

Endnote —
Mirrors of Uncertainty
PART ONE OF TWO

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control. (1 Tim 2: 5–15)

1.

As early as the 2nd-Century CE, the Pastoral Epistles (1 & 2 Timothy and Titus) were producing concern about their authenticity; about whether they were really of the Apostle Paul, who had female disciples that did the work of evangelism as an equal to himself. The perceived anti-woman element in the head citation creates tension between the epistle's author and what can be known about Paul's ministry, especially from Romans chapter 16. But the Pastoral Epistles were accepted as *genuine enough* to be read in congregations until they were included in the Christian canon centuries later. And it is in the concept of being *genuine enough* where many, many doubts have been spawned about the Bible being the infallible words of God, with the concept of textual infallibility being nonsensical on its surface; for ever since the Tower of Babel, linguistic icons have been separated from linguistic objects and shuffled around as if they were playing cards to be dealt to each Christian teacher according to his or her ante. For Holy Writ deconstructs itself before the reader/auditor if given a chance. It is only the semi-literate Bible thumper that seriously argues for textual infallibility and the King James Version of the Scriptures being the defining word of God.

One serious problem exists for our Bible thumper: the words and the structure of the King James Version, the Authorized Version conceal at least as much as they reveal, thereby producing a 400 year long affliction imposed upon English-speaking Christians, an affliction that better matches what the Lord told Abram (Gen 15:13) than the 430 years that Israel spent in Egypt.

Scholars and critics, whose business it is to closely read Scripture then speak authoritatively about what they have gleaned from the absence or presence of material/physical data, reject the Pastoral Epistles as being of the Apostle Paul, and because only copies of copies of copies of the initial epistles existed by the 2nd-Century CE, it is not possible to truly say much about what was originally written: everyone works with texts that were subject to much *humanizing* before the earliest existing copy was written. And it is here—with the *human element*—where I wish to dwell for a while, specifically with that most human of all elements, doubts and self-doubts.

Compare identical passages that I have written:

FEATHERS—

tall blue heron wait
for small mistakes by cutthroat
that snatch eggs from redds

a doe leaves timber
to feed on red rose hips, her
fawn driven away

juncos flutter loud
about red rose hips—the doe
listens for footsteps

meadowlarks flutter
around old apples hanging
lonely on bare boughs

in hard rain, the fawn
shivers as he stares at old
apples beyond reach

titmice swarm bare boughs
that held red apples & rain
droplets yesterday

a cold nightcrawler
caught by last night's rain wiggles—
the old hen hurries

dusk: a thicknecked
buck paws his scrape under the

apple where I wait

the last rays of day
highlight the round doe soft eye
that beams yellow death

ravens fly over
fat veined bowels, winter
meat still & steaming

owl hoots in darkness
fall from tall pines & settle
into rabbit runs

(from *Upriver, Beyond the Bend*)

The above poem may not be the best collection of English haiku poems written, but it is adequate for my purposes: each stanza should be read within the framework of Japanese haiku verse that is about nature and natural happenings. However, if I do to the above collection of haikus what King James translators did to Hebraic verse—and what I will argue an early scribe did to Paul’s epistles—the poem “Feathers” would read as follows:

FEATHERS—tall blue heron wait for small mistakes by cutthroat that snatch eggs from redds; a doe leaves timber to feed on red rose hips, her fawn driven away; juncos flutter loud about red rose hips—the doe listens for footsteps; meadowlarks flutter around old apples hanging lonely on bare boughs; in hard rain, the fawn shivers as he stares at old apples beyond reach; titmice swarm bare boughs that held red apples & rain droplets yesterday; a cold nightcrawler caught by last night's rain wiggles—the old hen hurries; dusk: a thicknecked buck paws his scrape under the apple where I wait; the last rays of day highlight the round doe soft eye that beams yellow death; ravens fly over fat veined bowels, winter meat still & steaming; owl hoots in darkness fall from tall pines & settle into rabbit runs

The passage above doesn’t make much sense, nor does King James mutilation of Hebraic verse—the structure of a poetic passage creates the context that gives meaning to the words. Remember, meaning is assigned to all words by the auditor; the oral or visual signifier doesn’t come with meaning but produces meaning in the mind of the auditor. And part of a signifier or collection of signifiers is the physical structure in which the signifiers are encountered. Structure provides disambiguation.

