

THE
FOURTH
WISE MAN

A Quest for Reasonable Certainties

by
Howard Matson



+++ Chapter Opening Drawings by Elizabeth Whipple

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To Rosemary and Bee

ORIGINAL BOOK JACKET – THE FOURTH WISE MAN BY HOWARD MATSON

Matson feels that each of us is confronted with the same problem. We want to press on to new adventure, but at the same time we need to hold on to familiar landmarks. "Those who never listen for the sound of a distant flute and never risks searching out the strange new music is as good as dead. The capacity to dream, to dare, and even to make mistakes and repent, is of the stuff and yeast of life." Aware of this searching restlessness, pervading all, Matson uses both science and art to propose dependable answers.

There is the certainty of beauty. "It is the most personal and elusive of values and at the same time the most universal and widespread. Beauty is a goddess who stretches out her arms for the world to see." And there is freedom. "Life is so varied and complex, so multiple and yet so unified, so bewilderingly and delightfully filled with many nations and peoples, races and cultures, ideas and systems of thought that the one over arching manifold that can pull all these things together is *freedom*." There is the certainty that is humanity's intelligence. "This ability to suspend ideas in the air and walk around and look at them from many angles is the key to scientific method."

Matson feels that since we live in a changing world, we need a new kind of human being, unfettered by our old prejudices. "When a code fails to serve humanity, we need to change it. Let us know the moral person when we see them. We are not ones to beat our breast with the constant burden of sin. This would be neurotic.... If we define religion as a quest for certainty, we should be as concrete and exact as life itself.... When a religion or a nation feels chosen to impose its will upon others, humans are divided into the haves and the have-nots.... Organized religion is on trial before the bar of humanity." But Matson feels hopeful. "Perhaps at this very moment of humanity's hard winter, a faint trembling can be heard. Perhaps a quickening is in the air as though some stirring were seeking to break through our rigid ways of living."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Howard Matson was born in the Bronx in 1907. He received a B.S. degree in education from New York University and an S.T.B. degree from Harvard Divinity School. He was ordained as a Unitarian minister in 1933 and served Unitarian churches in Houlton, Maine; South Natick, Massachusetts; Sherborn, Massachusetts; Santa Monica, California; and San Francisco, California. In 1942 he entered the U.S. Army as a private, completed officer candidate school, and served as captain in the Air Corps as flight control officer. He watched Lindbergh fly his plane a day before his solo flight across the Atlantic, and from a distance of 160 miles he saw the flash of the first atomic explosion at Alamogordo, New Mexico. "In both instances," Matson says, "I feel I saw history being made."

INTRODUCTION

Rosemary Matson

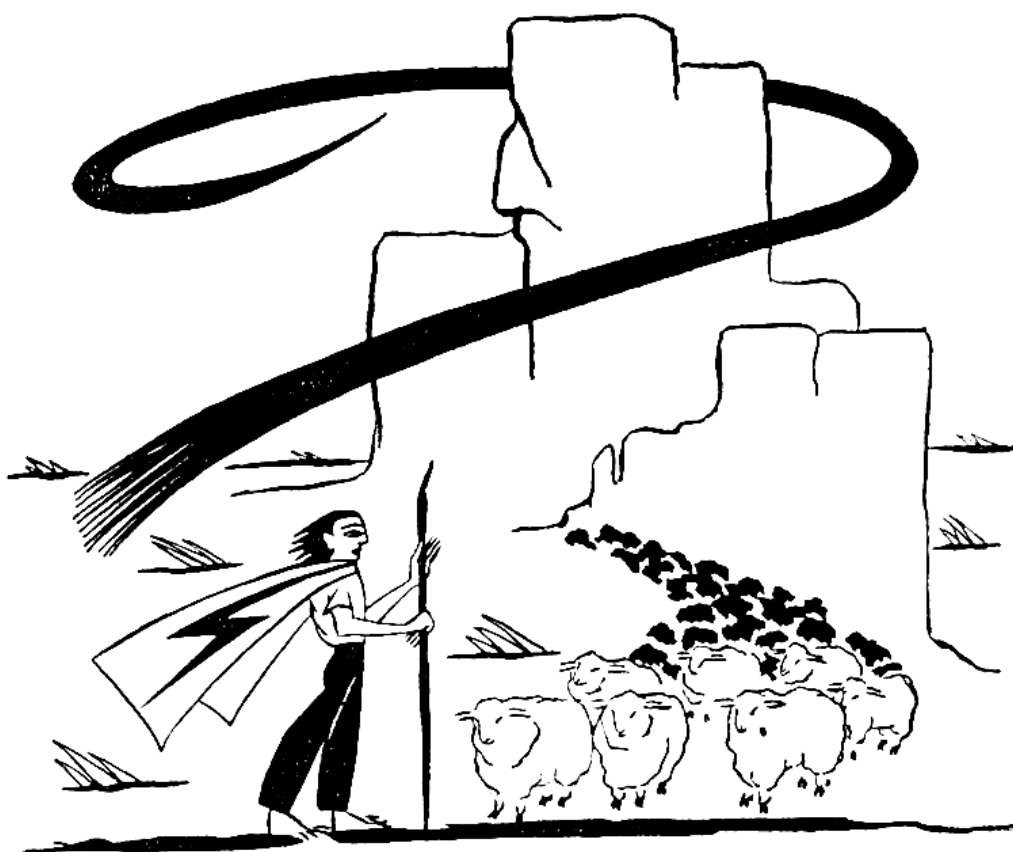
A few years before his death--when times were less hectic for us--Howard and I began to work on a task very important to both of us. He wanted to republish his first book *The Fourth Wise Man*, editing out the sexist language that permeated its pages. It had been written more than forty years ago, before the feminist movement taught us the importance of inclusive language. I was eager to do this because it is a fine book full of poetic wisdom and humor and it should be shared. The contents are as relevant to today's troubled world as it was when it was published in 1954.

