

INTO THE LANDS OF THE GODS

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Towards the Gods Far and Unknown

My reverie took flight, with autumn's sight,
For I was abstracted, entranced, and light.

I beamed to the site suffused with insight—
The solutions are deep within the mind,
Reachable by dreams of the lucid kind.

I flew south from my home, in New Hamburg,
Over the Hudson river, toward Newburgh,

Past Chelsea, and the great Storm King Mountain—
On philosophical aspiration.

A wake of leaves trailed behind, like a stream,
While I gathered clues, through my musing means.

My design, in this vaporous pipe dream,
Was to converse with all the Gods who seemed.

If Fishkill's and Peekskill's murderous names
Had not been token enough, there soon came
A sequence of locales that seemed to be
Ominous in their triple proximity.

First was Sleepy Hollow, the haunted land
Of the gambols of the headless horseman,
Then the Gate of Heaven Cemetery,

And the surprising Town of Valhalla—
A bright afterlife of an old-time place,
Of shops built right up against the road race.

I stopped to rest, well away from the maze,
Dazzled by the lustrous autumnal haze,
In a warm day's musk, before twilight dusk,
Near shining gates, toward the unearthly sod
Of the resplendent Graveyard of the Gods.

Over the stream, there was an arched bridge thrown.
Then I knew I'd gone beyond the known:
For in that span, each piece was a keystone.

I questioned two luminous angel goths,
“Where be the mythic Graveyard of the Gods?”

They looked askance, then smiled and pointed past,
“It's just beyond the land of epitaphs.”

Remembrances

The cemetery was where the ducks were fed,
Where two friends feasted on wine, verse, and bread,
Amidst the flowered trees and quiet streams—
The home for both the living and the dead.

We lived at once, aware that life was dear,
Oft smiling at Heaven and Hell without fear;
Yes, we had some laughs, gave true love, and made
Life better—for it was now and we were here.

Here the grave-sign of The Four Elements:
From the fires of stars to those of the cremation,
He has breathed, flourished, and dissolved:
Life is ashes to ashes, stardust to stardust.

Of airy winds, vapors, and a soft earth,
He rests, at last, under the spinning skies,
Those of Earth's sunny days and starry nights.

The Symphony of Life plays for the dead:
All that we know, even the loveliest of the best,
Decomposes into the dust of earth compressed.

The songs once composed now lie in repose;
Of this dust the future rearranges to recompose.

En-graved is 'THE END' of your Earthly sigh:
Six sides 'round you: five are dirt, one is sky.
Shov'ling, Death talks to you at last, and says:
"What were you doing during all of nigh?"

From Heaven's stars came our dust eterne;
Time's seas nurtured thee and thine in turn.
From time, death, and dust we thus became,
And by this, thus, and that we must return.

*What would be the price of a moment's breath
Purchased from Death's hand at the final hour?
All the world's wealth can't extend the power
That drains the cup and withers the flower.*

The light of Heav'n did the Earth illumine,
When He shaped human nature's acumen.
Temptations He then placed everywhere,
But He'll punish us for being human!

The wings of time are checkered black and white,
As fluttering 'round the day flies the night.
Like chess pieces, we gamely play for life,
Until into the box we return, quite!

Now my cup was nearly empty and done;
There was left but one last drop for the sun
To drink, or with which to make rivers run:
Its flavor burst in joy—my life was won!

Not all poems are pleasant—some speak of death,
Of life's end, separate by just a breath.
I saw tombstones overgrown, under swept,
Names unknown—and to all the message saith:

Read Me, it said, engraved beyond the brink,
You, who live, up above: of life go drink;
And you, underneath, now lying so dead:
Rest in peace, RELAX—it's later than you think!

Refreshed, I wandered among the tombstones,
Under which rested little more than bones,
Where from the life had fled when dreams were dead,
Which under me became life's stepping stones.

I'll play the game and roll the earthly dies,
And through this worldly life enjoy the prize;

If Earth is Hell for love's adventurers,
Then I wish no more for God's Paradise.

Good and evil were wrought from wrong and right,
When, of nought, twin genii split day and night.
Some may think that black's might can vanquish white,
But night can't even quench the smallest light!

Every-thing, every order happens for a reason.
Yes, for the most part, for most seasons,
But not for the bottommost cause the first,
For there was nothing before it to direct it forth.

Youth and Beauty made agèd Winter mourn,
For Summer's grain—the waving wheat and corn;
For Old Autumn, withered, wan, had passed on,
Leaving the Earth a widow, weather worn.

At first, you sleep in your dear mother's womb;
At last, you sleep in Earth's cold silent tomb.
In between, Life whispers a dream that says
Wake, live, for the rose withers all too soon!

Waste not the time of your life in gloom's doom!
By these verses, your lamp of life relume:
Your live body, full of warmth and bloom,
Is worth ten thousand lying in the tomb.

*Art and poetry enrich human experience,
But they're no substitutes for the living of it.
Like Keats' figures on the urn, should we live life less?
No, because what is deathless is also lifeless!*

Figmentations

Into supernatural figmentations,
I strode, with brilliant imagination,
To examine all the supposed Gods there—
Some no more and some ruling everywhere.