In the transition between Old English (a West Germanic language) to Modern English that doesn’t sound much like Modern German, the English Isles were invaded by Danes and nearly overrun by these Danes who were Old Norse (a North Germanic language) speakers. Eventually the warring between the two distant cousins subsided and a Dane Line was established, with the Old Norse

speakers being east of the Dane Line and the Old English speakers being west of the line. However, it wasn't long before commerce between the two peoples began to occur and they could understand each other if only they spoke in word roots [the two languages shared common word roots]. But just about when these two distant cousins were getting along fairly well, another cousin invaded, William the Bastard, whose army defeated the forces of Harold Godwinson [*Harold Gōdwines sunu*] at the Battle of Hastings, October 14, 1066. And William the Bastard brought his language, Norman French, with him and demanded that all official business be conducted in French, a situation that lasted for 300 years. Finally when English again became a written, not just a spoken, language, English emerged as a language of word roots in which word order determined what a word was doing in a sentence. Hence, Modern English has few case endings: an English speaker can thoroughly confuse his or her auditor by placing modifiers and modifying clauses too far away from what the word or clauses modifies, a situation that cannot happen in Latin.

In English, the position of a word in its context—the sentence—conveys not-inscribed information to the auditor. The context in which a word appears, and the structure of the context carries unspoken information, with the poem “Feathers” serving as an example. Without the context of three line stanzas of five, seven, and five syllables, knowledge that the words are to be read according to the English haiku tradition is lost. The characteristic movement between the second line and the third line of each three line set will seem jarring when it is that movement which determines the worth of the haiku.

In early inscribed languages—Egyptian hieroglyphs, proto Indo-European, proto Semitic—unpronounced determinatives were used to convey information in a way somewhat analogous to sentence order and visual structure in Modern English ... just as the structure of the poem “Feathers” is seen with eyes but not uttered (there is nothing to utter), with this structure providing a substantive portion of the meaning that the author [in this case, me] intended the words [signifiers] to convey. Thus, structure is part of the signifier. And if the structure is removed as in “Feathers” being inscribed as block prose, part of the signifiers are removed and cannot be accessed by future auditors. So for King James translators to present Hebraic verse as prose is to take meaning away from Holy Writ. A subtraction of considerable size has been made, especially from the Prophets and the Writings.

If King James translators subtracted from Holy Writ by changing the structure in which, say, Isaiah's writings come to endtime disciples—with this subtraction being made in innocence and not a willful act of removing words from Holy Writ—then could similar subtractions or additions have been made by early scribes copying the words of Moses into fully phonetic Hebrew morphemes through either including unpronounced linguistics determinatives into vocalized text or leaving these determinatives out? And the answer seems a resounding, Yes! with the unpronounced Tetragrammaton *YHWH* being the foremost example.

Since King James translators unintentionally subtracted meaning from Holy Writ by transcribing Hebraic verse as prose—the focus of words presented in verse is the words themselves and not the things being named or described by the words; thus, for a physical thing to be seen in verse involuntarily moves the auditor’s focus from the thing to the words, intangible signifiers—for the past four centuries considerable meaning has been concealed from both scholars and critics, pastors and lay members. In fact, any inscription by early scribes of New Testament poetry or short-line prose as long-line prose has taken meaning away from Holy Writ, thereby concealing information that was revealed and should be known to all.

The question that should be now asked, why would God permit such a thing to happen? And the answer that seems most obvious: God didn’t want certain information to be accessed by the world until the end of the age was at hand, meaning that as Daniel’s visions were sealed and kept secret until the time of the end, most of Holy Writ has been a sealed and kept a secret text because of how Holy Writ has been physically received. But why? Because without faith, without belief not based on solid evidence, no one can please God, with this faith/belief being the antidote to the Adversary’s rebellion, the anti-venom serum for the bite of that old serpent, Satan the devil.

When there is not solid historical or archeological evidence to support a person’s thesis, that thesis falls; the hypothesis fails. Yet if that hypothesis is true but simply cannot be proved by physical evidence, faith is belief of that hypothesis in the absence of irrefutable evidence. Doubts about the validity of the hypothesis come when the hypothesis seems to fail its stress-testing, with the Pastoral Epistles producing considerable doubts among Christian scholars and critics. And then the self-doubts begin: *why do I believe what I do? Am I naïve? Am I a fool? Considering the evil in this world, does God even exist?* And the Adversary has just slain another Christian. How does that song go: *ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty or more, the Bloody Red Baron is running up quite a score.* The words aren’t really important. The concept is. The Adversary has been shooting down Christians as if they were pigeons in Fenway Park and Ted Williams was at the plate with his shotgun, an analogy a few readers will relate-to but an analogy used because few will know that early on game days Ted Williams would *solve* some of the ballpark’s pigeon problem himself, a bit of privileged information.