As his wife Bee helped Howard put the words to print in *The Fourth Wise Man*, I was the guiding hand in *A Walk to the Village* (1980) and this revised edition of *The Fourth Wise Man*.

I want to thank Elizabeth and Robert Fisher, friends of ours since the 1980's when we met through our mutual interest in social justice, women's issues and ethical social policy, for asking "whatever happened to Howard's book?"

After looking over the manuscript, they took charge of the publishing process. Liz oversaw the document preparation, made editorial decisions, and arranged for printing. Bob prepared all chapter art, the cover, replacement pages, and corrections.

I am also deeply grateful to Sue Guist who retyped the entire manuscript so many years ago and Janet Cole who scanned the art and carefully reproduced the book.



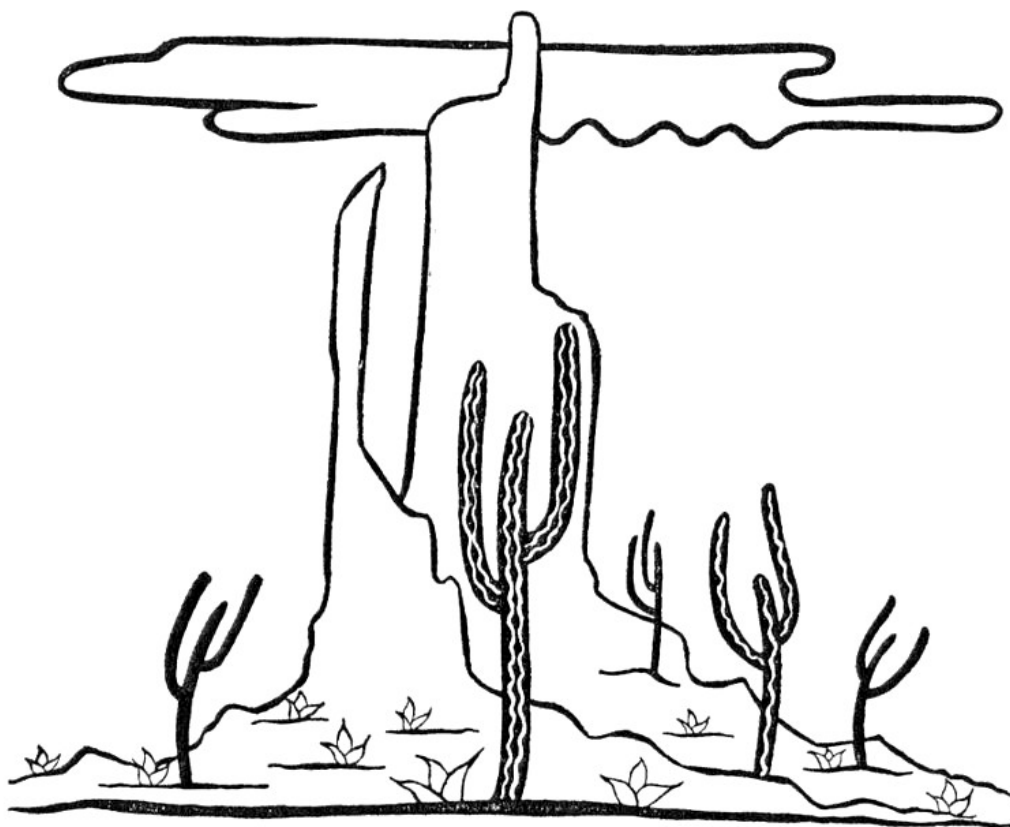
FACING THE WIND
January



MIND and SHADOW
February



THE DEAD END STREET
