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Another Short History, Dog Almighty

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Two Poems

PETER DESY

Another Short History

Founder Joseph Smith believed
the Garden of Eden
was twenty miles north
of St. Louis. It disappeared
as neatly as the gold tablets
the Angel Moroni presented
on a day. Such specificity, but
so many rules following.
Never simplicity, nothing
verifiable. *All* rely on assent
to the most fabulous of propositions.
Adherents must order every item
on the scripted menu. After a while
beliefs become tradition, venerated
by the fervid and the torpid.

When I turned atheist
my aunt said she *knew* there was a God
just by looking at a blade of grass.
That's a popular view, I said. However,
I've taken the tour of the universe
with Carl Sagan. My mother reached
across the table and slapped my face.
I never thought a son of mine...
she began and ended. Mother, I said,
look out back and see the summer slime
upon the pond. And think of dwarfs
with cataracts. I thought of Kierkegaard
preening the feathers of his agnosticism
just before his impossible flight.

Dog Almighty

He'd find a way through
the long backyard fence,
then roam the neighborhood
and come home when the spirit moved,
looking for dinner and a cold drink.
I'd mend the fence, but he'd study it,
sometimes for days, not doing anything
but sitting and staring at it, contemplating it,
always finding the flaw, some break
I didn't know was there,
speculating on human weaknesses.
Too aloof to be called an escapee,
he had a vain air about him
that put me off and I'd think
Augustine could be right about sin
and the human condition and the corruption
of nature itself. And at times I'd feel dense
because, like all right-thinking people, I believed
that dogs were sweet or vicious, but not
coldly calculating, elevating reason to an art,
figuring the odds, their stillness the outward sign
of an inward life. And finding a way out
and coming back again and again, always
discovering the breach and walking through it
like pure spirit leaving the body,
despising the material world,
sloughing it off like an old coat.