It is in the concept of privileged information where doubts and self-doubts evaporate: when a person is given privileged information such as the always unpronounced Hebrew Tetragrammaton *YHWH* is a determinative sign used for purposes of disambiguation by Moses, this privileged information should prevent its receiver from succumbing to the Sacred Names Heresy, which is for endtime disciples what the Circumcision Faction was for Paul.

By the very nature of being *privileged information*, others do not have this information. Others wouldn’t accept this information because it lacks irrefutable historical evidence. So a schism develops between those believing the information and those who have doubts—and it has never been God’s intension to

assist a person in resolving such doubts. It is the person's responsibility to resolve these doubts one way or the other, with the Adversary having used such doubts to fuel a rebellion against God.

A Christian must come to believe whatever he or she believes without that belief being based on irrefutable evidence. The person who cannot believe God—not just in God—would if glorified eventually become another Adversary; hence, this person will perish in the lake of fire, a mercifully quick death, as would have been Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's deaths (Dan chap 3) if they had not been supernaturally protected ... Nebuchadnezzar's blast furnace was a shadow and type of the lake of fire.

The words of "Feathers" in block prose are as confusing as Holy Writ is for spiritual novices, and for similar reasons. So, were the Pastoral Epistles written by Paul, or is that internal claim a lie? Scholars and critics have concluded the internal claim of Paul being the author of 1 Timothy is a lie, that Christendom might be better off if the epistle had not been canonized. But is this assumption really true? And since it is the following that causes the most problems—

Women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control. (1 Tim 2:9–15)

—it is in the concept of *women in Christianity* where time needs spent ...

John's Gospel begins with, *In beginning* — there is no article for ἀρχῆ so the signifier is not a Greek definite noun and might be better translated as *power, principality, principle, rule*, thus changing John's Gospel to begin with "In primacy was the Logos [ὁ Λόγος], and the Logos was with/of the God [τὸν Θεόν], and God [Θεός] was the Logos. This one [οὗτος] was in primacy [ἀρχῆ] with/of [πρὸς] the God. All things through Him [αὐτοῦ] came to be and with Him came to be not one thing" (John 1:1–3).

Does the change from <beginning> to <primacy> change the meaning of John 1:1? It does, doesn't it. It brings John 1:1 into close conformity with Paul's epistle to the Philippians, one of the epistles scholars and critics accept as being of the *Pauline corpus*; for in Philippians, Paul writes,

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in *Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped*, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:5–11 emphasis added)

If a person shares primacy with another, both are first; both will rule; both will function as one entity. First Timothy would give primacy to the Man because he was created first and was not deceived whereas the Woman was created second and was deceived. Now, how would this work in the heavenly realm: if Jesus Christ in the form of God did not count equality with God as a thing to be tightly grasped, then when this equality with God was relinquished, the deity that was equal with God entered the creation—His creation—as His only Son (John 3:16), the man Jesus the Nazarene, who took the form of a servant to His disciples [what washing feet was all about — John 13:3–17] being a human person and no longer the equal of God ... primacy went from two to one, with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the God of the living ones (Matt 22:32) choosing to make Himself subject to the God of the dead ones by being obedient even to the point of death.

Now think about the above: in primacy were two that functioned as one, these two named in the regular plural Hebrew noun written in Latin characters as *Elohim* and shown bound together in the determinative Tetragrammaton *YHWH*. But without going to war with one another, these two agreed that the Logos would divest Himself of His divinity and would become subject to the other for the sake of mortal men, the creation of the Logos (seen in Holy Writ as *YAH*, half of the determinative Tetragrammaton). Because these two were equal in primacy, one could not be the Head of the other. Thus to get to what Paul writes—“But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor 11:3)—one co-equal had to surrender primacy to the other, and in exchange the one who surrendered primacy would be highly exalted by the other so that every entity in heaven and on earth would bow to Christ Jesus, confessing that He is Lord to the glory of God.

There is no trinity, no triune deity in Scripture: there were two deities who were visibly conjoined in the Tetragrammaton *YHWH* as if these two were married. But marriage between equals will not long endure. One must defer to the other as seen in human marriage. Thus, one co-equal deity did defer to the other and subjected Himself to death and to the God of the dead ones, and died as a spirit being when He left the supra-dimensional heavenly realm to be born as a man ... although scholars and critics do not find the Incarnation in Paul’s epistles, it’s there in Paul writing, *the Head of Christ is God*. A co-equal is not the head of the other. In order for a co-equal to become the head of the other, the one co-equal must willingly subordinate him or herself to the other.

