

HOW BIG YOUR GOD IS

CHRISTIAN & SPIRITUAL POEMS



BY HARLAN RICHARDS

November 30, 2014

Dennis Sobin, Director  
Safe Streets Arts Foundation  
2512 Virginia Ave., NW, #58043  
Washington, DC 20037

Dear Mr. Sobin:

Please find enclosed my manuscript, How Big Your God Is,  
for posting on your website.

I am also enclosing a SASE.

Thanks for all your help and may God bless you and  
all you do.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Harlan Richards". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Harlan Richards  
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How Big Your God Is

A Selection of Christian and Spiritual Poems

Written by

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November 2014

In 2010, after 26 years in prison, Christ called me as one of His own. When I answered His call, He gave me the gift of poetry. Since then, I have written hundreds of poems, had dozens of them published and completed 2 books and a chapbook. This book contains many of my inspired poems.

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## Introduction

In 2010, I became a Christian and accepted Christ as my savior. The Lord put it in my heart to write poetry - something I believed I was incapable of doing. Nevertheless, I joined a creative writing group and began writing. Much to my surprise, poems flowed out of me and onto the page. Within a few months, I had my first poem accepted for publication and since then I've had dozens of poems published in various print and online journals. This ebook contains some of my best Christian and spiritual poems.

This book is my second ebook of poems. My first ebook, What Prison Teaches, consists entirely of poems about prison. I have been imprisoned over 30 years for stabbing a man in a fight. I came to Christ in prison and He changed my life. I dedicate this book to God and all those who sincerely believe in Him and follow His commandments. May God bless every person who reads this book



## How Big Your God Is

The preacher said  
Don't tell God how big your problem is,  
Tell your problem how big your God is.  
Let me bear witness that  
We all have problems, and to  
Each of us it seems our problem is  
So big we can't get a handle on it.  
The Lord showed me tonight, as I  
Listened to 5:13 sing His praises,  
That when we raise our voices  
In the name of the Lord, all things  
Are possible with God.  
The blind see, the lame walk, the  
Prison gates open at the Lord's Word.  
We are free to run, free to dance,  
Free to raise our voices to the Lord.

Harlan Richards

## Eternity

From the dark pits of hell  
    where I once reveled and ruled,  
I scabbled up unscalable cliffs  
    toward the light.  
Remorseless and angry,  
    unrepentant for decades,  
Attacking, taking, devouring,  
    reaving with rampant rage.  
'Til the Lord's lightning split  
    black heart's hardened shell,  
Awakening me to  
    the horror I had become.  
No more exalting, exulting in  
    domination and destruction.  
No more sadistically barbed words  
    inflicting cruel torment.  
Forgiven by God and self, washed  
    fresh and clean, healed anew,  
Given a last chance to  
    redeem my soul. It's now or never.  
Praise God my ego rules no more,  
    but heeds the call of His pure love.  
Not my will but  
    Thine be done.  
I pray Thee grant me the power to  
    serve, not self, but all whose need  
Cries loudly to the heavens from the dark  
    pits of hell which once held me in thrall.  
For one gift of kindness may man  
    forsake his madness toward others.  
If the insidious evil which was my self  
    can find redemption, then all may find it.  
I pray Thee heal others as I was healed,  
    help me to help them  
Sup at the table of loving forgiveness ere  
    the last supper come and go,  
    thence it will be too late.

Harlan Richards

## I Pray To Thee

I pray Thee God to light my way,  
Through my trials and my pain.  
Keep me alive another day.

I'll do your will come what may,  
As I smile through the pouring rain.  
I pray Thee God to light my way.

I give my life and to the Lord obey,  
That my sacrifice may bring forth gain.  
Keep me alive for another day.

I never knew how to portray,  
My heart's desire so I did abstain.  
I pray Thee God to light my way.

But now my life has become so gay,  
That spirit nevermore will wane.  
Keep me alive for another day.

Adversity will not inveigh,  
Nor thwart my path to attain.  
I pray Thee God to light my way.  
Keep me alive for another day.

Harlan Richards

A New Psalm

How many times, Lord,  
Will you allow my ego to rise up,  
Cerebus-headed, fangs dripping

To drive you off and leave me  
Trapped in this dark pit of hell  
From which I so recently escaped?

How long, Lord, will I struggle  
Alone in the darkness, cut off  
From your cleansing light?

Hear me, Lord, I am one of yours,  
Crying out for release from  
Satan's evil grip.

I am powerless without your love,  
Desperate without your grace,  
Condemned without your help.

I pray Thee, Lord, bring me back  
Into the fold, ere the evil one  
Have his way and destroy me.

Harlan Richards

From Saul to Paul

I was once much like  
Saul of Tarsus before  
He became Paul, foremost of  
God's messengers.  
Jesus was patient, persistent,  
Adamant that I was one of  
His Chosen.  
Though He never struck me blind  
On the road to Damascus, He  
Worked His will in my life and  
Brought me into His fold.  
Like a newborn lamb  
Kept safe by my shepherd,  
I learned to walk the path of  
Righteousness He paved for me  
With the blood of His sacrifice.

## The Pentecost

The apostles were at their lowest,  
Feeling bereft, their master ascended,  
Expecting the Pharisees and priests to  
Come for them, put an end to them.  
But the Lord had other plans  
For His Chosen, sending His  
Holy spirit to dwell in them.

Fear fell away, rich deep voices  
Rang out, giving glory and honor  
To the Lord, apostles stepped out  
Boldly, speaking in tongues,  
Spreading the Good News, converting  
Thousands as they went about  
Their father's business.

We celebrate it still, Pentacostal Sunday,  
Giving all honor and glory to the  
Indwelling of God in man.  
Our rich, deep voices ring out, echoing  
Those apostolic voices of long ago,  
Giving glory to God, calling  
All of His own back to Him.

Harlan Richards

## Test My Mettle

Go ahead, test my mettle.  
Make it as bad as you want,  
Lock me in prison for a quarter century,  
Don't let me see my daughter for a decade,  
Make me scrape dirty dishes, eat crappy food,  
Tease me, let me taste freedom,  
Then take it away again,  
Show me a light at the end of the tunnel,  
Then reveal it's an oncoming train.  
Doesn't matter, can't touch me.  
Nothing you can do can take my joy,  
Mar my mirth,  
Extinguish my exuberance.  
God gave me His Grace,  
When I gave Him my life,  
And you can never take my joy again.

