

## Ellen Gilchrist

{ IN HER WORDS }

**A**cts of God is a book of stories written over a period of nine years. It is a book that comes “out of my later years,” as Einstein called a book of essays he wrote when he was my age.

It is a book of praise and wonder. When we are young we are too self-serving and ambitious to look around and know how marvelous our fellow men and women and children truly are. We note their courage and generosity and imaginative leaps, but we don't keep thinking about them as I have begun to do as I grow older. We are dazzling, we citizens of this marvelous culture we inherited from men and women whose strength and courage puts ours to shame when we read history. They kept their children alive and invented and learned and built and taught what they had learned and what they inherited. They bandaged their cuts with leaves and built shelters out of earth and stones and trees and dug in the ground to bury their dead. They chased down animals ten times their size and four times their strength, they rubbed sticks or stones together to build fires, and they created languages and numbers and tamed wilderness and dug canals and used the languages they invented to talk and talk and talk, to invent ideas and pass them on, to invent gods and demons, to eat whatever was available, and learned to distinguish the healthy from the poisonous.

All this before they started writing down ideas and numbers and stories and plays. Before they called their creations cities and civilizations. Before they invented machines.

They drew or dreamed the wheel before they fashioned it from wood or stone. The ideal came first in many of their inventions, sometimes in writing, sometimes in dreams.

The stories in this book are about some of the inheritors of this twenty-five-million-year-old startlingly brilliant evolution.

There are men and women in these stories who would have been useful at any stage in our evolution. Heroes and heroines who don't need or want to be sung or recorded, except that it makes my heart beat faster to write about them. Set them down in any time or place, in any ice age or meteor strike or drought or plague or flood. These are the ones who will build the ark, pull their fellow men to safety, run for higher ground, call out warnings, do their share and more, and then sleep in any shelter and get up and do it all again.

I have known thousands of such people, and I am old enough to be dazzled. Here are a few of their stories.