

A TELLTALE GOAT

Professor Jonathan Sperry, who also contributed a story about prayer life in the first volume, has provided this story he says has been around for a long time in university circles. Jonathan is a member here at St. Peter in Jack Valley/Profitville and our link to much of what goes on in the college sphere.

Pastor Fred Anderson

Several hundred yards down a narrow path into Johnson's Woods sat a ramshackle house fit for neither man nor beast. Yet, that very house did provide cover to Wilbur Franklin and his only friend. Wilbur had spent a lifetime trying to find himself. Where he lost himself, no one seemed to know. While we could consider his continued search admirable in a sort of way, it never yielded any gainful employment. His only friend, Terence, offered no enlightenment toward his quest either. Of course, that was understandable and readily explainable, with Terence being a goat and all.

One day Wilbur and Terence finally took a long-awaited trip into the city. Wilbur had never seen so many buildings that didn't leak. Taking it all in, Wilbur didn't notice when Terence did a little sightseeing on his own. Eventually realizing that his companion wasn't with him, he cast a worried look to the east and then to the west. About a block down the main street, Wilbur just caught sight of Terence's wiry tail slipping into the local bank.

Upon entering the bank, Wilbur stood in awe of the shiny marble floor and well-dressed bank employees. He observed that people approached the tellers with simple slips of paper and came away with cold, hard cash. Eventually he got up enough nerve to try it himself. He walked up to a teller and handed her a scrawled note saying that he wanted \$100.00 cash.

"Do you have an account here, sir?" asked the teller.

"No," answered Wilbur.

"I'm sorry, sir. I can't give you any money if you don't have an account here."

Pondering his response, Wilbur finally came up with, “Does the goat have an account here?”

The teller gave him a disdainful look and said to the man standing behind Wilbur, “May I help you, sir?”

Wilbur’s long quest to find himself had taught him one thing—if at first you don’t succeed, try a different approach. After several hours of careful thought and observation, he decided they would have to rob the bank.

Two weeks later, the duo returned to the city to carry out their unscrupulous deed. Wilbur planned to throw a couple of sticks of dynamite down a vacant alley as a diversion. When the people would come out of the bank to see what was going on, he and his accomplice would discreetly slip into the bank and rob the tellers. Of course, he figured they must adequately disguise themselves so no one would take notice of them or be able to identify them. Wilbur strapped a pair of deer antlers onto Terence’s head and put a red ball on his nose. Wilbur dressed himself in a red suit with black boots. A huge pillow stuffed into his coat

made him look rather fat and jolly. He completed his disguise by wearing a thick white beard.

Amazingly, Wilbur and Terence got away with several thousand dollars. The investigating lawmen had a hard time holding back their laughter as they took down the descriptions given by the tellers.

It took about two months for the story to filter down to Raddetz County. Sheriff Culhane happened to be talking with a state trooper out on Highway 31 when he heard the tale. A hunch led him several hundred yards down a narrow path into Johnson's Woods.

Sheriff Culhane spent about fifteen minutes shooting the breeze with old Wilbur, sort of feeling him out.

Then he flat out asked, "Wilbur, did you rob that bank in the city?"

"No, Sheriff," answered Wilbur. "What bank?"

"Marston National Bank," said the sheriff.

“No, Sheriff. Me and Terence don’t know nothin bout that bank and them thousands of dollars.”

“Okay, Wilbur. Now who’s Terence?”

“Terence is the only friend I got in this world. He’s my goat.”

About that time, Terence came out of the barn munching away on something, so Sheriff Culhane asked, “That goat?”

“Yes sir, that’s my goat,” replied Wilbur.

The sheriff continued to watch the goat as he went back into the barn. He asked Wilbur a few more questions and then noticed the goat come back out of the barn chewing on something green. Walking over to the goat, Sheriff Culhane took note of the fact that Terence’s meal looked an awful lot like a twenty-dollar bill. When the goat once again went back into the barn, the sheriff followed him. Not surprisingly, the sheriff found Terence happily pulling twenty-dollar bills out of a Marston National Bank bag hidden behind some bales of hay. The lawman brought Wilbur into the barn and presented him with the evidence. When Wilbur

saw that Terence had found the hidden bag, he couldn't help but start bawling.

The local news media considered the crime story front-page worthy, and it eventually made national headlines. The famous goat lawyer, J.W. Morse, heard about the case and offered his expertise as defense counsel for Terence. He determined that Terence's role in the caper could easily be defended. Wilbur, on the other hand, presented a challenge, but he ultimately convinced the court that he could represent both clients.

Morse weaved a brilliant strategy. He claimed that Terence the goat had been victimized by his human owner and thus could not have adequately avoided the affair. He also claimed that Wilbur had been victimized by Terence because of the goat's appetite for eating anything. Furthermore, lawyer Morse claimed that the Marston National Bank and capitalistic society had victimized both Wilbur and Terence. The famous attorney used the words 'whereas', 'hereby', and 'therefore' so many times in his fiery orations that it frequently left the judge and the jury scratching their heads. Unfortunately for the two defendants, the jury found them guilty on all charges. The judge

sentenced Wilbur to twenty years in prison and Terence to a petting zoo for life.

As fate would have it, the story does not end there, though. The famous goat lawyer, J.W. Morse, wrote a book about the trial and made a million dollars. He retired from the active practice of law and embarked on a teaching career at an institution of higher learning.

During his time at the unnamed university, Mr. Morse became instrumental in the formation of “GOATS.” (Graduates Organized Against Theological Sense). No protest demonstrations occurred on campus at the announcement of Moe the goat as group mascot. Except for the usual societal benefits associated with such an organization, GOATS’s singular purpose consisted of proving that God had created the goat in his own image rather than man. They claimed that capitalists have victimized humans and thus have had their minds clouded to the truth. Only through membership in GOATS could they gain proper enlightenment.

After ten years of research, the members of GOATS felt prepared to present clearly documented evidence that would overwhelmingly

prove their claim. On the eve of the extension of their federal research grant, the group decided that their predicted victory over the conventional religious “thought-police” merited a night out on the town in celebration. Filled with exhilaration and bluster, the group eventually wore out the night and returned to their research facility for a few hours of sleep before their big day. Upon entering the building, many of the group felt a heavy weight of an ominous nature, though they couldn’t sense anything specific. When they opened the doors of the laboratory, Moe the goat stood before them as a beacon of tragedy. Nature can deal cold hard blows to the enlightened mind as well as the lesser developed. The elevated symbol for their entire existence had merely exercised a trait that nature bestowed on him. Moe liked to eat. Moe liked to eat anything within reach. In their rush to celebrate that evening, someone had forgotten to secure the latch to Moe’s home. For the span of time that the group spent out on the town, Moe celebrated his freedom from the confines of his home by eating ten years’ worth of paperwork—ten years of clearly documented evidence.

GOATS failed to meet even the minimum of criteria (though some say the decision to deny was very close) for extension of their federal research grant. Subsequently, the group made several attempts at trying to get relief money reserved for natural disasters, but were, in the end, unsuccessful. GOATS, the victims of the hand of nature, disbanded shortly thereafter when the membership decided that without taxpayer support, the theological point was simply not worth pursuing. Of course, at no point did it ever enter their enlightened minds that the Creator of nature was also the issuer of divine justice. The truth had come to light through the natural appetite of a telltale goat.