Harlan Richards

## Miracles

There are miracles in my life  
Gracing me, gifting me, uplifting me  
Like winning a million dollars  
After buying one lottery ticket.  
I share my good fortune with  
Everyone I meet, knowing  
The more I give, the more I get.  
Holy Spirit grants miracles,  
Agents of change catalyze lives,  
Opens hearts, like a long-buried  
Treasure chest.  
My words, my love, my intentions,  
Are Holy Spirit's tools  
For making miracles.  
We share miracles  
Like a common pot of stew,  
Each dipping in as need and  
Hunger require.



## Help Me

Holy Spirit help me,  
Fill my heart like a  
Summer storm fills a rain barrel,  
Slake my thirst for love the way a  
Marathon runner slams Gatorade,  
Hear my supplication with the urgency of  
A newborn's cry in the night,  
Help me see my way to God's loving embrace  
With the keen sight of a soaring eagle,  
Bring me the joy of salvation with  
The abundance Santa brings to Christmas,  
Teach me how to have miracles in my life  
The way the Beatles taught a generation  
All you need is love.  
Holy Spirit help me,  
I'm blind as a day-old kitten  
Crying for its mother,  
Lost, not knowing the answers,  
Or the questions.

Harlan Richards

Sometimes

Sometimes I'm unmotivated, lazy,  
Just want emotional gratification  
Without working for it.

Sometimes I know what needs to be done,  
Am able to do it, but  
Lack the desire to act.

Sometimes I'd rather not be strong,  
Not step up to make a difference,  
Let whatever happens, happen.

Then I remember who I am,  
What I stand for,  
Who I answer to.

Let others languish,  
The Lord calls me to His cause,  
And I will always answer.

Harlan Richards

It's Always the Same

When I look back on my life,  
it's always the same.

I swear to love God  
Live true to His Word  
Until my ego takes over  
And I start acting absurd.

I'm fearful and puny,  
Alone in my misery  
See only the evil  
Surrounding me.

I now know the lesson  
Learned by the Jews  
When they forgot their God  
And all His rules.

Forgive me my Lord  
For my faithless betrayal  
Fill me with love  
Help me be loyal.

I have only this moment  
With solemn intent  
To Love the Lord  
In the way that He meant.

Second chances

God dealt harshly with Jonah,  
And for good reason.  
When your Maker calls you  
To service, you answer,  
Not with a stiff neck or  
Hard heart, but with a  
Desire to please, grateful for  
The chance to show your love.

Sometimes I act like Jonah,  
Am ashamed of myself for  
Stinting my devotion, yet  
Lack the resolve to step up.  
That's when I'm most thankful  
For a merciful God.  
Even if at times I disappoint,  
He always forgives me and  
Lets me try again.

Harlan Richards

## Lord Knows

Lord knows, I've made some mistakes  
In my life, sometimes thinking  
I was doing the right thing,  
Finding a way to justify my sin.  
Now I know better,  
At least I think I do.

But still, there's  
A long row to hoe  
Before I meet my Maker,  
And it seems the more I learn  
The less I know.  
New mistakes crop up, run deep,  
Not so much because I'm such  
A sinner these days, but because  
I can now see old wrongs  
with new eyes.

Harlan Richards

## Love Thy Neighbor

Turning the other cheek seems  
More metaphor than an actual  
Commandment from God.  
Harsh words lead to harsh deeds  
And when we let ourselves hate  
Those who think differently,  
Respond in kind when misunderstanding  
Begets animosity, we lose sight of  
Those with whom we speak.  
We are all Adam's children,  
Saved by a loving God,  
Whose message came by  
The lips of Jesus  
Commanding us to  
Love thy neighbor as thyself.

Harlan Richards

Trust In the Lord

The Lord clears my path  
The way a snow plow  
Clears drifted highways.  
The clutter of my life  
May creep back in after  
A while the way a road  
May drift over again,  
But sure as the plow  
Will come through again,  
The Lord will be there to  
Help me along.

I once thought it was my job to  
Work my way to the Lord, failing  
When my strength gave out, losing  
My way when my resolved faltered.  
Then He came unto me, bidding me to  
Put my faith in Him, lean on  
His strength and wisdom.  
Now I see it's not by my strength  
That I am saved, but rather  
By His mercy.

Harlan Richards

Insensible

I don't know how many ways  
There are to count my blessings,  
Two-by-two,  
All in a row,  
What-have-you.

What I do know is that  
I'm grateful to have so many  
Blessings to count that even on  
My worst day I still can't  
Recite them all before I'm  
Carried away thanking my  
Holy Father:

The source of all creation.  
All meaning in my life, who  
Provides so plentifully for me.

Harlan Richards



## Benediction

I have so many blessings in my life that  
I fall asleep before they're all counted.  
I wonder whether others count their blessings  
Like I do, only take more time because of  
More blessings?

Yet I can't help but mourn those whose  
Eyes cannot see the Lord's blessings  
In their lives, choosing instead a path of  
Envy, bitterness and blindness.

Thank you Lord for the gifts you  
Have bestowed upon me.  
I pray you multiply my blessings  
A hundred-fold that I may pass  
Them on to others, to open their hearts  
To the infinite blessings of  
Your Son's presence.

Harlan Richards

## Blessings In Disguise

Sometimes it seems that the  
Most pernicious evil imaginable  
Infects our lives, causing  
Untold misery and grief.  
It's so hard to see meaning  
In times like this, feeling like  
An urban cowboy following  
The trail of a wounded deer.  
Sure, the blood's there, and a  
Hoof print or two, but finding  
The deer is about as likely as a  
Pig farmer hosting the academy awards.  
Still in all, at the end of the  
Road, it often happens that  
We are able to see  
How lucky we were when we thought  
We were done so wrong.

## Hubris

Once upon a time, all my  
Prayers to God were all about me,  
What I wanted, how I could be helped,  
And I suppose it's okay to pray for  
What one needs.

But my prayers bore very  
Little fruit, as if God was not omnipresent,  
Was on His lunch break.

But so many of those I love  
Are struggling, suffering, needing  
More than they can provide  
For themselves.

Soon, I forgot about me  
- Except to thank God for my blessings -  
And began to pray for others.

God heard me, healed those  
I loved, and before you  
Knew it, I was praying for  
Everyone I saw in need.

Yet I'm not perfect, because  
Now I take such joy in my power  
To bring God's blessings to others  
When in reality I have no power at all,  
But rather sit at the feet of the master  
Praying that His will be done.