Notions of 'God' are of the wide purview
Of the inquiring mind confined—its 'why',
That wide expanse of fables, faith, hoaxes,
Lies, imaginations, fictions, guesses,

Foggy notions, concoctions, phantasms,
Fantasies, falsehoods, conceptions,
Decrees, fiats, misrepresentations,
Dead ideas, magic, proclamations,

Wild tales, anecdotes, revelations,
Untruths, revelations, hearsay, scrap heaps,
Yarns, and fish stories, stated as beliefs
In that unseeable supernatural station,
Through faith's without knowledge ration;
These are all figmentations of the imagination.

Strewn about this great panoramic realm
Of the One possibly conceivable at the helm

Were all of the unknowable fabrications
Often dreamt up, via exaggerations,
By the human race of mammal sapiens.

The realm of such pronouncements has come to be
Superposed at the furthest edge of Reality,
Poised by the scope of some wishful thinking,
By all those dreaming and wild supposing,

Who wish for such legends to be ever
Actualized and realized; however,
These unknowns have never ever made it
Into our observable realistic habitat in any way,

They but remaining in the minds, joint,
Of the God-beholders—
Even as wildly varying viewpoints.

The Graveyard of the Gods

Without so much much as a word to say,
I passed those to whom most no longer pray,
Nor believe in, but once did, namely,
Those of the tombstones now deemed unholy:
Astrology—the God of the stars that plod,
Eternally blazed and marbled in the sod,

Monuments of Diana the Moon God,
Druid Gods, Apollo, Baal, Zeus, Wotan,
Aphrodite, Mithras, Isis, Amon,
Poseidon, Thor, and on and on, anon—
Posed in the burial ground of the Gods.

I ever hurried past the ledgering
Of those older Mythologies preceding
The formation of the Old Testament story—
Those ancient superstitions whose very
And various olden amalgamations
Brought forth to form it whole for our salvation.

I paused at that Old Testament maligned,
To mark the old but lingering lines
Of the 'knowing' of more invisibles—
The beliefs in imagined Angelics:

There were angels standing, frozen in stone,
Over the timeworn memorials' poems,
As well as atop the crumbling gateposts,
Cast as undying and near-living ghosts

Of the representations of the three spheres
Of the Heavenly host: the demigod-near
Seraphim, Cherubim, Ophanim,
Thrones, Principalities, Dominions,

Powers, Archangels, Angels, and, those final,
And the most useful—the Guardian Angels,
Who are said to protect children from harm.

There, Amaranth, its dead red leaves never
Fading on this Earth, unto forever,
Gave some color 'round the graveyard pallor
And to the dateless headstones' gray squalor.

There was a garish maroon view, on high,
Of streaking lights of an electromagnetic sky,
Hheretofore never imagined by my self.
I strolled on, and into the vale itself.

The Intelligent Designer

I approached a semitransparent,
Theistic Embellishment, quite well lit,
Who was holding out an eyeball—a shove
Of His hand for me to take note of.

*“Who might you be?” He mimed,
“For I am the God of Intelligent Design,
The One who was made by the signs discerned,
When the creationists noted them all, unlearned.”*

I answered, “I am Austin, Earth’s flower,

Although not ‘Powers’, but ‘Higher Powers’.”

*“Ha. Lo, they saw inexplicable complexity in Nature,
And thus they leapt and promulgated that Nature
Must have a Grand Designer of its mechanical dance,
For how could life have come about by ‘chance’?”*

I replied, “You’re right about ‘chance’s’ stance,
But wrong about ‘chance’ too, for little greatness,
If any at all, comes about by mere ‘chance’,

“Especially as some giant leap in one bound,
Up the sheer cliff-side of Mt. Improbable—
To find on its top a great complexity
Of something like the eye that You show me;

“However, it is actually an error to suppose
That ‘Chance’ is the scientific alternative
To Intelligent Design, for that’s quite negative.

“Natural Selection is the means of the design,
For it, unlike a one-shot ‘chance’, being not in kind,
Is a cumulative effect that ever winds,
And slowly and so gently climbs

Around the mountain’s other side, behind the sight,
To eventually arrive at the great height
Of complexity—from which we can then view
The beautiful sights through our eye anew.”

*“But the widespread Watchtower Zines
Always pronounce that the biological Designs
Were created by Me instead of by ‘chance’!”*

*“Just look at these eyeballs—take a glance—
And the optic system hanging behind them!
How could that come about by ‘chance’, these gems?”*

“You, like your followers, may listen,
But You do not hear, writing with untruth’s pen.

IDers deceive by this wrong approach,
Whether they mean to or not; I give reproach.

“‘Chance’ is not the opposite of Nature’s design;
Evolution of the Species through the graduality
Of Natural Selection is the path to complexity;
Your ploy falls as flat as an imaginary line.

“A flatworm has but an optical system’s spark
That can only sense but light and dark;
Thus it sees no image, not even a part;

“Whereas Nautilus has a ‘pinhole camera’ eye
About as good as half a human eye
That sees but very blurry shapes;
Thus these are examples of intermediate stages.

“‘Rome’ can not be built in a day by ‘chance’;
‘Chance’ is not a likely designer at all!

“Really now, could a 747 ever be
Assembled by a hurricane blowing free
Through Boeing’s warehouse of all the parts?
Now is this the sum of Your conversational art?”

“No, Austin—it’s quite unlikely—’tis just to confuse,
And that’s why we always so misleadingly use
The 747 argument as the contrast to ID...