The significance of the above comes in the movement of primacy of *Two* that functioned as one to the primacy of only *One*, the Father and the God of Christ Jesus (John 20:17), the basis for thwarting any future rebellion against the Godhead ... when *Two* hold primacy, a third entity—a guardian cherub—can aspire to this same primacy, thus inviting an angelic son of God to *say in his heart, I will ascend to heaven above the stars of God, I will set my throne on high* (Isa 14:13). By having only one deity holding primacy, the door to future

questioning of primacy is effectively barred, locked, bolted shut, and the key thrown away.

Can the above be better shown in Scripture, with figuratively two witnesses needed to establish a matter?

If a person—scholar, critic, pastor, lay member—doesn't understand what Jesus said when He said He was the beginning and the end, the A and the Ω, then it isn't likely that the person will understand Hebraic thought-couplets and the movement from darkness to light, from community to individual, from hand to heart, from physical to spiritual that thought-couplets represent, the movement from the enclosed portion of "A" supported by two legs [the visualization of the Tetragrammaton as the godhead] to the open "Ω" that represents the summation of everything that has preceded it.

If the godhead that is represented by the determinative Tetragrammaton *YHWH* were represented by the Greek uncial *alpha* [A]—my argument is that it is—there would be no opening in the godhead through which any son of God, human or angelic, could come before God to become part of the godhead. However, if deity were to be represent by the Greek uncial *omega* [Ω], there is a small opening in about the position of a human woman's genital area where entrance could be made. So now, take the visible image of *alpha* and *omega* as uncials back to 1 Timothy and reread the passage that has troubled generations of women: there is salvation in childbirth, with Christ Jesus being the one that gives childbirth, or so the Apostle Paul claimed when he wrote in the undisputed *Pauline epistle* 1 Corinthians 15:45,

Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; *the last Adam became a life-giving spirit*. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. (1 Cor 15:45–49 emphasis added)

A life-giving spirit gives spiritual life as Eve gave physical life to Cain and Abel, then later, Seth. A life-giving spirit functions as the Woman, not the Man, but if Christ Jesus is the Head of the Church, He functions as the Man, making gender identification a little more confusing than most Christians realize unless they understand what happened when Jesus was baptized:

The Father conceives sons through having given the man Jesus the Nazarene a second breath of life, His breath, the breath of God [πνεῦμα Θεοῦ] in the form of a dove (Matt 3:16) when Jesus began His ministry. And Jesus produces sons for the Father through giving His breath, in which the Father's breath dwells, to His [Jesus'] disciples (John 20:22), with this conception coming through the Christological expression, *the indwelling of Christ Jesus*, that represents the breath of God in the breath of Christ [πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ] that gives life to the dead inner self of the human person in a manner analogous to *Elohim* [singular in

usage] breathing the breath of life into the man of mud, the first Adam, and this man of mud becoming a *nephesh*, a breathing creature.

Thus, the spirit of Christ [πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ] is to the spirit of God [πνεῦμα Θεοῦ] as the Woman is to the Man, thereby making disciples the offspring of both the Father and the Son, with the life-giving breath of Christ being the Head of the disciple, hence placing the inner self [ἡ ψυχὴ — *psuche*, or *soul*] of the disciple in the position represented by the Woman with the breath of Christ being in the position represented by the Man.

When Jesus comes again [the Second Advent] Jesus as the Messiah will cause perishable flesh to put on immortality, thereby giving to the living inner self a living tent in which to dwell forever—and thereby transforming the inner self [soul] from a relationship position represented by the Woman to being the head of the glorified body, a position represented by the Man, with the glorified body now being in the position of the Woman.

And if the above seems a little confusing, go back to 1 Timothy 2:9–15, applying the Man/Woman, head and body relationship (also seen throughout Hebraic poetry in the movement from dark to light, from physical to spiritual) to “women should adorn themselves in ... good works,” learning quietly with all submissiveness. Jesus said He spoke only the words of the Father: He did not attempt to exercise authority over the Father or to speak His own words. He did not attempt to teach the crowds that followed Him but spoke to the crowds only in parables so the crowds wouldn’t understand. That is correct: by speaking in parables, metaphors that the crowds could not understand, Jesus **did not** teach the crowds anything, one reason why there were so many different opinions about what it was that He taught.