Harlan Richards

## Nightly

Once upon a time, I  
Tossed and turned in torment,  
Never a full night's sleep,  
Always awakening, sleepless too often.  
Then I resolved each time  
I rolled over, to thank the Lord,  
Count my blessings, for a life  
Well-lived, suffused with  
Meaning, saturated with love.  
Now each nocturnal waking moment is  
Given to the greater glory of God,  
Until I doze off again in the  
Loving arms of a forgiving God.

## Book of Fools

I've made so many mistakes in  
My life, found the land of  
Milk and honey, then wandered off  
Into the wilderness.  
Each time I get some sense  
Knocked into me, I step back,  
Ask myself how I could have  
Strayed so far from the Lord.  
He must have written my name  
In the Book of Fools by now,  
The place where you find all the  
Children of God with hearts of  
Gold, and not a lick of sense.  
Yet my Lord is a forgiving master,  
Absolving me again and again.  
Perhaps if I had a little more  
Holy Spirit and a little less  
Free will, maybe I could erase  
My name from the Book of Fools and  
Watch as the Lord records it  
In the Book of Life.

## Enslaved

I am a slave by choice,  
Thankful I'm not in charge.  
Once, I thought I was master of  
My destiny, my future, my reality,  
As I drowned myself in liquor,  
Smothered myself with smoke,  
And saturated my body with  
Toxic, blissful chemicals.  
Yet I was but a slave  
To many masters.

Then, freed of intoxication's yoke,  
I fancied myself once more  
Master of the universe,  
While I languished, in bondage to  
My desires, beliefs and ego.  
Still enslaved, still suffering.

Lost in discouragement, at last I  
Surrendered, gave up on winning  
The contest called life, not caring  
What the outcome would be,  
Wising to end the endless pain.  
I entered voluntary servitude in  
The army of the Lord, my God.

Since then, I've never looked back  
And never regretted serving my master,  
A slave to His Will.

Harlan Richards

## Low Rider

Everybody has seen them  
At one time or another.  
Those tricked-out low riders,  
Customized and detailed to  
Within an inch of perfection.  
Acres of chrome,  
Coats of lacquer,  
Artistry so sublime it's divine.

Jesus built me  
Like a low rider,  
Pounded out my dents with  
The hammer of retribution,  
Ground off old paint and rust  
From my Godless life.

All the while He was  
Getting me ready, applying a primer of  
Biblical knowledge, each day adding  
Another lacquered layer of understanding,  
A fresh coat of learning,  
Giving depth to my faith,  
Revealing the beauty of His work  
On my soul.

I may never win first place  
In a car show, or  
Shine with glitz and glam,  
But one thing's for sure,  
I'm one smooth ride for the Lord.

Harlan Richards

## Rebuilding My Chassis

Like busting loose a  
Rusted tie-rod end on my  
1969 Chevy van,  
Breaking free of my faults  
Takes some of the Lord's  
WD-40 and a whole lotta effort.  
I can put in a new ball joint to  
Keep my front end from wobbling  
The way I can insert some new values to  
Keep my faith from wavering.  
If I could fix my broken self as  
Easily as I fix my old van  
Jesus's job of saving me  
Would be a whole lot easier.

Harlan Richards



## Perdition

The hardest thing of all,  
Is to let the Holy Spirit  
Call the shots.  
I want what I want  
When I want it,  
In the way that I want it,  
Everyone else be damned.

That's what got me into  
This mess in the first place.  
Decades later, the lesson  
Has yet to be learned.

Would that I could see my faults  
As easily as I pick them out in others.  
Then perhaps the lessons would  
Not come so hard,  
I wouldn't suffer so much,  
And I wouldn't be forever taking  
The road to perdition.

## No Matter

No matter how bad it is,  
There's always someone  
Just a little worse off  
Just a little more agonized,  
So that even if you feel the  
Thorns of injustice crowning  
Your best effort, you know  
There's always something to  
Be thankful for and someone  
You can pray for.

Harlan Richards

## Judging Others

It makes me so angry, sometimes,  
when I let somebody get my goat,  
and only belatedly realize it was  
a test, and that I failed.

Fortunately, I can retake the test  
until I get it right.

I don't have to be a perfect  
test-taker, all I need to do is  
get it right in the end.

## Truly Blessed

I am truly blessed, and I  
Thank the Holy Spirit, after  
So many years of depression,  
Anger, hopelessness,  
While I fought furiously for  
Satisfaction, pleasure, happiness,  
Taking all the world had:  
Surfeit of sex,  
Gluttonous gorging,  
New clothes, new cars, new drugs,  
The latest movie, hottest hit song.  
Always seeking, craving, wanting,  
While I stayed empty as a drum,  
Until I stopped looking out, turned in,  
And didn't like who I saw.  
Desperate, despondent, determined to die,  
I killed myself, incinerated my ego,  
Let Phoenix rise from ashes of despair.  
There, behind the clutter of my life,  
I found the Holy Spirit,  
And felt the words,  
Not my will, but Thine, be done.

## An Angel of the Lord

I was there when it all began,  
Saw Lucifer the Lightbringer  
When he fell, and watched as  
He reigned supreme on earth.  
I did what I could, acted  
In the name of the Lord as  
He commanded me to do.  
I carried the warning to Lot ere  
The Lord's wrath destroyed Sodom.  
I led Isaac to his wife  
At the Lord's command.  
I wrestled Jacob at the well  
And watched over him as he  
Grew into Israel, the Lord's  
Faithful servant.  
I stood before Balaam's ass  
And made an ass out of Balaam  
In the name of the Lord.  
I was in the fiery furnace  
Protecting Shadrach, Meshach & Abde-Nego.  
Mostly, I watched and waited,  
Appearing briefly to set Mary's heart  
At ease and then encouraging  
Joseph to stand by her.  
I was one of those who  
Ministered to Jesus when  
The devil tempted him.  
It was me who rolled away  
The stone, being the last time  
I was on earth.  
Still, I watch and wait, carrying  
In my heart the Lord's promise that  
I would be in the vanguard when next  
He returns to claim His kingdom.

Harlan Richards

## What Makes A Hard Man Crumble

Many are the Evil Ones,  
Careless of others, willing to  
Kill, main, torture, for  
One cause or another,  
Even just a big, fat  
Paycheck. Evil Ones  
Have no qualms about  
Fighting to the death, enduring  
Privation, isolation, subjugation,  
Coming out stronger, meaner,  
More willing to kill,  
Maim, torture. Yet the  
Love of a forgiving God,  
When once received,  
Breaks that man  
Whom no amount of  
Adversity could cow.  
When Jesus comes to call  
A hard man crumbles,  
Surrendering his will to a  
Higher calling, anointed  
By the Lord's lovingkindness,  
Going forth to witness  
His salvation to all men.