“So then, Austie, ‘chance’ and Intelligent Design
Are not the two candidate solutions we’ll find
To the riddle posed by the improbable?
It’s not like a jackpot or nothing at all?”

“‘God’, Your ID ideas persist, as repetition,
But again, ‘chance’, for one, is not a solution
To the highly improbable situated Nature,
And no sane anti-creationist, for sure,
Ever said that it was; your tale is impure.

“Intelligent Design, is neither a solution—
Because it raises a much bigger question
Than it solves, as You will soon see, in a lesson.”

“Well, I’ll be darned,” replied the Designer.
“Natural selection is a good answer;

*“It is a very long and summative process,
One which breaks up the problem’s mess
Of improbability into smaller pieces, less,
Each of which is only slightly improbable,*

“But not prohibitively so, thus it’s reasonable,
As the product of all the little steps of which
Would be far beyond the reach of chance—it’s rich!

“The creationists have been looking askance,
Seeing only the end product, perchance,
Thinking of it as a single event of chance,
Never even understanding
The great power of accumulation.

“Such they didn’t know much else—their fall,
Not having any other natural ideas at all,
So they outright claimed that ID did it, as the Tree
That can magically grow the All, namely Me.”

“So ‘God’ You have now seen the light
Of the accumulative power’s might;
This is the elegance of Evolution’s ‘sight’.”

*“Yes but what is to become of Me, the Person,
For I only ‘exist’ through their speculation.*

*“In fact, the improbability of Me is so High,
And so much more so from where I lie so ‘sure’,
Compared to that of ‘simple’ Nature,
That My own origin...”*

“...Is a near-infinitely Larger dilemma, Mate,
For the creationists—the problem they love to hate;
That being that You, therefore, can only be explained
By another, Higher Intelligent Designer claimed!

“Far from terminating the endless regress,
They’ve aggravated it with a vengeance
That is way beyond repair or redress—
As beyond could ever be yonder of! Out west!”

With that, the poor Guy faded toward oblivion,
Which remarkably was the very location
I was visiting, but hence he soon reappeared,
Although in another guise, but quite well attired.

[God created Adam, then Eve, of Adam’s rib,
Both fully formed, imbued with God’s knowledge
And memories of times that never were,
Such as childhood.]

[They believed a shifty talking snake,
Ate the verboten fruit,
And were cast out, to fend for themselves,
God being quite surprised at their sin...]

The God of Irreducible Complexity

*“Hello, Austino; it’s time for more perplexity,
For I am now the God of Irreducible Complexity.”*

“That you are, being the unmade All,
And so it shall become your downfall.”

“*Eh? I’m never to be at all?*”

“Your believers have given You some fine new clothes:
But Intelligent Design is falsely based, God knows,
 On Irreducible Complexity—
So I still recognize You as the God of ID.”

“*That I am is what I really am now.*”

“Well, Darwin said long ago that his theory
Would break down if Irreducible Complexity
 Were shown to be true, and yet
No proposal has ever stood up to the analysis.”

“*Still, here I am, Mr. A, alive merely by possibility,
Myself indeed quite complex, even irreducibly,*

“*For “I am the be all and end all—the Prime Maker,
And so I keep tabs on every form and splinter
Of the Universe, planning its every constituent
 That I designed. So then, simple I am NOT.*

“*Yes, man, I am an extremely complicated System,
Yet I have no parts, for then My parts that stemmed
 Would be even more fundamental than Me!*”

“*Yes, ‘God’, if You existed you would surely be
Very very very complex, irreducibly so...*”

“...So...”

“...So, by the Creationist Theory, such as it must be,
You cannot be explained except by a larger ID.”

“*I'm falling...*”

“...Into the hole that they dug for you.”

The God of the Gaps

Yet another Theity appeared, out of the mist.

*“I am the God of the Gaps, of all those missed.
I Myself personally fill in all the gaps notwithstanding,
In the present-day knowledge of non understanding,*

*“Albeit a very large and unwarranted assumption,
But I surely do fill them all in—via the fiat lent
To Me by the creationist's fine endorsement.”*

“These gaps shrink as science advances anew.”

“*And so there is less and less for Me to do.*”

“What worries me is not so much that You
May be eventually laid off, having nothing to do,
But that those of Religion think it is a virtue
To be satisfied with not understanding a quandary;
Enigmas drive scientists on—they exult in mystery.”

“*True, My believers exult in mystery
Remaining as mystery and so they go no further,
But it keeps Me from being history!
They worship all these evolutionary gaps as being Me.*”

“With no justification?”

*“We have a ‘get out of jail free’ card—a vocation;
It’s an immunity to
The rigorous proofs of science;
We just claim by the ‘say so’.
All must respect that stance.”*

*“You lead a charmed life then,
One with no faults,
But You seek ignorance
In order to claim victory by default,
As a weed thriving in the gaps
Of science’s fertile fields.*

*“Scientists rejoice in (temporary)
Uncertain yields,
Whereas You halt all inquiry.”*

“I remain as a mystery.”

*“You’re the same God
Of Intelligent Design assumed—
Now known by a much more
Desperate nom de plume.”*

*“I repeat that I intervene
To fill the evolutionary gap.
I even alter DNA.”*

*“We could check the evidence for that.
We researchers fill the gaps in the fossil record.”*

“Then there are twice as many gaps. Absurd.”

