

Defender of the Faith

By Gale Acuff

No Sunday School today because of snow
and no regular school tomorrow, if
there's any justice, I mean the Divine
kind, the kind from God, Who's somewhere above
the snow when it first begins to fall. He's
in Heaven, I mean, where I want to go
when I'm dead so I can live forever
though I'll still be dead but that's not the point,

not exactly. I walk to Sunday School,
it's about a mile, and back home again.
I walk to regular school, too, but it
seems longer going there than coming home,
I guess because it's all about the world,
English, history, science, and math--and
recess--but Sunday School's about the life
to come, after I'm dead, I mean. I can't
wait but if I kill myself to get there

then I go to Hell, Miss Hooker says--she's

our teacher and doesn't approve of sin
but even she's not perfect, only God
is, and then there's Jesus and the Holy
Ghost, but not a ghost like at Halloween
though God can scare you, too, look what He did
to Saul just to get him to change his name.

He even sacrificed His only son
but it was worth it in the end and still
will be because a lot of folks aren't dead

yet but we're going to be and then we'll
go see God, or our souls will, and stand there
before His throne, Miss Hooker says, and be
judged and if our sins outweigh whatever
is the opposite of sins--no sins?--then
it's eternal life but in Hell this time
where we'll burn forever and yet not be
consumed, Miss Hooker says, which means burnt up
but in regular school it means to eat

and there's your difference. I'm glad that's settled.

I'm walking to Sunday School anyway
today, just to see what the House of God

looks like as a postcard come alive, and
our portable building, where we have class.

Tonight it's a voice on the radio

to tell if regular school is canceled

for tomorrow. I just might go to church

if it is. I just might go if it's *not*.

I wonder if that's a sin. I'll be damned.