Harlan Richards

## The Tree of Life

Sometimes I feel like  
A tree branch ripped off  
In a storm, torn away from  
My Lord's loving grace which  
Kept me rooted to my faith,  
Nurtured and sustained, as  
I did the photosynthetic  
Work the Lord created me for.

Though I fear being cast  
In a rubbish heap or left to  
Rot on the ground, the Lord's  
Aborist always picks me up and  
Grafts me back onto the  
Rootstock from which I  
Was sundered.

## Run, Demon, Run

They say demons run when  
A good man goes to war.  
Jesus came to earth to fight  
Satan for our souls but  
The evil one's minions, lost in  
Their own self-importance,  
Stood up to our Savior  
And paid the price.  
Jesus called down the  
Power from above to  
Send those below. Demons  
Destroyed, demons devastated,  
The Lord rules, on earth as  
He does in heaven.

Harlan Richards



## The Lord's Vessel

It sometimes takes me longer to  
Write a paeon honoring God  
Than it took Him to create  
Heaven and earth. I am  
A lump of clay, waiting to  
Take my turn on the Lord's  
Pottery wheel, molded into a  
Vessel of divine inspiration,  
Fired in the kiln of earthly  
Temptation, glazed with  
Scriptural instruction, now  
Destined to serve at the Lord's table.

Harlan Richards

## Bible Study

I haven't had the Lord's Word  
In my life nearly as much  
As I need to.  
The Lord has a way of giving me  
What I need, even when it isn't  
What I want, in the way I want it.

A reluctant Christian  
Is anathema to God,  
Redolent of stiff-necked Jewry of  
The Old Testament who didn't know  
The value of being the Lord's Chosen.

The Lord led me to Bible study,  
Even picked the course for me and  
Let me think it was my idea.  
Now, His Word is in my heart,  
Verses repeating like mantras,  
The scales have fallen from my eyes  
Revealing God's glory everywhere I look.

Harlan Richards

## Taming a Raging Torrent

Peace flows through me  
The way the Eau Claire River  
Flows through Gordon valley.  
It wasn't always like this.  
Once, I was a raging torrent,  
Dashing myself against rocks,  
Shooting rapids, sailing out  
Over the waterfall of strife.  
Yet the Lord helped me  
Get beyond the rough water,  
Built dams of Scripture,  
Tamed the ferocity. No longer  
Do the storms of adversity  
Overflow my banks to spread discord,  
No longer am I blinded by  
Lightning strikes over which I  
Have no control. With the Lord's  
Calming hand, I have been tamed.

Harlan Richards

## Madness

I hear the music of madness  
In the distance, watch  
Others dance to its tune,  
Wondering why they chose to  
Travel to the beat of a broken drum.

Sanity is consensus of the  
Masses, calling to what's  
Best in us, reaching out  
In spider web of assumptions  
Madness cannot fathom.

Once, the music of madness  
Played loudly in my ears,  
Tempted me to strip off sanity,  
Dance naked as David before God.

Reluctantly called back by Holy Spirit,  
Snubbed seductive siren sound,  
Gathered up another handful of resolve  
And made my way toward the light.

## Message From God

I received a message from God today,  
When He sent His Sacred Angel,  
A woman hated and vilified by many,  
To rescue my Bible.

The Holy Spirit  
Moves people to do His will,  
Giving each of us what we need  
To find His pure sweet love.

Mere mortals cannot  
Judge the wisdom of God's choices.  
The Holy Spirit sent her to  
Liberate my Bible - my first in decades.  
I did not doubt His wisdom,  
Merely thanked Him for His assistance.

Harlan Richards

## Forgiving Myself

It all began with me forgiving myself  
For the horrendous deeds,  
The selfish thoughts,  
The outsized ego,  
Which freed me to stop owning  
Who I was, what I did, what I thought.

Catholics have their confessional,  
Put the imprimatur  
On their forgiveness.  
The rest of us find God  
By going within, listening  
To the voice of the Holy Spirit,  
And heeding His word.  
It all begins by forgiving yourself.

Harlan Richards

Coming to God

When the Lord called me,  
I didn't hear Him,  
Was too busy being me,  
Getting what I wanted,  
When I wanted it.

Then the Lord struck  
The scales from my eyes,  
Let me see His truth:  
That all that I am,  
Or ever shall be,  
Is a blessing from Him.

Thus do I now plead  
With my heavenly father  
For the privilege  
To do His will,  
Every day of my life,  
Every way in my life, for  
Every person in my life.

Harlan Richards

## Can You Feel It Coming?

It came on the breeze,  
Stealthily, so subtly you  
Couldn't notice it until  
It was already there, as if  
It always had been.  
It's a mystery how something unseen  
Can ripple into existence, changing  
All it touches, much like mustard gas  
Poisoned soldiers in the First World War,  
Damage done on the first breath.

This time, it wasn't destruction  
By man's hand but salvation by God's.  
His cleansing forgiveness washed  
Away sin from every heart, healing  
Every hurt, revealing  
Every truth for all to see.  
Salvation is here and now,  
Natural as a deep breath and  
Coming to you on the next breeze.

Harlan Richards



Be Merciful, O Lord

I gush with the abundant life  
God intended for me, like a grizzly  
Gorging itself on spawning salmon.  
As I prayed with fervor, Montana  
Singled me out, prophesying the  
Word of the Lord, heartening me,  
Letting me know my suffering is  
God-wrought, part of His plan to  
Hone me to a razor's edge, temper me  
With His Holy Fire the way a warrior's  
Sword is forged into a mighty weapon.  
Thus may I find the courage to  
Proclaim His Word, declaim all  
Deniers, eat honey and locusts,  
Foretelling the Lord's return.

Harlan Richards

## A Christian

When a Christian faces adversity  
He sometimes says satan  
Is working against Him or  
The Lord is testing Him.  
Never does stuff just happen,  
Random vagaries of chance  
Defining the debate.  
It's always relevant, immediate  
And a message from God.  
Christians are powerless without  
God's helping hand, can only  
Reach Him through Jesus, the Son,  
And hardest of all, must do  
His will instead of their own.  
The Lord called me to His flock,  
Unwilling as Jonah was I,  
Yet slowly, steadily, He  
Brought me into His fold,  
Until His will became my will  
And I struggled no more.

