



ZWTF

SUNDAY, AUGUST 19, 2012 Zapping-you Whenever Thoughts Flow

A story about politics for boys and girls (and everyone else)

by Martin Zender



I remember the night in November, 1992, when Bill Clinton won the presidency. As I packed my lunch for work the morning after the election, I felt as though I'd awakened under an occupying power—and it wasn't a good one. Even though Clinton had yet to be inaugurated, everything felt weird. A person I considered irresponsible and godless would now steer my nation.

I stopped halfway down the sidewalk in the dark on the way to my car to listen to the new era. The first thing I heard was a dog barking; it was the same dog that barked every morning at this hour. *Hm*, I thought, *how strange for a new era*. Then I heard a frog croaking in the nearby stream. I'd heard him before; it was the one I'd dubbed, *Nebuchadnezzar*, or "Nebby" for short. I followed the strange sound and posed a question.

"Nebby, what do you think about this Bill Clinton fellow?"

There was a small splash, followed by three night-splitting croaks, and then a tiny voice: "Give me a second. Can't you see I'm trying to attract a mate?"

Four cannon-blast croaks ensued, each more warlike than the last.

"Where is your subtlety? I asked.

"Subtlety, schmutelty. The females dig volume. Especially when I bloat my cheeks. Watch this."

"Good God!"

“Like two dirigibles. Ha! The ladies *faint* over that. Hold on.”

He disappeared beneath the surface, returning with his tongue ajar and smacking.

“What was *that*?”

“Dead fly. They float by this time of morning. That one was fat, though. He was sinking.”

“I guess I didn’t notice.”

“You’re not very observant.”

I blew on my cupped hands, to warm them. “I see there is no way you can feel my pain. I’m sorry I bothered you.”

“Stay put, Grumpy. I want to help.”

“There’s nothing you can do. The United States has just elected a pot-smoking, womanizing liberal as president. What is anyone going to do?”

Nebby’s big mouth flopped downward. “I know about pot. I know about womanizing. But what’s this ‘*liberal*’ thing? And what is ‘the United States?’”

“*States*. That’s the country we live in.”

“I don’t live in a country.”

“Yes, you do. You live in the United States of America.”

Nebby looked around his stream. “No, I don’t. I live in this stream.”

“I know,” I said. “And I live in that house over there. But we both live in the United States of America. Raise your viewpoint.”

He looked down at his anatomy.

“Forget it,” I said.

“What is this United States of Whatever?” he asked. “Tell me exactly.”

“It’s a country.”

“You’re talking crazy now. Hang on again.” He snagged another dead fly. “Can you see it from space?”

“Can you see *what* from space?”

“The United States of Whatever.”

“America.”

“I’m talking about the stakes. You can see them from space?”

“*States*. But yes, you can see them from space.”

“How many do you have? I assume there are more than one.”

“There are fifty.”

“Can you see them *all* from space?”

“I already told you. Yes.”

“Who decides the lines?”

“*What* lines?”

“The lines of the states. You must have lines for there to be different states.”

“Oh ... politics, I guess.”

“Are the lines as big as logs? Can you sit on them? What color are they?”

“You can’t *see* the lines. They’re not *actual* lines.”

“So you *can’t* see them from space. Ding-dang, you said you could.”

“Well, you can’t. You can’t see the individual states.”

“What about the country. Lines?”

“Um, no, actually. Same deal. No actual lines.”

“Who decides? Polyticks again?”

“*Politics*.”

“So you can’t see the lines from space, and the *polyticks* decides. Dingle-dangle, I’m glad I live in this pond, and not where *you* say I live.”

I should have been exasperated, but strangely wasn’t.

“What about other countries?” he asked. “Do *they* have lines?”

“No.”

He looked up into space. In the moonlight, I saw the upward roll of his bulbous eyes. “Look at the stars,” he said. “See how brightly they shine. I know God put them there. They seem to move, but don’t. I know this, and I am only a frog. But there is one more thing I know: My Creator is over all. Say something about how still and quiet it is here. Because I know you feel both these things. You are not as stupid as you sound. Because you are now looking at the stars. Did I say a right thing?”

In spite of myself, I said, “It’s eloquent, the stillness.”

“Yes,” he said. “The stillness is that. We have that word: *eloquent*. Since the dawn of time, no star moves. They seem to move, but do not. Hold on.”

I heard a small splash.

“Mm. That one tasted like a peanut. Name some of your people.”



“*What* people?”

“Who have ruled you.”

“Ronald Reagan.”

“Same stars. Name another.”

“Jimmy Carter.”

“Same stars. Both United States?”

“Yes.”

“Name some people of the other countries.”

“Margaret Thatcher.”

“That is a sexy name. It hits me right. But same stars. Give me old ones.”

“Stars?”

“People.”

“Nebuchadnezzar,” I said.

“Interesting. That’s a frog name—I would not joke about that. Anyway, same stars. Give me another.”

“Alexander the Great.”

“Same stars. Name seven more. Quick.”

“Pontius Pilate. Nero. Genghis Khan. Ghandi. Napoleon. Jesus Christ.”

“Same stars. That’s only six; I counted on my toes; you are one short.”

“Adolph Hitler.”

“Consider the stars!” he croaked. And like that, he splashed away into the blackness.

I did consider the stars, then. Without moving, I shot myself into space, as Nebby had done. In my mind, I reached the peaks of the empyrean. I looked down upon our little planet from on high. My God, that little frog was so right! It was all so beautiful and still—from up there. There were no lines, but only natural boundaries: mountains, lakes, seacoasts. I returned to Earth, and the stars swam before me; tears filled my eyes.

I drove to my job from that celestial perspective, in perfect peace. ■



Contentment vs. Government

by Martin Zender

It is fine to want as good a government as can be humanly attained in this current wicked world, as long as one does not lose one’s peace striving or fighting for it.

I think that if we had to choose between Communism and Democracy, we would choose Democracy. Democracy aligns with the human spirit. People simply do not



want to live in gulags and eat white bread. They do not want to pay high taxes. Our souls cherish free enterprise and bread with significant amounts of fiber. It is God Himself who implanted this longing. Freedom to speak

and to worship and to choose what kinds of carbohydrates we consume is to be desired above iron-fisted rule and, say, government-mandated Twinkies.

Above all this, however, is contentment in Christ. Contentment in Christ trumps all. Peace of mind and a tranquil spirit are the transcendent gifts of God. One of the best things about these gifts is that they do not depend on our efforts for either their existence or maintenance. They are based on something God did in spite of us.

I contend that bread—even whole-grain bread with flax in it—cannot make people ultimately happy or peaceful. It helps, but you can’t count on it. You can have great bread, which we do have in this wonderful country, and still feel storm-tossed and depressed. But if you have tapped into God-wrought peace, then not even white bread can screw that up. God is calm because Christ satisfied Him concerning all humanity. Now *you* be calm.

Because of what Christ did at Calvary, God sees all humanity as a new creation. Now *you* tap into that new creation status. Christ represented all humanity before God, and so the old humanity is now considered dead to God because of Christ. Think on that. All things are made new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Tap into the newness in the midst of the old. The calm spirit of tranquility that now lives in us through Christ (because God made peace through Christ) is like an internal river that flows constantly into the cracks and crevices carved into our bodies and minds by this world. It hydrates and soothes every torn, dry crack. Its supply is endless, and it’s free. ■