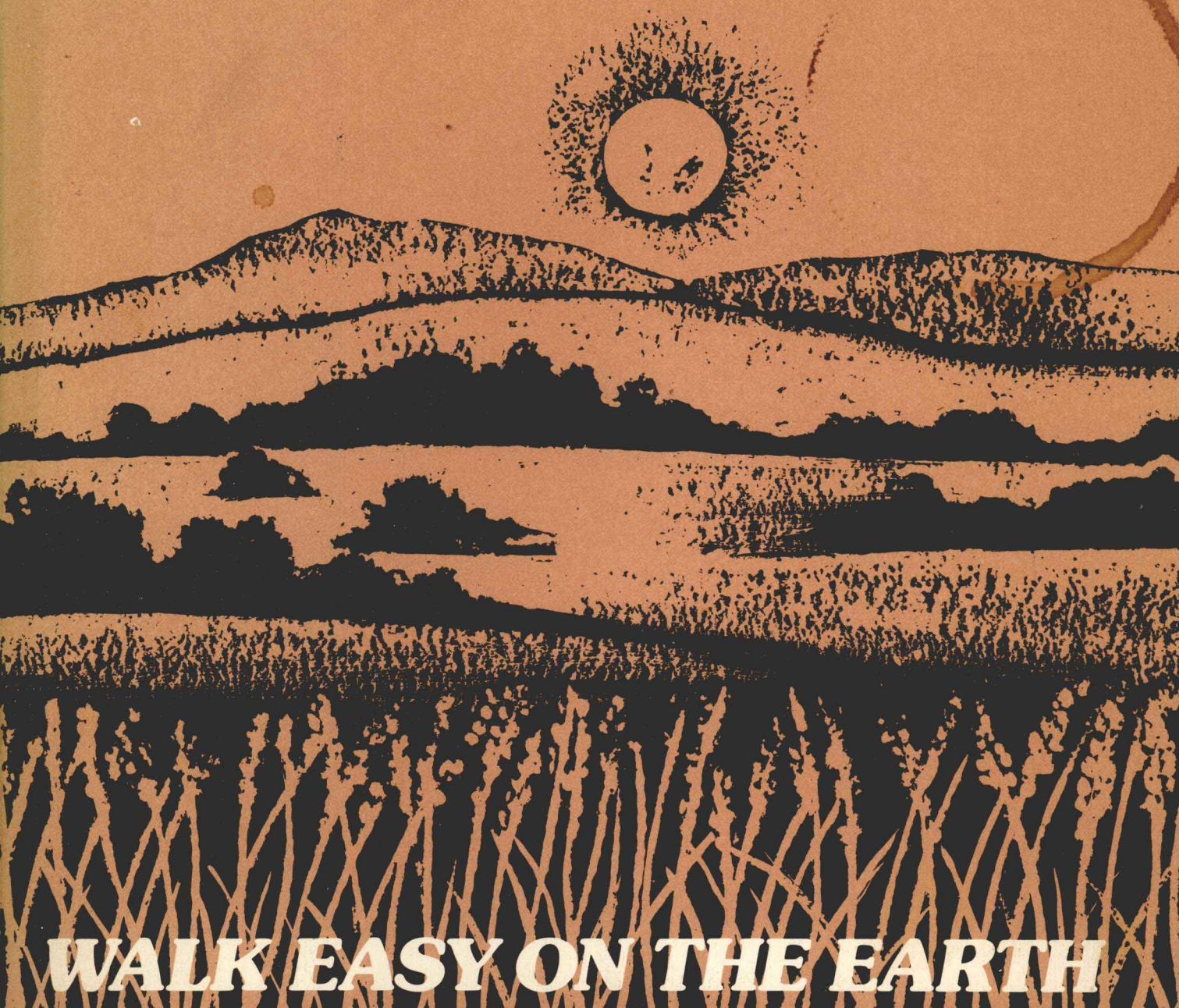


JAMES KAVANAUGH



WALK EASY ON THE EARTH

Walk Easy on the Earth

By James Kavanaugh

A Modern Priest Looks at His Outdated Church

The Birth of God

There Are Men Too Gentle to Live Among Wolves

The Crooked Angel

Between Man and Woman

Will You Be My Friend?