## My Protector

I can feel my guardian angel  
Hovering nearby, though he's  
Too large to actually hover.  
Big and bright, sorta off-white,  
I glimpse him from the corner of  
My eye, feel his presence  
As he watches over me,  
Silent encouragement while I  
Read the Lord's Word,  
Face down my demons, grasp  
In frantic desperation for  
Salvation from the Lord.  
It's such a wonder, after wanting and  
Wishing for awareness of the  
Holy Spirit helping me, to  
Finally feel the presence of  
The Lord's power in my life.  
I pray thee, God, may it ever be thus.

Harlan Richards

## Christmas Candy

Dolly sang about a  
Hard candy Christmas  
Like it was something bad  
And I suppose it is - for  
A poor child clad in rags.

I want to sing about  
An all candy Christmas  
Where everything is sweet  
To the taste, soft  
To the touch, and  
Pleasant on the heart.

Harlan Richards

## Having Faith

It was a sheltered glen  
Where it all began,  
A most unlikely meeting  
Making me think there  
Is a God and His hand  
Was directing my steps.

Seems so strange, in this  
Era of cell phones, texting, and  
Mars landings, to think that  
My belief in God, what Lenin  
Called the opiate of the masses,  
Is what means most to me,  
Guides my steps, gives me  
Reason for so much gratitude.

As I said, it all began  
In a sheltered glen . . .

Harlan Richards

The Dichotomy of My Muse

They say we have  
An angel on each shoulder,  
One good, the other bad.  
One to help us rise to our best self,  
The other manifesting hell on earth.

I found my good one  
When by the grace of God  
I became a poet.  
But she of the sunlight  
Could not live in  
The darkness called Stanley.

I saw her evil twin  
Leap onto the page.  
In the age-old battle between  
Good and evil, I found myself losing,  
Bitterness and anger  
Creeping into my verse.  
I surrendered the battle  
I could not win and  
Gave myself over to God,  
Let Thy will, not mine, be done.  
The Lord took up my pen and  
Vanquished all the evil.  
Once again His love fills  
My heart, inspires my words  
And powers my pen  
With such faith that I will  
Never again be stayed from  
My appointed task.

Love So Large

I want a love so large  
It makes me feel small,  
Insignificant, like a bonsai  
Dwarfed by a redwood,  
So many times bigger  
There's no comparison.

I want the Lord in my life  
To lighten my load,  
Level the playing field  
Let His grace, grace us all,  
With His love so large,  
For His children so small.

Sing For Me

I love the sound of birds singing  
Early in the morning  
Like miniature alarm clocks  
All going off at once  
In a cacophony of exuberance.  
The tree outside my window  
Is where they gather to  
Greet the dawn, moving on  
To their daily lives after  
Making sure I'm awake.  
I hear the Holy Spirit in bird song,  
Feel God's love wrap 'round me  
Like wings of mama bird  
Enfolding her chicks.



There's No Rainbow Without the Rain

Angry clouds rip across the sky,  
Tearing the fabric of our contentment,

Releasing a maelstrom of  
Disruption, cleansing in its  
Destruction, making way for  
A rebirth of nature's glory.

The sun pierces exhausted  
Clouds, shining with new life,

A rainbow arcs  
Across the sky, reminding us of  
God's promise to His children.

Never again will the maelstrom  
Unleashed by angry clouds  
Flood the earth in retribution  
For our disobedience.

Dark Night of the Soul

O dark night of the soul,  
Agony beyond belief  
Tore me apart like a ghou1.

Shattered me like a glass bowl  
As I cried for relief  
From the dark night of the soul.

Thus did I pay the toll  
Stole my joy like a thief  
Tore me apart like a ghou1.

O Lord make me feel whole,  
Misery and suffering God's motif  
In the dark night of the soul.

Bleak is the future, I lose all control  
Force, fury, a niddering naif  
Tore me apart like a ghou1.

As a ship wrecked on a shoal  
Or a lord deposed from his fief  
Tis the dark night of the soul  
Tore me apart like a ghou1.

Paeon to the Lord

My Lord, you gave me life, that I  
May one day give my life  
In service to your will. I  
Pray Thee, make it easy on me,  
Spare me the awful wrath of a  
Vengeful God toward unrepentant sinners.

My Lord, I give my life as you  
Gave me life, that I may use it  
In service to your will. I  
Pray Thee Lord, do not give me more than  
I can bear. I have failed in my weakness  
So many times, sought vainly to carry  
Your banner into battle, only to collapse  
In craven cowardice, for in my weakness  
I am nothing, without your strength  
I am powerless to act.

Harlan Richards

Sweet Savor

Like a sweet savor  
For the Lord,  
My intentions I give  
In an offering.  
Let my paeon ring out  
From the cell halls of Stanley  
To kingdom come and beyond.  
I sing my love, dear Lord,  
To the least of them,  
Embrace my brethren  
With the best of them.  
The miracle I behold  
Drawing up souls from below  
Herald the archangel's arrival  
Ensures my survival  
In a spiritual revival.

Harlan Richards

## Bible Man

They call him Bible Man,  
Though I don't know why.  
Perhaps he sells Bibles, or  
Has memorized vast tracts of  
Biblical lore, spouting impromptu  
Screeds redolent with fire and brimstone.

Bible Man may be he who  
Has devoted his life to the study of  
The Bible, that the Word of  
God fill his life with a  
Fullness and joy unfound  
In day-to-day dramas.

Bible Man, we can only hope,  
Found the spiritual message in  
The Bible, rather than the fanatical  
Message, where so much abuse,  
Pain and intolerance finds its  
Twisted justification.

Lord Jesus

Nothing irks me like a sanctimonious  
Bible thumper oozing spiritual  
Superiority as if he has  
The inside track on salvation  
And the rest of us poor sinners  
Can but fawn at the feet of his  
Magnificence as we implore him  
To touch us with his grace so that  
We, too, may hope to be saved.

My Lord Jesus, I pray you will  
Grant me your benediction  
Allowing me to love all my  
Brothers and sisters in Christ,  
Even if my satan-driven ego  
Wants to revile them for not  
Meeting my Christianic standards.

## Choosing Sides

The debate rages over  
The Christian Bible,  
Each faction arguing  
Irrespective of logical  
Fallacy, that God wrote it as  
The complete literal truth,  
While others seek to  
Pierce the veil, look  
Beyond mere words to the  
Spirit which lives within.  
I find it hard to believe  
In literal interpretation or  
Adhere blindly to dogma.  
Jesus said it best when He  
Urged us to love God with  
All our heart & soul & mind,  
And our neighbors as ourselves.  
Of that, I feel the truth.  
Any more, I cannot say.