Now, what to do about the author of 1st Timothy writing, *but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor*? This will be a little touchy: Jesus did not know that the Father would turn His back on Jesus when Jesus bore the sins of Israel as the Paschal Lamb of God. Hence on the cross, Jesus cried out, *Eli, Eli, lema sabachthni*? ... Was Jesus deceived? Not in a way that we would consider being deceived, but if Jesus didn’t know that the Father would abandon Him when Jesus took on the sins of Israel and thereby became a transgressor, then yes, Jesus was deceived for He obviously expected the Father to be with Him throughout His ordeal. So technically, everything the author of 1st Timothy writes pertains to Jesus in the role of Woman to the Father: if a woman were to walk in this world as Jesus walked, the woman would do exactly what is written in 1st Timothy, which isn’t to preclude a woman from teaching those who have been given to her as Jesus taught His disciples, but would preclude public evangelism; would preclude woman being prostitutes or appearing in public dressed as a prostitute; would preclude a woman exercising authority over her husband. Marriage between two equals returns the marriage to two-holding-primacy, a state that will not long endure, and the condition that apparently prompted an anointed guardian cherub to initiate rebellion against the godhead.

The Woman represents Christ Jesus now and even before, when He as the Logos who entered His creation as His only Son ... the Logos who was God and

who was with the God bore to the God a relationship analogous to the relationship the woman in marriage has with her husband where the man and the woman are one flesh: two being one. But with the Logos entering His creation as His only Son, the co-equal primacy between deities ended forever. The Son was not the Father, nor was the Father the Son—and the Logos was no more and would never again be in a side-by-side relationship as an Egyptian Pharaoh was in with his sister (wife and the co-Pharaoh).

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus spoke only the words of the Father; He did not speak His own words ... as the *woman* represented by the uncial “Ω,” Jesus was silent as the author of 1 Timothy tells women to be quiet, even to suffering in silence (not totally silent as that would be an unreasonable expectation considering the circumstances of the day). On the day when He was crucified, Jesus did not attempt to exercise authority over the Father as the Latin Church has attempted to exercise authority over its Head, Christ Jesus. The Church as the woman is to adorn herself in good works. Christ Jesus as the “Ω” adorned Himself in good works, even to dying on the cross as a woman dies in childbirth yet the baby lives, not to be nurtured by another physical mother but to be nurtured by the glorified Jesus.

The above isn't reading too much into Jesus' words. Look carefully at the uncial “Ω” ... two feet in cartoonish opposition, an opening between the feet, and an elongated circle, a squat oval, as if a person in an oral culture were drawing a woman such as the paleolithic Woman of Willendorf. Is that too imaginative in a context where the glorified Jesus is the Head of the Church and God the Father is the Head of Christ Jesus and the man is the head of his wife (1 Cor 11:3)? Too imaginative in the context of Jesus saying that He was the beginning and the end—the beginning when He was God [Θεός] and was with the God [τὸν Θεόν] in the form of the Logos [ὁ Λόγος], and the end when He shall return as the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19:11–16)), with the slain of the Lord being many (Isa 66:16), or the end being even farther away when He shall sit as judge in the great White Throne Judgment for all judgment has been given to the Son (John 5:22, 27).

Let the scholar or critic who lacks imagination scribble onto his or her tablet the uncial “Ω” and contemplate the letter's feet and the directions they face and try to imagine how the letter could be visually supported in any other manner. At least in contemplating the feet of the letter, the scholar or critic will do no further spiritual harm to him or herself.

The epistle that is 1st Timothy doesn't have about it the same narrative voice as Paul's other epistles, a principle reason its authenticity has been in doubt since the 2nd-Century. But in the three previous Endnotes, I have included a piece of my writing that I certify is fully mine, and I will here include a fourth piece. Do all of these previously unpublished pieces have in them the same voice as is found in the block, narrative form of “Feathers” or in the Endnotes themselves? This is a reading assignment you as a critic need to answer; for your inability to read closely has harmed many.

Mirrors of Uncertainty

For a lost wax casting class at University of Alaska Fairbanks, I carved five small fish in blue wax, and I was disappointed that the wax wasn't capable of holding the detail I was capable of carving. Nevertheless, these five little fish were invested, then melted out, the wax burnt, its smoke vented through the outside wall. The investment cavities were then filled with molten silver which, when cooled, shined like moons in January.

The fish were all about an ounce and a half apiece. I was still disappointed the wax hadn't better held carved surface details so I was disappointed in the fish although they satisfied one of the assignments for the class. I didn't know what to do with them so I kept them wrapped in a paper towel atop the refrigerator, first in Fairbanks, then in Idaho after I drifted south to accept a fellowship at Idaho State University. They were there atop my refrigerator for years even after I remarried and acquired a fourteen year old stepson.

One day I couldn't find them. I didn't remember doing anything with them, but they weren't on the refrigerator, weren't anywhere I looked. While I didn't thoroughly search the whole house, I looked in all of the obvious places, all of the places where I might have stuck them, might have hid them, all of the places I remembered sticking items since I moved into the house. And since one acquaintance of my stepson, a teenager with a reputation for thievery had been in our kitchen months before, I suspect those fish were stolen. I had no proof, no reason to suspect the teenager other than I couldn't find those fish. So I mentally chalked the fish up as gone—they represented thirty, thirty-five dollars worth of silver, and were among the least valuable things that could have walked out of the house. I sort of forgot about them until I heard a poet read, the reigning poet laureate for Idaho.

