

to accept, but beyond facts the heart must love Christ with true experience, sensing firsthand His true beauty and excellence. One may believe that honey is sweet, but he cannot know the true sense of that sweetness without tasting it; nor does he even know what others mean by saying honey is sweet until that happens. She will not know the beauty of Christ without the Spirit of God revealing Him.

Without that taste of true beauty, she will die in the sin of loving substitutes. And so, heaven is spoiled for her, and is not fitting for her, not because there are not beautiful *things* there, but because Christ, who is unlovely to her, is in the midst of it.

**James:** So, by not loving the truest and highest beauty, she will forfeit all beauty for an eternity of unfulfilling ugliness, despair, and deserved judgment. That is the saddest of all choices.



*For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 4: 6*



Read more *Brockton Dialogues* online!

Copyright © 2003 Jim Elliff Permission granted for not-for-profit reproduction in exact form including copyright information. All other uses require written permission. For other information about knowing Christ visit

*www.WayToGod.org*

## ***Brockton Dialogue #2***

# *Miss. Hockingfield's Waterloo*

By Jim Elliff



**James, the youth:** Why is Christ not beautiful to some people?

**Brockton, the older, and wiser:** Because without eyes they cannot see.

**James:** You mean such people are incapable of knowing Christ's beauty?

**Brockton:** Incapable because they are without desire; without desire because they are incapable. Miss Hockingfield's story explains.

It was "Art Museum Day" at Bussby Elementary, and Miss Hockingfield was ecstatic. She was a lover of beauty, an aficionado of all things lovely. It was on this day annually that, to her, all of life shone with meaning and life, and the education process rose to its quintessence.

The fourth graders were adequately primed on museum manners, accoutered with sack lunches, and buddy-systematized, as they marched down the hallway, through the ancient portals, and out to the yellow bus.

Norman was only a little hyper so far, whispering only a few humorous asides to his compatriots on their way out. He only whacked one girl on the top of the head as he sauntered down the aisle of the bus, but Miss Hockingfield was oblivious to Norman, and almost all things earthly. She fixed her sight on the supreme good of the venture. It was a glorious day in every respect. Like Washington crossing the Delaware, she was on mission.

Although the boys wanted to see the shrunken heads, Miss Hockingfield was aiming for something higher—the Dutch Masters—which, according to her strategy, should enrapture the most uninitiated of souls.

To her amazement and downright chagrin, however, the Masters not only did not take their breath away, they evoked a group yawn. She could see it first in their eyes, then in their slipping deportment, and finally in their complete distraction.

She would have to rally them with better words. The dutiful children were commandeered back to a listening position as she gave an ardent and extensive exposition of the paintings, with considerably wilder gesturing to allure them. Yet, for all of it they remained implacable—not impressed in the slightest. And this scene, immediately petrified in her mind, became a telling moment—the hot dry wind of reality and the desert of despair.

Miss Hockingfield wilted, turned the whole ordeal over to the helper, and crumpled in an uncharacteristic pose on the bench in front of the Rembrandt. All the children saw it, said nothing, and drifted on into the other rooms on the heels of the teacher's Aid where they were left to interpret the rest of the paintings for themselves.

This became Miss Hockingfield's Waterloo. It is hard to explain how this class (which had not been an exceptional class anyway) and especially this very experience in the life of this class, held the key to her future. She resolved that it was all over at this point and within the week was in the principal's office, resigning for the next year—in fact, taking early retirement. There was no use going on if all that she held dear was spurned—though only through the polite disinterest of a few children. Overreaction? Maybe, but symbolic. She was worn out trying to make beautiful what nobody could “get.”

It was Jeremy that finally addressed the dispirited teacher during the last weeks of school—a conscientious young scholar, not overly bright, but willing and responsive. “There is something more beautiful than paintings, Miss Hockingfield,” he forced out of his mouth, though he battled with whether it was his place to say anything to the teacher.

“There was something more beautiful than my mother.” This statement had huge pathos, because Jeremy had lost his mother early in the year after a prolonged sickness. He had loved her dearly. “Jesus is more beautiful than anything.”

Miss Hockingfield did not agree, even though the exchange was sweet and even memorable. The young boy was, if anything, perfectly sincere. She felt no compulsion to argue with him. But she did not in the least think he was right, but was the product of too much church, being susceptible, she reasoned, to absorb what he was taught undiscerningly. After all, Jesus left him motherless. But, if it helped him cope, then good enough. Religion is a benefit to society, and one ought to go to church, but it is hardly reality, and certainly not beautiful if you have any ability to think.

She thanked him, said that she was glad that he found beauty in Christ, and patronizingly sent him out to play with other kids at recess.

**James:** So, Jeremy had eyes to see, and the teacher had none, though her external knowledge of Christ may have been even greater than the child's.

**Brockton:** Exactly. Jeremy spoke from experience. But even if Jeremy and a team of expert Christians might try to convince her of Christ's beauty—called his glory—she was not capable of seeing it.

**James:** It is obvious that she did not desire such beauty, but is she really incapable of knowing it?

**Brockton:** She is incapable precisely *because* she has no desire. She *cannot* because she *will* not. She cannot love what to her is unlovable. Her heart is the problem. She simply cannot want what she does not value. And if she could be convinced in her mind through force of logic to finally admit that Christ must be the highest beauty, she still would not *know* the experience of that beauty, which is the same as knowing his glory, without the Spirit revealing Christ to her.

Contrary to art appreciation, she cannot be educated to Christ, if only a good enough teacher could explain it. There are certainly essential facts