## Noisome News

I used to listen to the  
Nightly news, on the edge of  
My seat, as the latest  
Crisis de jour played out.  
Fiscal cliff, terrorist attack,  
Hurricane from hell. I soon  
Realized that nightly news  
Wasn't that at all. It was  
Sensationalism, voyeurism,  
Obsessive fixation on empty  
Emotional hot buttons.  
Then I heard about sacred stylings,  
Music so spectral it spun me into  
Another sphere, shifted me up to a  
Higher place, helped me find a  
Special space, beyond the daily  
Miasma of news media manifested  
Fear mongering, freeing me to  
Seek God's abundance with  
All my heart.



## God's Gift

God's gift, to those who seek it,  
Is so simple it seems nothing at all.  
Yet on second look it appears  
Onion-like, layered with ever deeper meaning,  
Multitudinous as the seeds of a pomegranate.

God's gift is the answer to every question,  
Pro to every con, point to counterpoint.  
Nebulous to direct observation, it  
Fills the nook of every unnoticed cranny.

God's gift is free for the asking.  
Though it has value beyond reckoning,  
It cannot be bought at any price.  
Those who have it count themselves  
Wealthy beyond measure.  
While those who don't  
Are unaware of their poverty.

God's gift can be found in  
The song of spring's first robin,  
A blind man's gratitude for restored sight,  
Or one who sheds self-imposed isolation.

God's gift is in each of us  
Every day of our lives,  
Waiting to be discovered, that it may reveal  
The abundance which is our birthright.

God's gift is love.

Fellowship of the Lord

I read the Word,  
Pray unto God, seeking, ever  
Seeking to be of His flock.  
I hear Him say as I prayed  
That we are all one, must  
Testify to His truth,  
Share what we know in  
Fellowship with the Lord.

Lord of Strife

The Lord in my life  
Brings me such strife  
I can't get free  
Tell them, let me be.  
My muse skedaddled  
My plans are all addled  
Dear Lord in my life  
Deliver me from strife.

More of the Same

It's always the same  
The anguish and doubt  
Wondering what  
It's all about.

So certain, so sure,  
I seek the Lord  
Only to find  
I can't hear His Word.

Fall back in a funk,  
Self pity, depression,  
Another wrong step,  
Made such an impression.

Back on track  
Riding the rails  
My spiritual path,  
It never fails.

Harlan Richards

## Salvation's Illumination

I am glowing like a  
Thousand watt bulb,  
Lighting up my world  
With renewable energy.  
I burn with the intensity  
Of a magnesium flare  
Throwing off heat and light  
To those around me.  
The Lord fuels my fire of  
Devotion, emotion, salvation.  
It's a miracle how  
My Father's love can  
Fulfill me, heal me,  
Reveal Thee, and  
I thank Him for it.

## Omnipotent

I give thanks to God,  
For trials I face,  
Yet wish it was someone  
Who knew me less well  
Directing my life, so I  
Would not always have  
The most painful experience  
I could bear, maybe dodging  
The bullet once in a while,  
Getting off lucky for a change.

God in His omniscience knows  
How to probe the open sores  
Seeping from my soul,  
Making life relevant, immediate  
And oh-so-unbearable.

I like to think God is  
Infallible, only giving me  
As much as I can bear, but  
I know better, know all the  
Suicides made in desperation by  
People facing more than they  
Could bear, proving God may know in  
Excruciating detail my inner weakness,  
But not how much I'm willing to bear.

A Kernel of Truth

The truth comes as a seed  
Planted in your heart  
To grow and mature  
As your desire for God's  
Cleansing light dictates.  
This kernel contains  
Destruction of delusions,  
Brought to fruition,  
Over time, by the Mighty  
Hand of God.  
Thus does He bring those  
Who stray  
    back into the fold.

Trying So Hard

Each day, I pray to  
My Heavenly Father,  
Imploring Him, begging Him to  
Have mercy on me,  
Deliver me from  
My suffering,  
Restore me to  
My rightful place.

My dear Lord, I pray you  
Hear my plea, give me  
The support David knew,  
The vindication Joseph had,  
The justice Isaiah proclaimed, and  
The wisdom Solomon pronounced.

Help me crawl from  
This pit of despair  
Into your healing light  
Bathing me in a golden glow  
Suffusing me with your  
Spiritual light, imbuing me  
With divine insight, that  
I might act with all  
Your might, even unto  
The final night.

Harlan Richards



Holy Art Thou

Upon all that is holy  
And all I hold dear  
I give you my word,  
That which you see  
Is all there is of me.

I may have dissembled,  
Deceived and denied,  
Flaunted false face  
In days gone by.

It's a new day now,  
And a fresh beginning,  
Where truth will be told,  
From my head to my toes.

Harlan Richards

## Jesus Is Still Healing

Jesus performed miracles of  
Healing. Through His father's  
Mercy, the lame walked,  
The blind could see.

Made me wonder why He  
Could not be here now,  
Healing our brothers and  
Sisters in Christ.

The Lord chided me for  
My doubting heart, as He  
Revealed a mighty truth to me.  
From God Comes all things:

Medicines, machines and doctors  
Performing miracles of healing,  
These are the Lord's servants,  
Saving lives, curing cancer.

The lame walk, the blind see,  
Through the merciful God-given  
Gift of technology.

Harlan Richards

## Keep Hope Alive

Every day is another battle  
To keep hope alive, as I  
Take yet another trudging  
Step, stuck in mire so deep its  
Sucking sound bears witness.

Mostly, I bear it all stoically,  
Inured to resistance,  
Oblivious to opposition  
I've borne for so long  
Its absence now would  
Seem unnatural.

Yet there are those days  
In my bipolar universe  
Where it gets just a  
Bit too hard and my world  
Comes crashing down.  
It's then that I dig deep,  
Plumbing the depths of my  
Heart like a bathysphere in  
The Mariana Trench to find  
The Lord's voice whispering,  
Soothing, saving my sanity,  
Letting me once more  
Encourage others to:

Keep hope alive.

## Magmatic Magniloquence

In ancient Pompeii, Mount Vesuvius  
Erupted, burying the city for millenia.  
The Lord erupted into my life  
Burying my small-minded self for  
All time in a magmatic flow of  
Divine inspiration.  
My verses celebrate His magnificence,  
The sizzling lava of my words reflects  
The creative flow He has placed in me.  
Through Him, my imagination works in ways  
I could never do on my own.

Harlan Richards

The Best of Us

There is good in each of us,  
Walled off and starved  
In some of us, lest  
Others get the best of us.

