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James Valvis

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How I Became a Christian

by James Valvis

They visited the barracks on weekends,
usually Saturdays, an hour before
my roommate and I hit the NCO club.
They tried to save my fallen soul.
A father and son, devout evangelicals.
Fun to argue with. I schooled both
on Nietzsche and Schopenhauer,
gave lessons on Voltaire's *Candide*.
I used some lines from Anatole France, too.
Nothing thrilled me more than taunting
their ignorance, those holy rollers,
Jesus freaks with nothing better to do
than waste my time with fairy stories.
What fools they were, I told them
and laughed, hung raunchy posters
of naked women for their weekly visits
and took them down for inspections.
Then the day came they no longer came.
They still worked the barracks, other rooms.

One day, I bumped into them in the hall
and asked why they stopped coming.
I loved setting them straight, I said.
The father told me he knew a lost cause
when he saw one and something else
about shaking the dust off his feet.
I laughed. I told him if he had filthy feet,
he should try a shower and went on
my merry way to a discharge,
unemployment, homelessness,
until, with no one to argue with,
and no one to laugh at but myself,
and God alone would have me
for a friend, the only fool
who could convert me finally did.