The poet had been a divinity student. He had planned to preach Christ and Christ crucified to sinners until he realized that he was a sinner. Then his doubts began. First about himself. Then about Scripture being the word of God. Finally about whether any god exists. He wasn't long into his doubts before he couldn't continue as a divinity student so he became an English major (what else when a person has lost their faith), and eventually an English professor whose performance of *Beowulf* is remarkable. But he has never shaken those doubts about whether he is worthy of elevation.

None of us are, and most of us know that. We get up mornings and pull our pants on, one leg at a time. We are tired at night, often frustrated, and we doubt ourselves. This is the week the last Peanuts cartoon strip will appear for the first time. Charlie Brown's self-doubts are ours. And as we nationally consult more analysts and more counselors of all sorts we just confirm our doubts about whether we are able to cope with those things that didn't seem to phase grandparents and great-grandparents.

Last night my wife of now five years looked at a list of houses available in the area of Alaska where we will buy property [since we married, I have never returned to Alaska]. She became excited about one place. Its location was perfect, and its price a bargain. I asked if she realized the place used an outhouse. "Where do you see that?" she asked. I pointed to where. "Oh, we don't want that."

"Why not? I don't know anyone on the Kenai who hasn't experienced a winter using an outhouse."

"You have already spent a winter, and I don't intend to." She was mad at me for at least five minutes.

Yes, we used an outhouse my first winter North, but I don't really want to return to using one. However, the experience wasn't as bad as my wife obviously envisioned. About Thanksgiving, I took the seat loose and started bringing it inside and keeping it behind the stove—

My memories of using an outhouse as a kid in Indiana are of how cold the edges of the hole were and of a huge harvest spider that lived in the upper corner by the door. I didn't know spiders grew so large, and I wasn't convinced a spider that large was harmless. I used to keep my eye on it as I sat out there, shivering and crumpling pages of last year's Sears catalogue, its yellow pages already missing. For me, the worst part of growing up was becoming old enough that I couldn't use the thunder mug in the house at night, but had to get up, get dressed, and go to the outhouse, where I sat almost too cold for anything to happen, where I sat with that spider watching me.

So, no, I don't want to return to those days. But I have no *angst* about them, or about returning to using an outhouse, or about Sear catalogues or harvest spiders.

That winter of 1974-75 spent on the Kenai Peninsula, we rented Bishop's cabin at the corner of Oil Well and Kingsley Roads. I fell timber for Tommy Simmons, another gyppo delivering logs to Louisiana-Pacific. The only gyppo who declined a contract for export logs or cants was Denny Bell, with whom I eventually became friends.

At Denny's one evening, I meant Clovis Kingsley for whom the road on which I lived was named. Clovis told me a story about Denny and him shooting a bull moose just about dark one Friday evening. Like myself, Denny was also a Sabbath keeper, and he wanted to get that bull hung and dressed before sunset. In addition, they shot the bull on Bell's Flats, and I have seen brown bear there. They didn't want to risk losing the bull, which meant they needed to get it to Denny's house, a mile or so away, before a bear claimed it.

If a fellow intends to pack a moose on his back, he usually butchers it into eight pieces of eighty to a hundred pounds each. With two fellows packing, that translates into four round trips. Hiking, especially with a load, a mile of muskeg in the dark will take an hour. For Denny and Clovis to have packed that moose out on their backs, they would have been until two or three in the morning. Denny would have certainly worked hard enough to have violated the Sabbath in his mind. He had a better idea: he hurried up to his homestead, got his D4 Cat and rattled it down the hill and across the muskeg as fast as he could. He and Clovis hooked onto that bull—it was already dark enough that the lights of Denny's cabin could be seen from across Bell's Flats—and Denny headed for his place by the most direct route across the muskeg.

There are things on the Kenai Peninsula Catskinners call *Alaskan creeks*. The average person doesn't notice them. Catskinners say that is because they are one inch wide and ten feet deep. Denny ran into one. The Cat sank to the top of its tracks, and sat there jiggling, unable to move, as it threatened to sink even farther.

Clovis said that for awhile uncertainties nearly overwhelmed Denny, who just knew he was breaking the Sabbath and didn't know how he could free his Cat, which continued to sit there idling, jiggling, sinking farther into the muskeg.