There's an ebb and flow  
In others of us,  
One day acting for  
The good of all of us,  
The next day hurting  
The best of us.

I put my trust  
In all of us  
Knowing that the  
Lord's works brings out  
The best in us.

Harlan Richards

## Second Thoughts

Doubting Thomas stands as  
A lesson to us all not to  
Doubt when God shows  
His glory to us.  
Nevertheless, we must be  
Ever vigilant not to  
Believe when a false prophet  
Seeks to lead us astray.  
Jim Jones lured over a thousand of  
His followers to South America  
Where he forced them to  
Drink the Kool-aid, while  
David Koresh enslaved dozens and  
Led them to fiery deaths  
In his Waco, Texas compound.  
Perhaps the lesson of Thomas  
Is to make sure that the  
Voice you hear is the Lord within  
Your heart and not satan  
Whispering in your ear.

## A Fresh Start

I begin each day with  
The Holy Word, praying that  
Inspiration will suffuse  
My thoughts throughout the day,  
Hold demons at bay, letting me  
Rise above the cess pit of  
This dreary existence.  
The Lord is everywhere, but  
No where is He more needed,  
More prayed for, more  
Sought after than here, the  
Worst place I've been in decades.

My daily walk skirts  
The precipice of sanity,  
So near that one strong  
Gust of adversity could  
Send me tumbling over the edge  
Into fathomless despair  
Where the only rescue is  
The Lord's lifeline,  
Prayerfully in reach,  
Tearfully I beseech Him  
In His mercy, to deliver me  
From my own folly.

Baking the Bread of Life

Holy Spirit is preparing me  
Like bread dough,  
Kneading me to get me in shape  
Then letting me rise to the occasion  
Whence I will be baked to  
Christian perfection.

He Prayed

He prayed  
For God to punch his ticket  
To the Promised Land, as  
He crouched, despondent,  
at the curb of life.



## Happy Easter

I have spent my life  
In a Christian country,  
Experienced dozens of Easters,  
Some as a Catholic, others  
As a Thelemite, finally  
As one of Christ's Chosen.  
In all that time,  
I still don't know, what's up  
With the Easter Bunny?  
I didn't read about him in  
The Bible, didn't hear any  
Sermons on the Bunny of God,  
Who came to take away  
The sins of the world and  
Didn't see any bunny ears  
On the pope's cap.  
And what about all those  
Hard-boiled eggs? Coloring them  
Doesn't make them taste  
Any better, and it doesn't seem  
Much of a treat for being the  
Best searcher in an Easter egg hunt.  
If not for the resurrection of Christ,  
I wouldn't have any use for Easter at all.

Harlan Richards

I (Almost) Lost Christmas

Until the Lord landed me here,  
I had never understood why  
Some guys chose anger  
Over Christmas cheer.

I have always been thankful  
For the excuse of Christmas  
Which brought to others the  
Joy I know all year long.

Stanley almost broke my spirit  
Almost made me give up my life  
Almost was more than I can handle,  
Until I remembered who I'm not.

I'm not the person who came to prison  
Not the selfish ego I used to be  
Not the one who always put me first,  
But the man who gave his life to God.

Lord you brought me to this place  
To teach me about false pride,  
To take me at my word when I said  
Not my will but Thine be done.

And I thank you for it.

Harlan Richards

## Christmas

They tell me Christmas season  
Is a celebration of  
The day Christ was born.  
And I suppose it is,  
But truth be told, we  
Really don't know what day  
Christ was born.  
December 25th is as good a day  
As any, and better than some,  
But does it really matter what day  
We choose to honor our Lord?  
Each day is a celebration of  
God's love in my life,  
Healing me, heartening me,  
Giving a greater purpose  
To the things I do, a  
Better path than I had before, and  
A future where my salvation's secure.

Harlan Richards

Unrepentant On Christmas Eve

The world is a beautiful place  
But you're too blind to see it,  
Too numb to feel it, and  
Too foolish to appreciate it.  
The Lord has called and  
Called again, for you to  
Come forth and follow Him.  
Time is running out, the  
Last dance has begun, repent  
Now, lest you die unshriven,  
Falling to the depths of hell  
From which you will never return.

Harlan Richards

## At What Price?

Speak truth to power  
Is a call to arms for  
Many a liberal counter-culturist.  
But must we also tear down  
Our adversaries, spit on their  
Values and spew venom to  
Get our point across?  
A loving God sent His only Son  
To save us with a message of  
Forgiveness and redemption.  
Most of all, He gave to us  
His love and commanded us  
To love others as well.  
By all means, chase the  
Money-changers from the temple,  
But do so with a silver tongue  
And loving heart to the  
Greater glory of a loving God.

Harlan Richards

Render Unto Caesar . . .

In a Christian yet secular land  
Where acrimony bleeds into every  
Corner of our lives, we endure  
Countless attacks. Super-pac ads  
Decry this candidate's honesty,  
That candidate's integrity.  
Each proclaims his Christian roots,  
Vying for the high road and  
Our dear Lord's tacit approval  
While rendering unto caesar  
Tainted hypocrisy, a willingness to  
Skewer our foes,  
Lambaste our opponents,  
Nuke our enemies.  
The Lord's commandments do not  
Rest on the seventh day, nor  
Any other day, least of all  
Election day. Take a stand,  
In the name of God,  
Lest you win the contest  
At the cost of your soul.

Harlan Richards

Ego

Every time I think I've finally  
Committed myself irrevocably to a  
Spiritual path my ego creeps in  
And takes over.

It happened again this week  
When I let another person,  
A loving, caring human being  
Who is doing the best he can with  
What he has to work with,  
Bring me down to his level  
Instead of me lifting him up to mine.

Holy Spirit forgive me  
Help me love him no matter  
What my ego wants or thinks.  
Let me love everyone, every day  
And please, Holy Spirit, help me to  
Help them reach atonement.  
Thank you Lord.

## Spiritual Pride

I pray that the Word of God  
Spoken by the Holy Spirit  
Saturates my soul, seeping into  
My waking, walking, working world  
Illuminating me with the compassion,  
Love and forbearance I desperately seek  
Letting me rise above the turmoil  
Roiling my equanimity, no longer  
Judging, despising, resenting others just  
As lost and forlorn, left behind on  
My selfish quest to realize atonement  
In my life, knowing forgiveness is  
The key, yet tenaciously hanging on to  
Small-minded dreams of power,  
Sucking up arrogance and  
Spewing out the foul miasma of  
Spiritual pride coating others with  
The slime of my discontent.