Faces in the City

Celebrate the Sun

America

Sunshine Days and Foggy Nights

Winter Has Lasted Too Long

A Coward for Them All

Walk Easy on the Earth



Illustrations by Edgar Blakeney

Walk Easy on the Earth

James Kavanaugh



E. P. Dutton New York

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*For information contact:
E.P. Dutton, 2 Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016*

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Kavanaugh, James J*

Walk easy on the earth.

1. Title.

PS3561.A869W3 811'.5'4 79-16513

ISBN: 0-525-93078-7

*Published simultaneously in Canada by Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited,
Toronto and Vancouver*

Designed by Barbara Cohen

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

First Edition

To those who know:

*that the desert flowers will bloom
when the oil rigs are silent;*

*that trees will again stand tall
over the ashes of forgotten wars;*

*that no one can take away the sunrise
or the smells of spring.*

To those:

who walk easy on the earth.

Lately the world seems a more frightening place than before: fierce civil and territorial wars, a devouring inflation, and prophets speaking ominously of society's doom. It is as if our planet is finally out of fuel and will dissolve in its own anxiety.

Some people are turning to religion, others are amassing property or secretly hoarding gold. Almost everyone seems afraid of something. The hopes of the sixties have vanished in the seventies. We live in sober, unlaughing, intensely serious days when men and women focus on personal survival and walk ponderously on the earth.

Such heaviness ignores the deeper human appetites to live creatively and joyously, appetites which have endured every historical crisis and flourished. To ignore them is to be obsessed with each new anxiety in the world's headlines. It is to focus on personal success and to hope that enough money or power will bring peace.

So much of life is decided by what we permit ourselves to see. If our focus is narrowly financial, we are terrified by the dismal vision of economists. If past failure is our obsession, we lose faith in private dreams. If guilt, we assume our own existence has no meaning and spend our lives vainly trying to please someone else. Only some recurring depression reveals a profound despair that resists any but the most dramatic redemption.

There is no need for redemption when I am in touch with the roots of my own human joy. I do not focus on a world's despair, I am forever renewed by spring splashing over granite rocks or a cautious deer emerging into twilight. I know then that I will survive all personal fears and economic disasters, that I will realize my finest dreams. At such times I am able to laugh easily, to see clearly, to reach out to another.

But when I lose contact with myself, I rely on someone else's approval or cautious wisdom, or the feeble security of success. I push and prod and force my way, upsetting the rhythm of my own energy, ignoring my secret strength and impossible resiliency. I become the ready victim of another's projected fears and private manipulations.

This is a book about refusing to surrender my life or dreams to anyone. It is not a guidebook or even a philosophy. It is the hand of a friend, the voice and face of one who lives in the same troubled, anxious world as you do, who shares the same guilt and fear. It is an attempt to respect my own deepest rhythms. It is an effort to rise above Asian wars and Arab oil, to look beyond inflation and even death, while staring them in the face, to laugh frequently amid occasional tears. It is, above all, to *Walk Easy on the Earth*.

JAMES KAVANAUGH
Nevada City, California

Walk Easy on the Earth

This Above All

Walk easy on the earth
Without disturbing the sand.
Let others observe your footprints,
But like night and day leave no trace.
Let your shadow move where it will,
Its magnitude decided by the sun.

Do not love easily but well,
Linked in spirit and flesh.
Let your love be warm and generous,
And like the sun do not measure your gift.
Let your friendship be enduring and loyal,
Even as the mountains are not displaced.

Let no one judge you
Beyond what you actually do.
Thus you will not be judged
By anyone harsher than yourself.
To judge another is to become blind
And delay your own passage.

Do not disturb the waters
Or race futilely against the wind.
The sun will rise every day
And the moon will follow its course.
There is a rhythm for you
As smooth and unmistakable as the tide.