Denny and Clovis cut every willow and black spruce within two hundred yards of the Cat and shoved them under its tracks to try to keep the Cat from sinking farther. The Cat was a cable blade with a pony motor, meaning the Cat had no hydraulics to force the blade down so it couldn't lift itself with its blade. Plus, the Cat used the gas pony motor to start its diesel motor. The gas motor didn't have a starter but only a crank located behind where the blade was floating as the Cat sank farther. They couldn't again start the Cat if they shut it down, and the vibration of its engine idling continued to cause the Cat to sink into the muskeg.

Denny used the Cat to skid logs which he then milled for his sole source of income. He couldn't afford to lose the Cat, nor his salvation: if a person is convinced God requires him or her to keep the Sabbath holy, refraining from doing any work on that day from sundown to sundown, and then that person finds, in this case, himself working harder than he ever has to keep from losing a main source of his income, that person will experience doubts about God and about why God is letting this thing happen. He will tell himself this is an ox-in-the-ditch situation that can be forgiven, but he will know that is not the case. This is a situation where he put the ox in that ditch, and he will begin to doubt his sincerity as a Christian. He will have doubts about the wisdom of pulling that trigger so late Friday afternoon (the bull was a big one, over sixty inches). I know. I have been there, and Denny told me that he was there.

When Clovis told this story, he laughed and Denny had a red face. It was only a year later when Denny brought that D4 up to my shop to put in a driveway and parking lot that I heard what he was thinking: Denny said he felt guilt with every chew of every bite of that moose that winter even though he knew the incident was covered by blood.

Traumatic occurrences seldom produce real trials of faith. It is in these little incidents where faith is eroded by those moments of uncertainty, which, like dripping water droplets, wear away our resolve.

Denny and Clovis worked until dawn getting enough wood under the tracks of Denny's Cat for it to pull itself out of that *Alaskan creek*. Then they still had the moose to skin and quarter—that moose was both families' winter meat.

Moose were all over Ninilchik the winter we rented Bishop's cabin. At least fifteen were in the little patch of timber right behind the our outhouse.

I had shoveled a path through waist deep snow to the outhouse. One night, when my wife was out there, I heard her scream and I ran outside without stopping to pull on my boots. As hard as she screamed, I thought something or somebody had attacked her.

Those who have lived in snow country will know how difficult it is to keep the swing of a door shoveled free of snow buildup. Before winter is over, doors to outbuildings don't want to close, and sometimes it is easier to live with a door standing ajar than to clean all of the ice out from behind and under it. Such was the case with our outhouse: its door didn't close the last four or five inches. And a moose had stuck her nose into that gap and was checking out what my wife was doing in there.

I saw the moose with her nose in the gap, and I grabbed a metal five gallon jerry can and threw it at her, hitting her in her ribs. She grunted, then ran around behind the outhouse and looked to see what it was that had hit her. My wife ran for our cabin as fast as she could, and I had to retrieve the toilet seat. I really don't like cold seats.

My wife may have had doubts before about moving so far away from her parents and family, about relocating to the Kenai Peninsula, about my employment, where we were living, how we would get through the winter, but her doubts were about big issues which she felt comfortable taking to God in prayer. Now, she had doubts about whether she ever again wanted to use the outhouse, a subject she wasn't about to mention in prayer. She had doubts she had to handle, and when daylight came, she chipped away all of the built up ice so the outhouse door would close freely—within two weeks, the door again wouldn't close tight. The snow, though, had settled. The moose could get around easier and were less interested in shoveled walks and plowed roadways. Most of them had moved down onto the Ninilchik River where they were trimming willows.

But my wife's other doubts stayed with her.

I sometimes wish I could write with the self-assuredness of Mom's ancestor who preached the funeral for Mary, Queen of Scots. But we are well enough educated to know

to qualify everything we say. Scientific truth has a life of, what, seven years. And with deconstruction, is written communication even possible? We deconstruct our history, our literature, our language, our faith, and we are left to drown in a flood of disconnected signifiers and signifieds, none of which have meaning, making our suffocation equally meaningless. No wonder our local poet remains reluctant to say, *This text is finished*. As long as he holds it close to his breast, it remains alive, strong and healthy. It grows, matures, like hidden *Leaves of Grass*.

Writing has become a process, like the growing of *Grass* but with revision instead of publication its product. We have circled around on ourselves since Jack Kerouac was *On the Road*.

Too many of us lack faith in our convictions. As was said in an ancient Pogo cartoon, *We have opinions because somebody said we should have opinions*. We have endured a President still discovering his core convictions (they might all wear stripes), and a Vice President who invented the Internet. We profess faith in a Creator God, then deconstruct and carefully, thoughtfully, emotionally reconstruct the only text that reveals this deity. We questioned whether our military could defeat Iraq. Yes, we did. Then when our military did, we asked them to use safer bullets as they were and are sent to figuratively deliver pizza around the world, a phrase that belongs to Rush Limbaugh.