Harlan Richards



A New Future

I can't change the past, but  
I can build a new future  
One day at a time,  
Based on what I do,  
From now on, by staying  
In the now, being  
In the know, putting  
Others first, giving my  
Life to God, following  
The Holy Spirit, no matter  
How painful, arduous, or unpleasant.

Harlan Richards

## Transcendence

Transcendence is what I feel  
When I look out across the  
Eau Claire River Valley.  
Pristine wilderness must look  
As wild and untamed,  
With eagles soaring over deer  
Splashing in the shallows.  
Each red-wing blackbird  
Has his territory staked out,  
Proclaiming his boundaries from  
The highest perch he can find.  
I pray to the Lord, letting  
Sights and sounds drift through  
My translucent self, like a  
Trail of smoke gently  
Wafting on a windless day.  
Holy Spirit brought me here to  
Experience God's unity among all  
Living creatures, teaching me,  
That I may teach others.

Harlan Richards

### Highest Pinnacle

I reach to the highest pinnacle  
Of my highest Self, so  
I can grab onto what's there  
And pull my thoughts up.

I'm the little boy who  
Still needs a high chair  
To sit at the family table.

Tired of crawling around  
In the dirt and crumbs  
Of my basest self, wanting  
Instead a perch on the  
Highest aerie I can imagine,  
Where love and lofty thoughts  
Flow to those below.

Harlan Richards

## Worst Winter Ever

It was the worst winter ever,  
That I can remember, and I can  
Remember a lot of winters.  
Not that it was so cold, or snowy,  
That it would set records,  
Although maybe it did.  
The worst winter ever  
Is a Stanley winter.  
Poor clothing, feeling too cold,  
Not much rec, not much fun,  
Abysmal misery, compounded hopelessness.  
It's the worst winter ever,  
Because there is no escape  
From the suffering.  
The Lord visits here often,  
Responding to desperate cries for relief  
And while He fills my heart,  
It's not so bad, not quite so sad.

## Simplicity

Simplicity calls my name,  
Urging me to abandon convolution,  
Obfuscation and other opaque objects  
Shielding my fragile,  
Failing ego, keeping it safe  
From the Lord's cleansing light.  
Digging deeply, peeling  
Layer upon layer of complexity  
From tortured soul, seeking  
Absolution, atonement and  
My spiritual father's sacred Will.  
No longer stuck in wiggling, wormy  
Wanton self, debauching all that ever was,  
Sacrificing earthly attachments  
To sit through eternity  
At the feet of my Maker.

Harlan Richards

## Begrudging

So many of us hold grudges,  
Family feuds, workplace conflicts.  
Always their fault, not ours.

Owning our hurt, parading our  
Victimhood like a badge of honor.  
No forgiving, no forgetting,  
Until we get our pound of flesh.

Yet it is all so easy,  
Once we surrender to God,  
To feel the warmth of His  
Forgiveness, learn that  
To forgive is to heal,  
That we benefit ourselves  
More than the malefactor,  
As we are enfolded in the  
Loving embrace of  
A forgiving God.

Harlan Richards

## Evil Walks At Night

The crone thrust her  
Taloned hand deeply into my chest,  
Piercing my heart as her  
Fetid breath choked off  
My last gasp. Hard,  
Black pupils drilled  
Into my eyes as I  
Dangled before her.  
No demon's voice could  
Match her venomous outpouring.  
Lost for all time in the grip of  
An evil I could not fathom.  
My piteous scream echoed out of  
The depth of my despair.  
Heard by the Lord above, He  
Sent His avenging angel to  
Free my soul from its torment.

I awoke to the sound of birds and  
The sun streaming through my window.  
To this day, I don't know whether I  
Dreamed a bad dream or lived a  
Nightmare, thankful only that the  
Lord had mercy on one of His Chosen and  
Delivered me from suffering.

Harlan Richards

Kiss An Angel Good Morning

I met an angel today, to  
My surprise and relief,  
Because I expected another  
Battle royal, which is  
Par for the course in this  
Gladiator school of the mind.  
She bathed me in  
Compassion and empathy  
Then took up her sword  
And shield to fight  
My battle for me.  
In the aftermath of  
Victory, I gave the credit to  
God and thanked Him humbly,  
Marveling once again  
At His mercy and grace  
Which I could not live without.

Harlan Richards



It's What You Make It

Evenings and weekends,  
That's all I work, and  
That's the way I like it.

Away from the boss,  
On my own, sort of,  
Free to be myself,  
Give of myself,  
Help myself,  
To the richness  
Which surrounds me.

I feel needed by patrons,  
Searching for a book,  
Reserving an elusive title,  
Or seeking lovingkindness  
In another's eyes.

It's not just a job, but  
A chance to meet God every day  
In every person I greet.

Harlan Richards

A Day Worth Celebrating

Another year older,  
Another year better,  
The time how it flies,  
In our mortal lives.

My prayer for you,  
I know that it's true,  
May God bless you  
And all your family, too.

Harlan Richards

Barking Up the Wrong Tree

You betcha sweet ass I do  
Said I to my questioner as  
The supplicant mistook me for a sage,  
Seeking sagacity to dazzle his eye.  
Sadly, all I could offer was  
Shocking reproof to dull-witted stupor.  
The neophyte, unfazed, implored for more,  
Drop nuggets of wisdom, or crumbs  
From a table, set by the Lord.  
Humility, said I, is the best I can do,  
I'm a true seeker, just like you.  
Though I crave the attention  
A yogi could garner, I must confess,  
I'm still a larner.

## Self-Doubt

I have heard it said that  
A good meal is like  
A sincere apology.  
It leaves the recipient  
Satisfied and the provider  
In no way diminished.  
I am in an agony of doubt  
Because even though I gave  
A sincere apology, I'm afraid  
It wasn't enough to  
Satisfy the recipient.  
Perhaps I said too much,  
Spoke too much truth to hurt,  
When I should have applied  
A thicker layer of lovingkindness.

Harlan Richards

## About the Author

Harlan Richards grew up in Madison, Wisconsin, during the turbulent 1960s. He frequently got into trouble as a teenager and ended up spending time in a state juvenile institution. He also served 4 years in prison in the 1970s. In 1984, at age 30, he was sent to prison for life for stabbing a man in a fight. In 1997, he earned a bachelor of science degree in business administration from UW-Platteville, graduating summa cum laude. He began writing poetry in 2010. He has one daughter and three grandchildren.

He also has a blog at [betweenthebars.org/blogs/637](http://betweenthebars.org/blogs/637)