“I’d laugh, but I know You’re not joking.”

*“No joke. Try what we’ve been smoking.
Lack of 100% complete documentation*

Of Evolution means that I aid its motion.”

“‘God’, that is not a good default stance.”

“*It’s an unknown happenstance.*”

“So do we let criminals go
Because we don’t have a video
Of their every intermediate foot step
To and from the lawless event?”

“*No, of course not, but we now have great worry
About our precariously perched gappy theory.*

“*Also, you made a typo—it’s a God default stance,
Certified by nothing more than proclamation
Of Our Bull of Decree covering all instantiation.*”

“An edict, huh.”

“*Why not, duh.*”

“It was also once avowed that an Evil Spirit,
One that You Yourself allowed to exist,
Produced physical illnesses, on us weighing,
But, thank God—just an old saying—
That scientists persevered, and still do,

“Such as finding out the immune system’s zoo—
Our defense against the non evil spirits
Of germs, viruses, and bacterial fits.”

“*Yes, agreed; that claim was dead wrong; take pills,
But evil spirits still cause the nonphysical mental ills
That are called sins and bad thoughts,
Even crimes of wills.*”

“Still trying to halt scientific inquiry,
I see, for the burning.
Mental lapsing ‘sins’
Stem from upbringing, wrong learning,

“And/or low serotonin and
Such imbalances, needing cures,
Not to mention the differences in cultures,

“Such as other religions
Causing a problem of stability,
For people think this undermines
Their own belief’s credibility.”

“Okay, I give up for now, AustinTorn. Be.
Go on with your work, with My blessing,
To discover important truths about reality,
But some fossils are evidently missing!”

“Only a tiny fraction of corpses fossilize;
However, not even a single fossil guy
Has shown up in the wrong geological stratum;
How’s that for absolutely no erratum?”

“Well... it’s sad for Me, but true.
I’d still love to find wrong a few,
Like a fossil rabbit in the Precambrian.
I’d have planted one there if I existed then.”

“Dream on. Lazy reasoning is all that’s behind
These declarations of the irreducible complexity kind.”

“Yes, but all this ignorance, for sure,
Of the possible steps of Nature
Has kept Me forever alive,
Allowing Me to ever thrive.”

“And has just as soon forgotten You, in truth,
But for those sustaining your being without proof.”

“Wait, what about an arch of bricks?
I’ll try to use this one as a trick.

“Pull one away and the arch falls apart;
It cannot survive the subtraction of a part,
So how then was it built in the first place?
With this insight, I can win the human race.”

“By scaffolding, the same as seen in Evolution.”

“I was afraid that would be the solution.”

With that, the holey God of the Gaps separated
And nearly evaporated
To become a discontinuity Himself,
But the creationists gave Him help
By trying to hold Him together
With their ditch efforts.

(Yes, ‘gapping’ still goes on, it seems.
When the argument first gathered steam,
There were but a few transitional forms known,
Although good ones, enough for the idea to own,

One being the bridge to vertebrates
And another the bridge to flying creatures.
But there are many more now, a wide range,
So then it is the data that has changed.

These ‘gap’ arguments were already down
To the faint hope that scientists, as clowns,
Wouldn’t find any more natural explanations;
But the finds were the most inevitable situations.

Creationists yet remain at the pointward
Of not being able to 'push forward',
So all that's left to is push backward,

Albeit at the firmly established fact words
Of evolution. Even the Pope concedes this
But tries to salvage the faith and solve,
By saying that the mind was not at all involved.)

"In the darkness I alit from the Wiz,
And tried to make sense of this world of His.
Now I've found the answer to life's dark quiz:
One must live this life by what light there is."

The Deity

Another God appeared, a mere Deity,
Meaning no intervention, so He's not a Theity,
And thusly said, "*Forget the Theity solution.*
I am the Smart God who seeded Evolution.

*"It was I that set the whole universal notion
And all of life's evolution into motion;
That was My elegant and foreseeing way
Of creating the kind of life that would stay."*

"I thought You were all powerful;
Why not just make 20-40 million species,
All fully formed, as immutable as Thee,
Along with their usable natural habitats,

"For this is how most Gods would do it.
What energy loss could that be to You?
Your infinity could all this in an instant do."

*"I'm not so Great, plus, since Evolution is too stable
For some creationists to scoff at, as a fable,*

*They have assigned the job to Me, the Creator,
As all of Nature's natural Instigator,*

*“Because they must take retreat from the first ID God
Who zooms souls into humans at birth—it’s so odd.
So, now I am not a Theity any more of proof,
And thus I must ever remain aloof.*

*“Of course, now I have very little to do,
And so I am not much needed, true,
For I can’t even muddle with their lives;
They are all stuck now with their wives.*

*“I might really just as well retire,
For I am superfluous and tired.”*

*“Well, You’re still kind of close to our Universe,
Not completely outside it, the place the worst,
As I suppose your successor will have to be placed,
Absolutely, totally invisible to the human race.*

*“At least You made some
Basic primordial substance,
And foresaw the billion years
Of combinatorial chance,*

*“Predicting every turn,
Or at least knowing that something neat
Might probably come out of it,
Which was still quite a feat.”*

“Thank you, but it was nothing.”

*“On the contrary—I say verily—
You’re the Super Scientist,
An Engineer Par Excellence—
The Ultimate Inventor of All Time—*

Much better than than the old God of ID.”

