?"

"That's just the funny thing about it, Sir," said Peter. "Up till now, I'd have said Lucy every time."

"And what do you think, my dear?" said the Professor, turning to Susan.

"Well," said Susan, "in general, I'd say the same as Peter, but this couldn't be true—all this about the wood and the Faun."

"That is more than I know," said the Professor, "and a charge of lying against someone whom you have always found truthful is a very serious thing; a very serious thing indeed."

"We were afraid it mightn't even be lying," said Susan. "We thought there might be something wrong with Lucy."

"Madness, you mean?" said the Professor quite coolly. "Oh, you can make your minds easy about that. One has only to look at her and talk to her to see that she is not mad."

“But then,” said Susan and stopped. She had never dreamed that a grown-up would talk like the Professor and didn’t know what to think.

“Logic!” said the Professor half to himself. “Why don’t they teach logic at these schools? There are only three possibilities. Either your sister is telling lies, or she is mad, or she is telling the truth. You know she doesn’t tell lies and it is obvious that she is not mad. For the moment then and unless any further evidence turns up, we must assume that she is telling the truth.”

Susan looked at him very hard and was quite sure from the expression on his face that he was not making fun of them.

“But how could it be true, Sir?” said Peter.

“Why do you say that?” asked the Professor.

“Well for one thing,” said Peter, “if it was real why doesn’t everyone find this country every time they go to the wardrobe? I mean, there was nothing there when we looked; even Lucy didn’t pretend there was.”

“What has that to do with it?” said the Professor.

“Well, Sir, if things are real, they’re there all the time.”

“Are they?” said the Professor; and Peter did not know quite what to say.

Now the dialogue between the three of them continues for a bit more, but the selection above will more than suffice (you can find the passage yourself and finish the conversation—it is found in chapter 5, “Back on This Side of the Door”). Of course, the interesting thing about this passage is that it seems as if it two great philosophical systems are arguing back and forth, essentially that of pre-Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment. Maybe one would say that faith and reason are at odds in this conversation. Peter and Susan are only operating from a certain point of view. Their rational system does not allow for parallel universes. The Professor, of course, has absolutely no problem accepting the fact that there may be other unknown worlds.

This passage could find many parallels today, and I believe that Lewis’ primary goal is to debunk the idea that science and empiricism are the only ways of epistemologically approaching life. But I want to “apply” this little excerpt to a different realm: *inerrancy*. I think we all know of the contradictions that some force onto the Scriptures. I know of some who, if they do not outright deny the doctrine of inerrancy, are at least sympathetic to those who do. But perhaps in this situation it would be best to apply the Professor’s logic. Before we accuse the Scriptures of being false, it might be best to first question whether the Author is one whom we know speaks false things. We know that God has always been truthful. Is there Truth without Him? We further know, of course, that God is not mad. This eliminates the second option.

This leaves only one of the three possibilities. God, in His holy scriptures, is wholly truthful. This should be enough for us to avoid leveling against God so strong an accusation as *lying*, or even being mistaken. After all, a denial of inerrancy, and other ideas of this type, do not simply sit in a vacuum, remaining isolated from our other religious beliefs. In fact, once one begins to deny that the Scriptures are completely true, he begins to change the very *idea* of God. In the words of the Professor, “a charge of lying against someone whom you have always found truthful is a very serious thing; a very serious thing indeed.”

The so-called “problems” in Scripture are not new. Unbelievers have been pointing them out for hundreds of years. Believers sometimes provide answers, and sometimes they cannot. Sometimes the problem gets answered hundreds of years after the initial question is raised. The ultimate difference between people with problems and people with answers is one of faith. We as believers must remember first that sweeping statement by our Savior: “Sanctify by thy truth. *Thy word is truth.*”

Remarks

If you could be prepared to discuss “Gerontion” we would be much obliged! If this is your first or one of your first exposures to T. S. Eliot’s poetry, then you should try to read some more. A really good place to go to that will be worthwhile will be to his play “Murder in the Cathedral.” If you try to read his long poems and figure them out in a week you might find yourself frustrated. “Murder in the Cathedral” is a really good way to begin to appreciate T. S.

Eliot. He has written works of criticism which may also prove helpful to you - "Tradition and the Individual Talent" comes to mind.

Gerontion

*Thou hast nor youth nor age
But as it were an after dinner sleep
Dreaming of both.*

Here I am, an old man in a dry month,
Being read to by a boy, waiting for rain.
I was neither at the hot gates
Nor fought in the warm rain
Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,
Bitten by flies, fought.
My house is a decayed house,
And the Jew squats on the window sill, the owner,
Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp,
Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in London.
The goat coughs at night in the field overhead;
Rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron, merds.
The woman keeps the kitchen, makes tea,
Sneezes at evening, poking the peevish gutter.

I an old man,
A dull head among windy spaces.

Signs are taken for wonders. "We would see a sign":
The word within a word, unable to speak a word,
Swaddled with darkness. In the juvenescence of the year
Came Christ the tiger

In depraved May, dogwood and chestnut, flowering Judas,
To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk
Among whispers; by Mr. Silvero
With caressing hands, at Limoges
Who walked all night in the next room;
By Hakagawa, bowing among the Titians;
By Madame de Tornquist, in the dark room
Shifting the candles; Fraulein von Kulp
Who turned in the hall, one hand on the door. Vacant shuttles
Weave the wind. I have no ghosts,
An old man in a draughty house
Under a windy knob.

After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
Guides us by vanities. Think now
She gives when our attention is distracted

And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions
That the giving famishes the craving. Gives too late
What's not believed in, or if still believed,
In memory only, reconsidered passion. Gives too soon
Into weak hands, what's thought can be dispensed with
Till the refusal propagates a fear. Think
Neither fear nor courage saves us. Unnatural vices
Are fathered by our heroism. Virtues
Are forced upon us by our impudent crimes.
These tears are shaken from the wrath-bearing tree.

The tiger springs in the new year. Us he devours. Think
at last
We have not reached conclusion, when I
Stiffen in a rented house. Think at last
I have not made this show purposelessly
And it is not by any concitation
Of the backward devils.
I would meet you upon this honestly.
I that was near your heart was removed therefrom
To lose beauty in terror, terror in inquisition.
I have lost my passion: why should I need to keep it
Since what is kept must be adulterated?
I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch:
How should I use it for your closer contact?

These with a thousand small deliberations
Protract the profit of their chilled delirium,
Excite the membrane, when the sense has cooled,
With pungent sauces, multiply variety
In a wilderness of mirrors. What will the spider do,
Suspend its operations, will the weevil
Delay? De Bailhache, Fresca, Mrs. Cammel, whirled
Beyond the circuit of the shuddering Bear
In fractured atoms. Gull against the wind, in the windy strait
Of Belle Isle, or running on the Horn,
White feathers in the snow, the Gulf claims,
And an old man driven by the Trades
To a sleepy corner.

Tenants of the house,
Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season.