

## Preface

The American philosopher William James once said he couldn't understand how anyone could read the Bible from cover to cover and believe it was the word of God. The Old Testament's Jehovah is an angry, cruel tyrant. He drowns every man, woman, and child, and their pets, except for Noah and his family. He turns Lot's wife into a pillar of salt because she disobeys him by looking back at Sodom and Gomorrah while his angels are demolishing both towns. When Moses' two nephews mixed incense improperly for an animal sacrifice, God ~~so~~ <sup>so</sup> ~~dislike~~ <sup>disliked</sup> the smoky smell that he killed both boys with lightning bolts.

Jesus' God was ~~more~~ <sup>more</sup> merciful. He only ~~tor~~ <sup>Tortured</sup> eternally such evil men as the extremely ~~weak~~ <sup>richly</sup> wealthy. Paul's god was ~~much~~ worse. He punished forever (forever!) those who held incorrect beliefs about Jesus and his Resurrection!

The best known remark of stand-up comedian Lenny Bruce was that people are leaving their churches and going back to God. What follows here is <sup>a</sup> rambling autobiography of one such person, <sup>namely</sup> me.

Martin Gardner

Norman, Oklahoma

## 1. Earliest Memories

I have always loved colors. All colors. To me the ability to see colors is one of God's great blessings. (Yes, Virginia, there is a God, In my last chapter I ~~will~~ explain why I call myself a philosophical theist). In Searching my brain for the earliest event I can recall, the best I can come up with is a memory <sup>of seeing colors when I was</sup> of being carried in my father's arms <sup>on</sup> a fine autumn day in Tulsa. The ground was covered with dead maple leaves. I pointed to a leaf and somehow indicated ~~that~~ I wanted it. My dad picked it up and handed it to me. It was gorgeously blazing with red<sup>s</sup> and browns and yellows.

My mother, too, was fond of colors. When she was a kindergarten teacher in Lexington, Kentucky, <sup>trained</sup> ~~trained~~ in the Montessorri Method, she liked to teach her children the names of colors. I remember when she made for me six balls of yarn, three bright with the primary colors, three with the secondary colors. She <sup>could</sup> ~~liked~~ ~~to~~ point to objects in <sup>the</sup> room and ask me to name their color. Late in life, when she studied ~~studied~~ art under Adah Robinson, at Tulsa University, she reveled in the colors of dozens of still lifes she painted.

<sup>Miss</sup> ~~Miss~~ Robinson was well known in Tulsa as ~~the~~ designer of the Boston Avenue Methodist Church which we attended. She also designed the interior of Tulsa's First Church of Christian Science. Her <sup>oil</sup> portrait of my mother is owned by Tulsa's Gilchrist Museum.



I remember one day, when I was a child in bed with some illness, <sup>my</sup> ~~my~~ mother brought a box of water colors to the bed <sup>and</sup> ~~and~~ on a sheet of paper painted a picture of a sunset, I can still vividly recall its <sup>glowing</sup> colors.

<sup>O</sup> ~~H~~anging in our large house at 2187 South Owasso Street, <sup>Tulsa,</sup> were several water colors by the Kentucky artist Paul Sawyer, a painter my mother ~~greatly~~ admired. Many years later I sold to a gallery in Frankfort, Kentucky, reproduction rights to a Sawyer picture of a covered bridge. He is Kentucky's most famous artist. There is a room devoted to his work in Frankfort's <sup>capitol</sup> ~~capitol~~ building. You can buy a huge volume <sup>about</sup> ~~devoted to~~ his paintings.

An indication of my mother's love of colors was her enormous delight in seeing a rainbow. She always looked for one if there was a shower accompanied by sunshine, especially from a sun low in the sky. She would rush outside to look for a bow. If there was one she would <sup>hurry</sup> go to the phone and call a dozen friends urging them to go outside <sup>to</sup> see <sup>the</sup> bow. To paraphrase a familiar couplet by Wordsworth:

Her heart leaps up when she beholds  
A rainbow in the sky.

Now that I am an old man, my heart still leaps up <sup>too,</sup> when I see a rainbow. It made a ~~high~~ leap one morning when I saw a secondary bow. The wonderful thing about a rainbow is that it is not something "out there" in the sky.  $\longrightarrow$   
It exists only on the retinas of eyes or on photographic film. Your image in a mirror is similar. <sup>it's</sup> ~~It is~~ not <sup>a thing</sup> ~~something~~ behind the looking glass. By the way, what does a mirror look like when there's no one in the room? And why ~~does~~ a mirror reverse left and right but not up and down?