“Yes, I am a Scientist, making all that’s real—
I Had to be, but it was really no big deal.”

“You’re too modest.”

“It was just some little quarks,
And some electrons that I sparked,
And some forces that arose,
As reality was composed.”

“But look what became of its simplicity—
Through its stages, to astounding complexity,
Over billions of years of circumstances;
We’ve traced the composites to simple substances.”

“Well, um, it did really take that long for My intention,
By some coincidence, the same as that for evolution;

“However, I guess I’m just as surprised as you, frown,
That when some examine substance and get down
To these simple subatomic levels of unadorned things,

“That they then take a giant leap back, of all things,
To the composite complexity of Me, the Ultimate.”

“Isn’t complexity a much higher product
Of combination upon combination,
And thus not lower than simplicity itself?”

“Yes, it would seem so; that’s a near empty shelf.”

“Then I suppose You’re some Great Alien Scientist, odd,
Highly evolved from somewhere, but not really God.”

“True, and you, Austin, as a scientist,
Should seek what underlies the all,

*Not some Great Complexity who oversees it,
For that's for what the theory calls."*

“Wise thoughts.”

“*The best that can't be bought.*”

“Well, whatever on the alien thing of it,
But the creationists are not keen on scientists,
For scientists regard the honest seeking after truth
As a supreme virtue beyond all reproof.

“If they ever found out...”

“*Yikes, they know not what they have made Me.*
As a Scientist Myself, I truly value honesty
And skepticism over the dishonestly faked beliefs,
Those that only seem to bring Rolaid's relief.”

“The Founding Fathers of America liked You,
Although some of them, as Thomas Jefferson too
Were outright non theists, many seeing You as a Deity
Who just started things up,
never interfering with reality.”

“*Funny how President Bush's America sings,*
Straying so oppositely from its humble beginnings.”

“Not to mention that some the world's peoples, really,
Are squandering their precious time
Worshiping a Theity, and sacrificing to Him,
Begging, fighting, and dying for Him,

“Even threatening the world with its destruction.”

“*What a waste.*”

“Are you real?”

“No, I am but a figment of imagination, see,
But some really do like harmless old Me.”

“So what’s really fundamental?”

“The real fundamentals, just below
What you now call ‘fundamentality’,
Have always existed—the quantum reality.”

“There’s perhaps no time of ‘forever’
At that level for Your ‘always’ ever.”

“True, they just are, and had to be—the possible,
For a state of absolute nothing is indeed impossible.”

The God of the Agnostics

I came next upon a God sitting on a high fence,
And waved to Him, saying
“Come down and talk the whence.”

“I can’t; I am stuck here, but Salutations to you.
I am the God of Agnosticism, one neither false nor true.
None of the agnostics know if I exist or not,
So here I must stay put a lot,

“Along with the Tooth Fairy,
Santa Claus, and the Easter Bunny,
Just in case we all might exist or not,
As a quadzillion-to-one shot.”

“Why can’t agnostics make up their minds?”

“My followers cannot even make or see
Probability judgments about the question of Me.
This is the limitation of agnosticism,

*“Perhaps the error of no consideration
Of the likelihood of that for which evidence seeable
Is not even the least bit conceivable.”*

“It is a fallacy; what I call the poverty of agnosticism,
Because though being agnostic is reasonable criticism
For some things, such as whether life exists elsewhere,
It is not appropriate for those things undoable,

“For which the idea of evidence is not even applicable;
However, actually, we can actually still talk
About the probability of the event,
While even going for a walk.

“The true fallacy, however, is that the existence ever,
And the nonexistence of You never,
Are not even on an even footing to begin with.
The two are not at all equiprobable cases.

“The burden of proof lies with the believers,
For anything that we can conceive of
Can be claimed to exist, as that we love,
Such as ghosts, spirits, and such forth.

“Are we then to straddle a fence that has no worth?
And, never seen. So, then, at the end of the day,

“Probability creeps into the beliefs of the agnostic way,
For in practice they end up in the lurch,
Not going ‘half the time’ to Church,
But mostly deciding not to go at all.”

“*Yes, they still decide that which is ‘undecidable’,
For the fence is very uncomfortable
And so then the superposition*

“*Decoheres into the inclination*

*Of non belief—until, right here,
The Extraordinary's evidence appears.”*

He came down off the fence,
For he couldn't exist and not exist at the same time.
I continued on through the undulating hills.

(We can refer to the fence sitters as non theists
In order to get away from labels like 'agnostic'
Which might imply that the probability of thinking
God or not is on some kind of equal footing;

Plus that the fence sitters don't really stay
On the uncomfortable fence but usually...

Go one way or the other way
In life's practice of the everyday,
Although some might go to church
On alternating Sundays.

In between, perhaps they go
On wild picnics with their sweetie
And drink wine and do all that 'bad' stuff,
That we can't say here, while waiting for some
Extraordinary evidence to appear.

I will soon have a talk with
Old Jehovah Yahweh's Thee.
He's not so terrible as many
Have made Him up to be,
But then again He's not
So great either—He's quite off,
Just another poor middle manager
Caught up in the layoffs.

I already spoke to the Deity
The God who doesn't ever interfere
In the running of the universe.

The Pope doesn't know it here,
But a Deity is what he's
Leaning toward when he says then
That evolution is acceptable now
For Catholics to believe in (no mind).

