

Gale Acuff

Everybody goes to Heaven or Hell

folks say at Sunday School so I say *Sure enough* and just go along, I don't mean to Hell or Heaven but that I agree though just to avoid an argument, for ten years old I'm pretty peaceful, I'd make a fair preacher save that I don't believe and it might be a law that you have to, I guess my God is more easygoing, resting on Sunday and I mean *resting*, He or She or whatever's the proper handle hangs at home while folks spiff up and meet at church--how can they expect God to pay attention when He's dreaming? Unless He rested just that once and it was good.

When they die folks head for Heaven or Hell

they preach and teach, mostly preach it seems, at
Sunday School, I have perfect attendance
there so I must know something, at least I
feel pretty righteous and told my teacher
so but she said *Gale, that's commendable
but don't ever think that you're God Almighty
yourself, you know*, so I said *Oh, no ma'am,
of course, that is I mean I damn sure won't*
but the word that escaped kind of nailed her
so she said *Well, that's pretty good proof that
you're not He* and I was going to beg her
Please don't tell my folks that I curse at church
but then I thought *What the Hell, I don't care
too much and if God does then good enough.*

Everybody dies but not all at once

and that's a good thing though it's not a *thing*
at all says my Sunday School teacher and
if everybody died at the same time
nobody would be left to carry on
the future, which makes sense, I'm ten years old
but that makes sense and I don't want to die
at all, I want to live forever and
I can, she says, my Sunday School teacher,
I can live *eternally* but first I
have to die and I don't want to die but
to live forever I *have* to die, which
sounds crazy but that's religion and at
Sunday School I have perfect attendance
so that's something. Sometimes I wonder what.

When you die you're still alive, that's called

religion and I get my weekly dose
of it and the Holy Ghost at Sunday
School and I go since one day I'll wake up
dead and have to get ready to meet God
and especially His judgment of me
and then get to stay up yonder with Him
or have to go to Hell forever to
suffer and suffer but maybe after
I can get promoted to Paradise,
I'm not too sure of the facts, but I'd like
to have another shot at life on Earth
before I have to spend Eternity
in the Good Place unless there are Chinese
buffets there and I mean all-you-can-eat.

In the Afterlife you're kind of on your

own is what they say at Sunday School but
then that's life as an angel, unless you
and your angel-buddies are all praising
God Almighty through song and harp and
other ways to make a joyful-noise-un-
to-the-Lord and all that, I'm kind of shy
and expect I'll stay so while I'm dead but
then again if Heaven's perfect so will
I be so if I'm still shy like I am now
while still alive then part of life on Earth,
mine anyway, will be perfect, too, so
why croak at all? I'll take death up with God
when the time (or Eternity) comes
and I'm not busy praising. I'm too nice.

Sooner or later we all go to Hell

whispers Grandfather, it's his deathbed
after all so I guess he can say what
-ever he wants, not even God would blame
him and I guess that's why Jesus died but
before I can advise him he closes
his eyes and I don't want to wake him just
when he can clamp his 'lids forever, that
seems like cheating to me or at least it's
not fair in some way I'm too young to know
and maybe Grandfather was, too, when *he*
was ten years old and his grandfather be
-fore him, let's see, that would be my *great*-grand
-father, and on back to the beginning
of it all. I close my eyes and see me.