

In Perspective

On the Beach



James brushed the damp sand from his fingers, and picked at a last grain lodged beneath his finger nail. Sitting on the beach waiting for grandchildren to be dried and clothed was not his most enjoyable way to spend an afternoon, but it was satisfying to watch them having fun. He sat, listening to the summer-sounds of play; shouts of surprised annoyance when a ball bounces sand uninvited into someone's picnic; anguished tears over dropped ice-creams, squeals of delight from discoverers of crabs and multicoloured pebbles. It was a refreshing change when the children pulled him to his feet to join them over at the rock pools in search of marine life. That irritating grain of sand was still stuck under his finger nail. He sat on the edge of the rocks, working at it. At last it came free and dropped onto the wet rock beside him. Just for a moment it glistened like a tiny diamond in the sunlight before a ripple lapped it up in a timeless natural motion. Lost now among the rocks and water from which it came, there was no way to find it again. James' attention was caught by an excited cry of 'shrimp!'. He looked round to see behind him the red sandstone rocks broken by winter waves and pitted with bird's nests. Maybe that grain of sand had come from there - the product of wind, rain, ice and seven hundred and thirty tides a year, clawing at rocks, tempting the cliffs to fall. It was in fact a part of the shaping of a planet; the work of a million, million years. Suddenly he was caught up in an awesome sense of loss. Where was his grain of sand? He felt a kinship. He was sitting in the midst of a vast creative process; enjoying it; just being part of it; a speck of humanity, sitting in the studio of the Divine Artist. James wished he still held that grain of sand beneath his finger nail.

In Perspective

At the Table



You cannot put two litres of milk into a one litre bottle, but it is possible to drop eternity into a split second of time. Or at least, Julia recalled, into the time it takes to kneel at the communion rail and take a piece of bread and cup of wine. At the rail her in-grained house-pride made her aware of the crumbs on the carpet. At the other end of the rail the minister was saying, 'The body of Christ'. A few moments and he would be treading on the crumbs. Julia felt a sad annoyance that this precious bread should be scattered and trodden under foot. But then, she thought, perhaps that's how Jesus would have wanted it - to see his love, himself, scattered prodigally. There would be waste - even rejection. She held out her hands to take the bread.

'The body of Christ for you.' For me! He gave himself for everyone, and I can have a share in what he did! I can have God's life in me - in a few crumbs. Julia's eyes caught the flash of sunlight over the silver cross on the table in front of her. The light was at such an angle as to make a brilliant rainbow of colour right at the centre of the cross. It seemed to her that all light, all creation, all of God was in the beauty of it. It spoke to her of all the cross stood for: salvation - hope for all the world; forgiveness and peace. For that brief moment she felt close to the heart of God - to the centre of all things. It seemed the whole universe was in that glory light.

'The blood of Christ'. She sipped the wine. The cup trembled in her hand. She was sharing in a vast, gracious miracle of sacrificial love which was for the whole world.

Julia suddenly realised she was alone at the rail. Hurriedly, and reluctantly, she rose to her feet to follow the others. If only she could hold that moment for ever. She would. Eternity was in it.