The Deity Guy was
Actually kind of a great scientist.
And I already met with
The Creationist's ID God,
Who while still a Designer
Is, well, not so cool at all, either,

For He gets back to what
The Fundamentalists believe,
And neither, they would say,
Did evolution happen,
Or if it did ever function,
God constantly stepped in
To rectify its direction.

I haven't really begun
To scratch the surface of all the Gods,
Though, for so many lie now beneath the sod.

I'm only interested in
The person-type Gods of monotheism,
And I'm hardly even getting
Through those variant theisms
That fight amongst themselves
Over Jesus' divinity, or if there is a Hell,

Or a Devil and some Angels about thee,
And over so many more
And other major differences, totally.

Then there are the multiple Gods,

Now up in the millions,
And the many Gods-who-are-not-persons,
Plus the TAO, the Consciousness,
And some way-out Ones.

There are also hundreds
Of long gone, ‘sure thing’ Gods,
Which I needn’t get into,
Except to wonder, and say:
Is that how the future will
Look at our Gods of today?

I can also skip the many
Weird offshoots that persist,
Like those saying that
The self is not allowed to exist,
Even calling it ‘ego’ to make
It seem so much worse;
I don’t have time for these
And other cult-level verse.)

The God of the Old Testament

Of all my rotten luck,
The God of the Old Testament
Appeared and proclaimed,
“I am Yahweh, never absent,
For those schooled from infancy
In My strange ways
Have become desensitized
To My horrific side,

“And so they continue to
Keep Me very much alive,
Through their thoughts;
So, fire away at Me;
I no longer bite that hard, you see.”

“You’re too easy of a target to attack for free—
So it would be rather unfair of me.”

“True, and I won’t deny it—
It’s all there in the Testament.

I was the most unpleasant character
That anyone ever made up in literary fiction.

“I was revealed to be jealous and proud of it,
Petty, unjust, controlling, vindictive,
An ethic cleanser, genocidal, infanticidal,

“Filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal,
Homophobic, misogynistic, sadomasochistic,
And much more, and a Bully—who gave it
Free will only if it matched My own Will.”

“Peace be with you.
How about the New Testament
To replace and hide Your scent,
As many religions have already
Done through Jesus sent?”

“Yes, that Testament is quite opposite in tone,
But I am still the Father of Jesus sown,
So the problem of Me can never really go away.
I am what I was, still here unto the present day.”

“Well, so long. You’re the worst role model yet
That human mammals have ever dreamed up.
Who would imitate, emulate,
Or follow You as a ‘leader?’”

“Well, My followers are those numerous slaves
Who excuse my mysterious [insane] ways,
Along with my exclusive desert tribe.”

“Well, You’re the Boss, and, anyway,
Who ever said that a God
Had to be perfect and good?”

“*Everyone that I told—
And those who thought I should.*”

“Oh well, never mind; whatever pleases.
So, um, Joseph was not
The biological father of Jesus?”

“*No, I was.*”

“So Jesus really did descend from David?”

“*That was on his mother’s side.*”

“Well, my ancestors descended from the trees.
Hey, why don’t Catholics get the 72 virgins
That Islam gives for martyrdom for their sins?”

“*I told each religious faith a different story.*”

“You also gave a bible half-different
To the Mormon founder,
Joseph Smith, finely engraved
On golden plates he discovered?”

“*Sure. I thought at the time ‘why not’.*”

“You had Islam add different things
To their Koran as well?”

“*Yes of the many more ways to avoid Hell.*”

“And You told only the Catholics
That there were umpteen levels of angels

And that bread was your body
And that wine was your blood?”

“*Yep, I told just them and a few other selves,
But they made up the Saints themselves.*”

“And You presented differing visions
To the Lutherans,
The Episcopals, and the Jewish,
And to many other also-rans?”

“*Pretty much,
Except that a King of England
Founded the Episcopals—
The Anglicans, of course,
Since his own religion
Wouldn’t give him a divorce.*”

“And you killed everyone but Noah
And his family in the Great Flood, wet,
Even young children and their pets?”

“*Sure, again, why not? Life is cheap.
However, My creation of the rainbow
Says that I’ll never be so cruel again.
What can I say—I goofed. My sin.*”

“But You are infallible, and even omniscient
And so You know all of the future meant.
You even broke your own commandments!”

“*My omnipotence of changing my mind
Got in the way.*”

“But your omniscience knew you would...
One day.”

*“Yeah, I know—it’s a paradox; oh the strife.
And I can still technically end all life,
By means other than a flood.”*

*“You burned people in Hell, not saved,
When they didn’t follow
The unfree will that you gave?”*

“Yes, because I was not a loving God.”

“Well, God, who made You?”

“No problem—either I was Eternal or I made Myself”

*“This is remarkably the same, but for Thee,
As the Universal ingredients would be.”*

*“Then who would need me—wait,
I don’t want the answer told.”*

“Is the Earth only about 4000 years old?”

*“Of course not but I may have let that slip to some,
To tease their intelligence apart from being dumb.”*

*“Do you mind-read
The thoughts of every human,
Using all of your acumen,
And write the earthly script for each event,
Being so omnipresent?”*

*“I tried that at first, but it didn’t work for Me
To put my finger on every atom that be,
To micromanage its doings for all of thee.”*

*“That’s called ‘God’s Will’,
By some, even now.*

What went wrong?
Was it the where and how?"