The popularity of radio personality Rush Limbaugh might have as much to do with him voicing his convictions as to him validating the opinions of his audience. Rush, G. Gordon Liddy, Chuck Harder, Allen Keyes, a few others—all might stand out because they deconstructed their uncertainties instead of their opinions. Perhaps we should send all of them back to college so they, too, can learn writing as process.

I used to sit in that outhouse there at Ninilchik, and wonder if I had made a mistake moving North. We might have been too poor to even collect Food Stamps (a person needs a kitchen) if we would have applied. I was working on a contract for Louisiana-Pacific but not getting paid. I had uncertainties. And they were probably the same ones my wife had. We just dealt with them differently.

There at Ninilchik, we really didn't lack anything: we were given bundles of used clothes for our daughters, who were young enough they didn't mind wearing hand-me-downs. A couple local sawmills had me fall a little timber for them and paid me in cash. A fellow leaving Alaska gave me his eight laying hens. A farmer gave me several hundred pounds of frozen potatoes, enough for both us and the hens ... in case a person ever encounters having to eat frozen potatoes, don't let them thaw. Once a frozen potato thaws, it's nasty. But if a person throws the still frozen potato in boiling water, it cooks up okay. Not quite like a potato that has never been frozen, but plenty good enough for mash potatoes or *lefse*.

Bishop's cabin, when we moved in, was heated with a small potburner oil stove. By January, working fulltime for Louisiana-Pacific but not getting paid, I couldn't afford to buy heating oil. But I had an almost unlimited supply of dry, bug-killed spruce available to me. All I needed was to acquire a wood stove. I just couldn't afford to buy one. And if there is anything that can cause a person to doubt himself that thing is being in Alaska in January in a cold cabin with a wife and three daughters six and under. I truly questioned my ability to provide. I had some of those questions Denny asked.

A commercial fisherman I had met, Bob Clucas, said, "Rusty Hicks has a wood stove in one of his sheds that you can probably get. Why don't you ask him?"

I don't think I have ever admitted to anyone how hard a thing that was. Rusty was a disfellowshipped member of the church to which I belonged. I had never met the man. He then lived three miles up Oil Well Road, and I didn't have a vehicle that ran. But it

was twenty-five below zero. We had a little electric milkhouse heater that was keeping the cabin somewhat warm, but we were out of oil and the temperature was falling. It would be forty-one below in the morning.

As I walked up Oil Well Road that night in January, 1975, northern lights out but the wind blowing, cutting through my jacket and jeans, I kept hearing in my mind, almost as if the words were being spoken aloud, *If God is for you, who can be against you?* I could think of a lot of whos. But the passage kept repeating itself, almost with the regularity of a cadence count as I walked against the wind.

Rusty couldn't have been happier to give, not just loan, me the stove and new stove pipe. He drove me back down Oil Well, and helped me install that stove. He didn't leave until the cabin was warm.

(Could I have applied for welfare? perhaps. But I really didn't need you to support me.)

So yes, I have dealt with uncertainties, mine, my wife's. She never really got over hers. A decade later, following a traffic accident, eleven months of hospitalization, and a six-figure insurance settlement, she took her money and left, leaving me to continue rearing three daughters who then faced their own uncertainties about marriage and divorce, law and grace. If I could preach with the self-assuredness of Mom's ancestor, it would be about divorce. But what can be said about divorce in the deconstructable English of the changing millennium?

Before I sailed for Kodiak in 1979, I had only been to sea in skiffs, and then never out of sight of port. I didn't know what I was doing, didn't know much about the boat I bought, but I was willing to take educated chances. Still as I watched the lights of Homer disappear as I headed for Kodiak, 210 degrees, south by southwest, magnetic, I felt all kinds of uncertainties, ones I again felt when I left Kodiak for Dutch Harbor.

I feel uncertainties about putting forward my words. Who am I to challenge cultural deconstruction? Well, I am that person who walked up Oil Well Road with that phrase in mind. *If God is for me, who can be against me?* No one. The uncertainty can only be whether God is for me. So exactly a quarter of a century older than on that January night in 1975, I set down words that are my own, but might not be.

Last month I found, in a crumpled paper bag among moth-eaten fly-tying necks in a tin cookie can, those five cast silver fish. They were tarnished, one of them almost black. I don't remember putting them in that bag or in that tin, but I must have. And my doubts about that teenager were unjustified.

[Continued in Part Two]

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