

Fearful symmetry

by [Gary Percesepe](#) in the [June 2026](#) issue
Published on May 20, 2026

With apologies to William Blake and James Tate

Things got bonkers after the election. The church fired me at the Annual Meeting then requested a closing prayer. The vote hadn't been close. I removed my collar. This was going to be harder than it looked. I could give a veiled sermon on René Girard's scapegoat mechanism, but that was last week's prayer. The Moderator handed me the microphone.

"Could you pray us out, Pastor?" People looked hungry for closure then lunch. *Tyger, tyger, burning bright*, I intoned, trying to remember the rest of the poem I'd learned in Mr. McKenna's class. He loved to call on me when my head was down, shrinking into my desk. Like then, the stakes seemed both urgent and utterly forgettable.

When the stars threw down their spears / And watered heaven with their tears, I prayed—"That's enough," said the Moderator, yanking back the microphone. He dropped the mic onto the communion table, which doubled as the Moderator's desk during Annual Meetings. Someone's hearing aids squealed. The congregants milled about, slapping backs and

exchanging high fives. I was three quarters of the way down the aisle when I bellowed, *Did he smile his work to see! Did he who made the lamb make thee?* The silence was general. My flock looked at me as if I'd dropped in for the day from Jupiter. "Pastor, could you lock up before you go?" the Moderator asked. "Sure," I said. "Which prison did you have in mind?"

He frowned. Jupiter was an honest to God improvement. Last week was Pluto. "Do you believe in God?" he asked. Ultimate question. Epistemic quandary. I took my time. Everything and precisely nothing hung on a thread. "God's in prison," I said. The Moderator looked surprised. News, at last, but fake? "What'd he do?" he asked. "Everything," I said.