*"It disrupted the atoms' normal
And natural movements."*

"And that's what caused the storms unfocused,
The lightning bolts and the plagues of locusts?"

"Yes, so I stopped making such a mess of things."

"So the prayers of six million Jews pleaded
In the holocaust went all unheeded?"

*"Yes, plus I have better things to do, in time,
My sooth,
Than look after some old experiment of Mine
From my misspent youth."*

"Did you really make Adam and Eve
And all of Earth and Nature, as we believe?"

*"Yes, I made Nature,
Including the humans, in My image."*

"It shows in their rage."

"Thank you."

"God, it's ID deja-vu all over again—
I really have to move on."

*"No, wait. I like your questions.
I'm mellower now, this being My new direction.
Not as many strictly admit to Me anymore."*

"How come so many of the gospels were omitted

From the New Catholic Testament,
Like those of Thomas, Peter, Nicodemus,
Philip, Bartholomew, and more,

“As well as whole books kept from us,
Although You told some other religions to keep them,
Such as the Book of Revelations?”

*“Those gospels were embarrassing and wild;
They told about My Son doing magic tricks
And practical jokes on people when He was a child.”*

“Oh, we never heard much about his youth.
And didn’t You send the Mormons proof
That Jesus spent an early era
In what was to become America?”

“*Probably.*”

“What about the trillions of galaxies in the sky?”

“They’re just for show and scenery on high.”
“Where’s all your rantings and ravings
That I’ve heard about?”

*“I now take Prozac for
My mood swings and bouts.”*

“You don’t really exist, do You, as mental,
For how could You have an emotional system—
As composite—and still be absolute and fundamental?”

*“No, I don’t exist,
For how could I since I am so horrible?
Human mammals made all of Me up
As a very bad example,*

*“As it turned out, from their many fears
In the childhood of their species’ years.
Unfortunately, it caught on to their children’s ears.”*

*“So, yet You still subsist
In this indefinite locus of wishes?”*

*“Yes, sort of.
I am sustained here since many children
Have learned to obey and listen
To what is-was told to them,*

*“For this obeying was an
Evolutionarily useful thing,
As many of their obediences
Resulted from warnings of things*

*“That were truly dangerous,
And so the children grew up
To indoctrinate their own children
In all the ‘knowledge’.”*

*“We’ll have to offer more reason
To those so indoctrinated.
Now farewell to You, the impersonated.”*

*“See you. Pay no attention to Me as certain,
But to all those blinded by the curtain.”*

He soon dozed off into never land.

The Gods Meet One Another

I next encountered all the individual Ones,
The specialized 'Gods' of all the Religions.

They didn't get along at all, not even for an instant,
For all they had in common was their intolerance
Of the others' greatly erroneous and unjustifiable beliefs
That clashed with their own, for tolerance as a relief
Was truly Not an attitude the jealous 'Gods' endorsed.

The followers of each 'God' thought that their own
Irrational embrace of myth trumped the others' known,
And so this led to many of the religious groans.

I watched the "Gods" battling for a while, steadfast,
In the present, as well as in the distant past,
Their followers' beliefs scripting the actions,
Conflicts leading to dying for untestable propositions
About where everyone came from and was going to:

Metaphysical Martyrdoms
Conflicted with the Divine Book of Revelations.

Deuteronomy 13:7-11
Stoned those disbelieving in Yahweh,
Killing them, while the Koran eliminated some infidels.

India and Pakistan, different countries domiciled,
Because the beliefs of Islam could not be reconciled
With those of Hinduism, were poised at the brink
Of nuclear war merely because they disagreed, rife,
Over some supernatural 'facts' concerning the afterlife.

Karmas ran over Dogmas.

Musharraf suspended Pakistan's constitution,

To stamp out the growing Islamic militant coalition.

Palestine's Jews and Muslims scuffled on;
Balkan Orthodox Serbians dueled
With the Catholic Croatians,
As well as with the Bosnian
Albanian Muslims;

Northern Ireland Protestants
Warred with Catholics;

Sudan Muslims discorded
With the Christians;
Sri Lankas's Sinhalese Buddhists
Went against the Tamil Hindus;

Caucasus Orthodox Russians
And Chechen Muslims
Exterminated each other and their kin;

Iraq's Sunnis and Shites massacred each other
For some very slight dogmatic differences.

I interrupted their skirmishing and said in haste,
"What about tolerance and respect for other faiths?"

They all answered at once and said, in unison's beef,
*"That's just political talk. If we tolerated other beliefs,
That would be akin to recognizing them readily
As having some credibility, which they certainly do not.
We are saved and they are all doomed, in peril;
We can't have them exerting influence in the world."*

"So," I said, trying to make some small talk,
"I've heard that You've each written a book
That makes an exclusive claim as to its infallibility.

“Congratulations to each of You on being published.
All have made the bestseller list;
However, I have respectfully shelved all of them
Next to the ‘*Egyptian Book of the Dead*’
And Ovid’s ‘*Metamorphoses*’,
In the contradictory book and bible section.

“Hey, how about getting modern and making a film?
I know that a book was a great thing way back,
But a moving picture is worth 10,000 still pictures
Which are in turn each worth a thousand words.”