Do not try relentlessly to understand.
Time itself will decide.
There will be stars enough
When clouds and neon lights do not hide them.
Do not be sad. It has been written for you:
Your joy will come when it is time.

But this above all: Walk easy on the earth!

Seven Sons

Seven sons at a family meal
Who never knew they were young,
Only tomorrow and forever were real
And death would never come.
Football in fall and baseball in spring,
Where did time go so fast?
Where are the songs we promised to sing?
Where are the boys of the past?

We buried one a year ago spring,
Thirty years before it was time,
Another year came and another was gone
Before he could fall from the vine.
Each one I loved far more than I knew,
I think of them both every day
And the pain that I feel will never be healed,
There was so much I wanted to say.

Seven sons at a family meal
Who never knew they were young,
Only tomorrow and forever were real
And death would never come.
Football in fall and baseball in spring,
Where did time go so fast?
Where are the songs we promised to sing?
Where are the boys of the past?

Somewhere in My Heart

Somewhere in my heart

A lonely shepherd laughs across Irish hills
With no good reason even to smile,
An indentured slave, forbidden suffrage or school,
Denied land or grave, the helpless tool
Of history's tyrants. Indebted for the clothes
Upon his back, yet finally unafraid of those
Who could not destroy his secret faith
Or soothe the ancient anger of his race.
Time was on his side,
As was his Irish pride,
That stubbornly refused to die
And even laughed at funerals.

Somewhere in my heart

A homespun girl laughs across Irish hills
With no good reason even to smile,
A shy domestic hating the clammy hand she fed,
Denied her own hearth and a marriage bed
By history's jailers. Kneeling on all fours
To clean the foul-smelling floors
Of those who mocked her brogue and auburn hair,
But could not suppress the wrath of silent prayer.
Time was on her side
As was her Irish pride,
That stubbornly refused to die
And even laughed at funerals.

Somewhere in my heart.

Words Are My Friends

Words are my friends

Sounds and syllables borrowed from sea shores
And winds whispering across a lonely canyon,
Or sudden storms frightening trees and little birds.

Words are my friends

Born in silence and boyhood wanderings,
Erupting from caves and rocks and city streets,
Or seeping from wounds and a face wrinkled too soon.

Words are my friends

Crawling from dreams and forgotten memories,
Cursing at pain and the deaths I did not understand,
Ready to hide or reveal as I bade them.

Words have carried my love

Betrayed my enmity and fear,
Healed wounds or inflicted them,
Shared secrets or sheltered me from everyone.

Words are my friends.

I Asked the River

I asked the river

Where he was going
and how he would know
when he got there.

He only laughed at me
Splashing across the rocks.

I asked the mountain

When he was high enough
and how he would know
when he reached the heavens.

His echo only laughed
Like thunder in the valleys.

I asked the trees

How long they would live
and how they would know
when they were a forest.

Their leaves only shook with mirth
In the joy of a sudden wind storm.

Finally I was silent,

As if there were no one else to please,
And I spent my time laughing
With the river, the mountain,
and trees.

It's Time to Fall in Love Again

It's time to fall in love again,
The trout aren't biting in my favorite brook,
I can't hear the lyrics of the willow trees,
No one cares that the swallows didn't return,
And the nest is empty under the eastern eaves.
The wood ducks aren't playing by the upper pond,
I can't see the moonlight through the sugar pine.
(You know, the one I wanted bulbs on for Christmas,
And you said a single star would do just fine.)

It's time to fall in love again,
The lizards don't hide beneath the rocks,
The waterfall has lost some silver in the sun,
The brush is growing back across the forest path,
I think the mockingbird has lost his tongue.
The deer don't drink below the spring,
Where I promised you the finest summer wine.
(You know, the place I loved you in the afternoon,
And you said the cold water would be just fine.)

It's time to fall in love again,
(I promised you a ring to make you mine.)
It's time to fall in love again,
(You said a daffodil would do just fine.)

It's time to fall in love again.