

## The Unanswered Question

By Bev Currie

*Either God wants to abolish evil, and cannot,  
Or he can, but does not want to.  
If he wants to but cannot, he is impotent.  
If he can, but does not want to, he is wicked.  
If he neither can, nor wants to,  
Then he is both powerless and wicked.  
Epicurus: 300. BC*

Lately I've been thinking about religion a lot. This alone should get me into the Book of Revelation. But I digress. You see, I live in a small community. The town and the surrounding area probably consist of no more than a couple of hundred persons (oops, souls). When you live in a small community like this everybody knows everybody else, especially those of us who have lived here all our lives.

Bertie and Betty have lived here all their lives too. They grew up and married here and to use the vernacular, they are known as party animals. At least a couple of times a week you could find them in the bar, drinking beer, smoking cigarettes and swearing a lot. They could be found playing the slot machines too. At bonspiel time, sports days or social dances, no one had more fun than they.

The reason I have been thinking about religion is because Bertie and Betty have recently found the Lord and the whole town is all a-twitter.

Now I've been talking to religious people and they tell me that if you find the Lord, you will have a chance of getting into heaven. It doesn't seem to matter what you did in the past, if you repent and find the Lord, you will be forgiven.

The way I have it figured, Bertie and Betty have a pretty good chance of getting into heaven because they have never hurt anyone, except maybe themselves and they have done good things too. Betty belongs to the Ladies Aid Society and Bertie has been involved in several local activities as well. So if really bad people have a chance of getting into heaven, I would think Bertie and Betty should have pretty clear sailing.

It seems to me, if you are going to find the Lord, it would be an advantage if you waited until later in life. Bertie and Betty had it timed pretty well because my religious friends tell me that once you find the Lord you can no longer do all the things that Betty and Bertie found so enjoyable.

If this is so, why do quite a few people find the Lord when they are comparatively young, if finding the Lord keeps them from doing a lot of things that are fun? It is true you can still do good things, but sometimes they are not a lot of fun. For instance the Lord might ask you to go and live in a mud hut in the African jungle where there are all kinds of diseases and dangerous animals and where your mission would be to convince the people there that your religion is better than theirs. That can't be a lot of fun.

Again, my religious friends come to my rescue. This is how it works. The Lord can come and take you any time He wants and it doesn't matter if you have found Him or not. And here's the main point. Finding the Lord gives you a chance to get into heaven but (and this is important) if you don't find the Lord before He takes you, you won't have a hope in hell of getting into heaven. Knowing this, every one has to make his decision on when to find the Lord after weighing the risk against the reward so to speak.

So Bertie and Betty found the Lord rather late in life but they didn't both find the Lord at the same time. Betty found Him first and Bertie some time later. Bertie still carried on having fun just the way he had done for so many years but after a while he discovered it wasn't much fun anymore without Betty so he decided to find the Lord as well.

Now my religious friends didn't tell me this but I am pretty sure it would have been much easier for Bertie to find the Lord than it was for Betty. You see Betty had already found the Lord and it is a safe bet that she gave Bertie a pretty good hint where He could be found. "He is over in that area there," she might say. "He is somewhere between that rock and that tree over there, look around and you'll find Him." "You're getting waarmmer."

There Bertie would be, walking around looking for the Lord, reminding me a bit of my father when he was walking around in the dusty fields looking for arrowheads. Then all of a sudden he might say, "Good Lord you scared the hell out of me! God, I must have walked by this place a million times and didn't see you! Why didn't you give me a sign or something? You could have stuck out a foot and tripped me. I would have gladly gone ass over teakettle for you, Lord." Or something like that.

We may never know for sure how it happened but there is a question about this whole affair that I find puzzling and it is a question my religious friends don't seem to have an answer for. And that is, how do you tell a religious person from a liar? Now this is a serious question. It isn't one of those jokes where the answer is, "when his lips are moving." It's not that at all. You see, we know for sure that a religious person would never tell a lie. That's a given. But we know as well that a liar would have no problem saying he is a religious person. It is sort of like a cuckoo laying her egg in a blackbird's nest. If the blackbird doesn't know the difference it will raise the little cuckoo as if it were one of its own.

You might ask why any person would lie about finding the Lord. There could be an advantage to him though. Perhaps he is a businessman who thinks it would be an advantage if his customers believe he had found the Lord or he might be a politician who would like the voters to think he is religious. There is even a remote chance that a minister of some religion or another might lie and say he is religious, if for instance, he believed there could be a lot of money to be made from it. I know it stretches credulity but it *is* possible.

So how *do* you tell the difference? The answer is that most of the time you can't. So, when a person says he is religious and has found the Lord, he must be taken at face value. It's the logical thing to do. Again, you have to consider the risk and the reward. No one wants to be fooled by a liar and on the other hand, an honest person should not be excluded because he is thought to be a liar.

But once in a while a situation arises when you know for sure that the person is lying. I was having trouble thinking of a good example but I finally came up with one.

Take George W Bush for example. George lived it up for a long time. He drank a lot and took drugs too. Then he found the Lord. And we know as well that he eventually became the leader of the free world. There is nothing wrong with that.

Now here is the tricky part. Before long, President Bush told his people that he had talked to the Lord, and the Lord had told him to invade Iraq and find Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. So what are good people supposed to do? You can't be sure he is telling the truth but again you have to weigh the risk against the reward. It would be a terrible thing if the leader of the free world was lying, and killed a million people for no good reason at all. On the other hand, killing a million people in order to save the rest of the world from a mushroom cloud would be a reward worth risking. The good people,

especially religious people went along with George Bush. Given the choices, I think it was the right thing to do.

So George Bush went into Iraq and killed a million people and spent five years looking for weapons of mass destruction. We know now that he didn't find any weapons of mass destruction and this gives religious people a big problem, a problem for which none of them seem to have an answer.

They tell us the Lord would never tell a lie and they tell us as well that the Lord knows everything. The Lord knew all along then, that there were no weapons of mass destruction and because we know He would never lie, He would never have told George Bush that there *were*. Now we know, proof positive, that George Bush is a liar.

So here is the unanswered question. Now that they know George Bush is a serious liar, why do religious people still take him into their fold just as the blackbird would, and nurture him as if he were one of their own?