“*Indeed, we will each be divinely inspiring a movie
That will soon be playing in a theater near you.*”

“Wait, Guys, I take it back,” I said with alarm,
“Are not all your children doing enough harm
By fighting over your books and morality plays?

“Will people now die for another media—the movies?”

They ignored me and fought on, with their kind,
Unable to see but through their own ‘right’ minds,
Doing the opposite of their teachings of love,
Which they were especially and paradoxically out of.”

Unfortunately, they now represented the largest threat
That human kind has ever imposed against itself—

All due to differences regarding some very improbable
And differing notions about the nature of the universe.

I noted the Land of Evil Demons,
Although sometimes it was hard to tell which
Was which or not witch.

I also bypassed the numerous Gods

Of the instant Cults
That had always gained so many followers, and bad results.

The God of the Religious Moderates

I next encountered the
God of the Religious Moderates,
Whose numbers had been
swelling lately, at any rate,
But they had seemed to
get stuck in that middle state.

The God of Moderates said to me, in soft oration,

“Greetings. All things in moderation.”

“I bet that You derive from secular knowledge
Combined with religious ignorance.”

*“Well yes, modernity has allowed some dust to settle
On the very old unchangeables that do nettle,
And so now people pick and choose,
Invent, or ignore the Dogma’s ruse.”*

“Dogma is indeed
An unchangeable definition—
It does not admit of progress,
By its very definition.”

*“True, but I am still their God, of course,
As they have abandoned the wingèd horse,
Virgin births, sexual prohibitions, the value of life—
And they even have some doubts about the afterlife.”*

“They betray both faith and reason.”

“That they do in this new season.”

The God of Nature

Lastly I met the God of Einstein—Spinoza's God.

*“I am the so-called God of Nature,
Being as one and the same with it—no different;
Although that which has no difference
Is really not any different.*

*“Anyway, at least this is how the people awed
By Nature's intricacy and beauty refer to Me.*

*“I am only here in this nebulous vicinity
Because I don't actually exist with certainty,
But seem to some to be tautological with Nature,
Always existent and beautific.”*

“It's OK, don't worry about it.”

“Thank you, and welcome to reality.”

“You mean I'm back?”

“Well at least you have one foot in it through,
Just as I seem to do.”

“I'm going, but why did humans
Invent the theistic and deistic Gods?”

*“Man created them in
His image's inward glance,
Because he was and
Is terrified of his insignificance,
As well as from a fear
Of losing the beauty
Of his life's instance.”*

“So man just proudly declared
That he was of Special Creation.”

“Yes.”

“Farewell and thank You for Your insight.”

He called after me.

*“Enjoy reality—it’s really a place that’s better.
There’s nothing more beyond it.
All comes from matter;*

*“You’re electrochemical creatures—
As organic and natural
As anything else in Nature.*

*“Consider this knowledge
As the ultimate humility, if you will.
Live life, love it—while you can,
During your lucky incarnation
From the evolving composites
Of the last 13.75 billion years.
You are here. You have arrived.”*

“Panthea, the greatest God there never was...
How to explain? She does what nature does.
As a rose is still a rose by any other name,
Then so is a universe a cosmos the same.”

Down to Earth

As I rejoined Actuality, I felt its waves and seas
Of brightness and color joyfully washing over me.

Getting back to my existence and its stresses,
I ignored some knocking Jehovah Witnesses

Then made nine golden tablets,
And reported my findings on ToeQuest,
Then went breathing, seeing, and hearing,
And otherwise sensing
All that was knowable as reality.

THE PROBLEMS OF TRADITIONAL RELIGION

The Christian concept of reward and punishment
Handed out by an omnipotent, omniscient God,
Is derivative of the family experience—
The child and parent—a conception of our world.

God in the News

I picked up some newspapers and magazines:

*A suicide bomber blew up a bus and himself as well,
Sending many of the unbelievers straight to Hell,
While assuring himself and 72 friends a place
In Heaven, a double blessing from his Faith.*

*His family, relatives, and friends gathered soon
To celebrate their wonderful good fortune.*

*The bomber's death was especially lauded as wise,
Because he had proceeded directly to Paradise,*

*Bypassing the possibly troublesome way
Of the litigation of Judgment Day.*

*Fighting continued in Kashmir
Due to some perceived insults to Muhammad.*

A man was released in Northern Ireland

After claiming to be a Protestant atheist.

*A child of Christian Scientists died
Due to the religious refusal of antibiotics.*

*Extremists sought nuclear formulas and parts to reduce
The peril of the unbelievers in the world,
Those whose ways are not sanctioned by Allah.*

*Pope authorizes millions to reach
Children sexually abused by priests.*

*The recently discovered Gospel of Judas
Suggests he wasn't really such a bad-ass.*

*Some nuclear facilities no longer exist in Syria,
About whose disappearance both Syria and Israel
Seem to know nothing.*

Battles rage on over differences in some holy books.

Iran promises to destroy Israel.

*President Bush led off his latest speech with
'In God we trust.'*

And in a more than 2000 year-old newspaper:

*The Emperor led off his latest speech with
'In Zeus we trust'.*

And finally, in a future newspaper:

*Religious extremists detonate atomic bomb
In Washington, DC;
Nuclear retaliation destroys
Twelve highly populated middle-eastern cities.*

*World greatly stunned, begins to widely read
'The End of Faith', 'The God Delusion',
And 'god is Not Great'.*