OF HISTORY
March

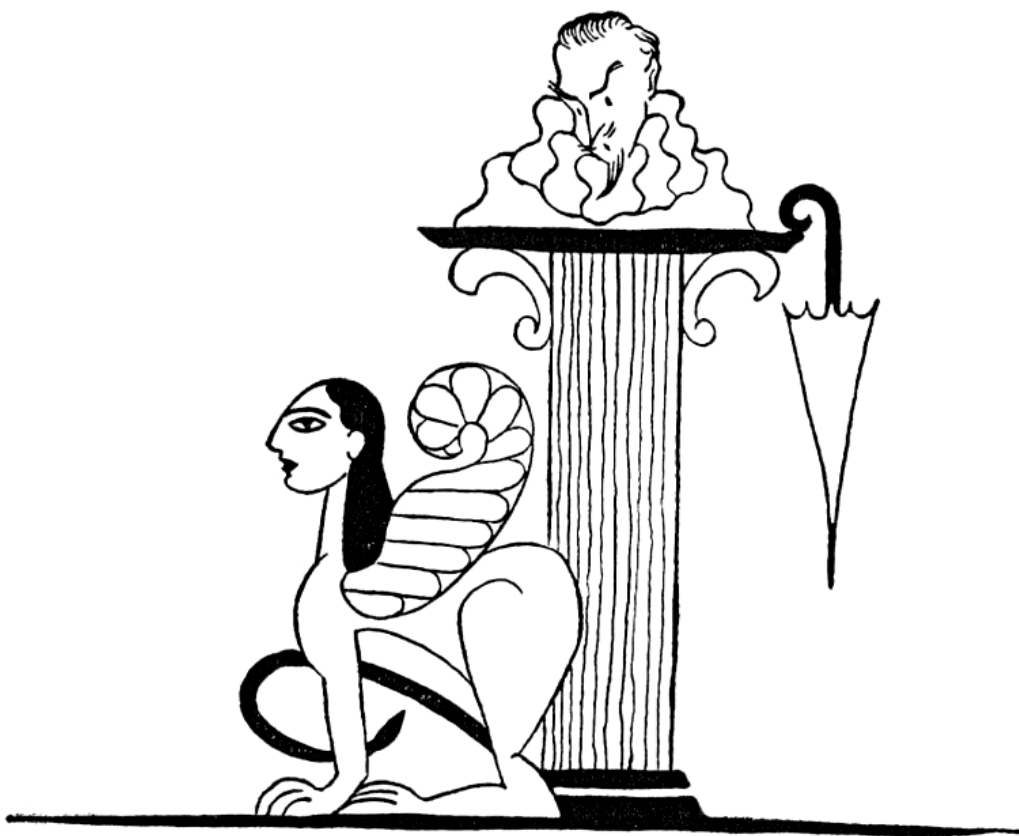


THE UNIVERSE AND
EDDIE QUINN

April



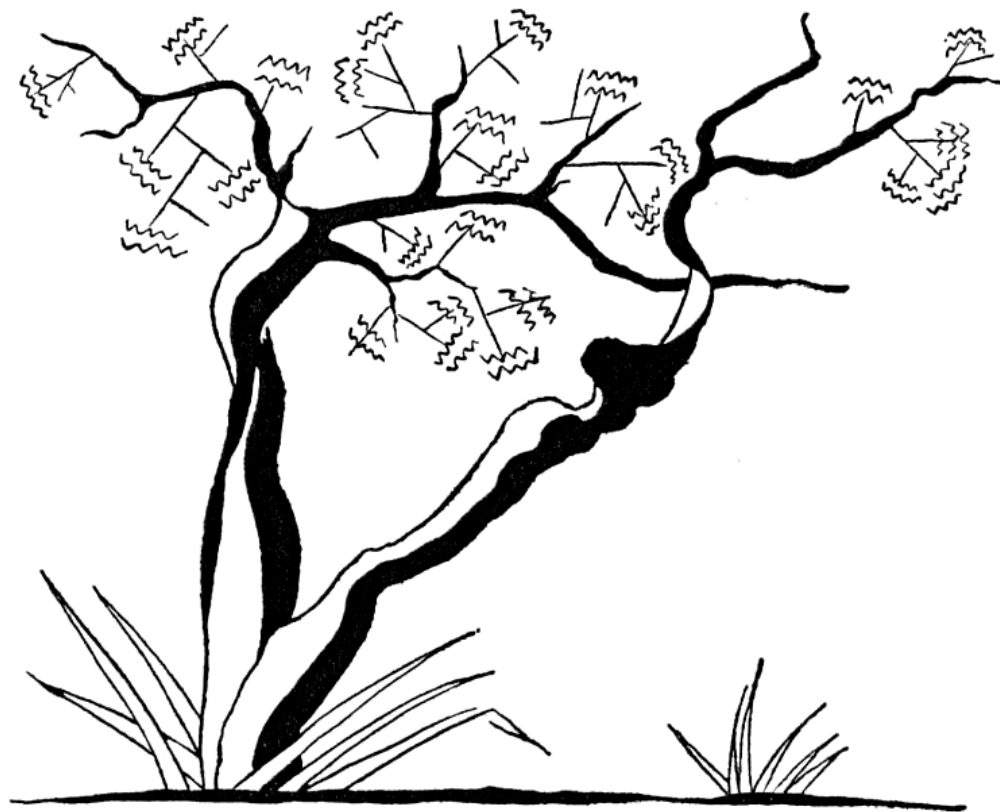
BEAUTY IS A GODDESS
May



THE SMÖRGÅSBORD
INTELLECTUAL
June

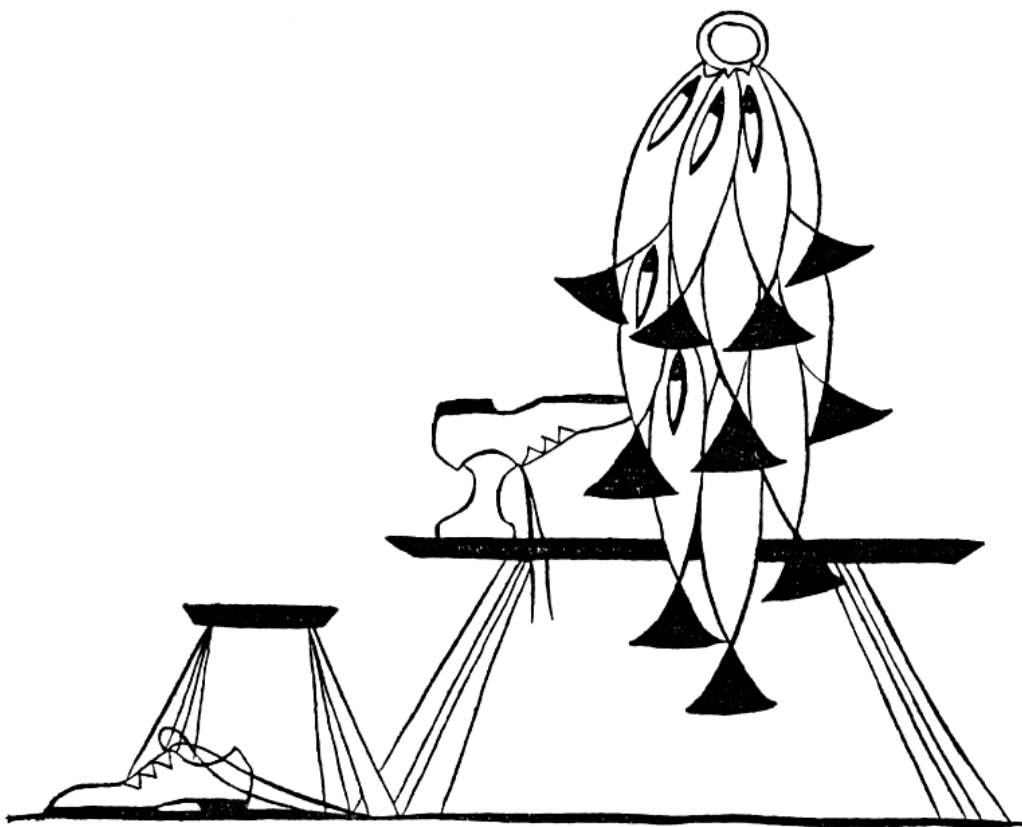


THE CASE OF THE
MISPLACED FAITH
July



THE CATEGORICAL
IMPERATIVE AND MY
FRIEND CHARLIE

August



THE NEW CHOSEN PEOPLE
September



THE INVERTED TANGENT
October



THE FOREST AND THE TREES

November



THE FOURTH WISE MAN

December