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Hippie Convert

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Hippie Convert

There once was a hippie named James
who wore patches all over his jeans,
for he wanted very much
to be like Neil Young
on the cover of *After the Gold Rush*.

It's true he was too young
to slog through the mud at Woodstock –
being only nine at the time –
but when he became a teen,
this icon stole his imagination.

And so, though slightly out of time,
his heart still beat
and he was no less obsessed
with long hair and marijuana,
not to mention LSD.

Peace and love meant everything to him –
Jesus spoke of this, did He not? –
and the bandana-ed souls with flowers everywhere
proclaimed these words constantly...
So why not join their ranks?

Hippie Convert

Of course, there was also John Lennon –
who could be cooler than him?
He was always imagining peace
and speaking truth to power...
it was easy to get lost in his dream.

Every adolescent
wants to impress his friends
and will often go along to be 'in',
and so James traveled many wayward paths
that led inevitably to sin.

The foolishness of youth
accounts for much
of the blindness in our eyes,
but everyone is responsible in the end
for his soul's condition.

But how can the blind recognize their call
while living in a pipe dream?
How can the unreality of our lives
be seen when it is so veiled?
And so, how can we be redeemed?

Hippie Convert

It is a certain slavery
into which we fall
when led by something other than the LORD,
when love becomes confused...
and peace completely false.

From the beginning the devil is a liar;
in his heart he ever conceives
deceptions that cause
the unwise to be misguided,
to lose all sense and clarity.

We are not even aware as it happens,
especially when we are young,
for the culture is pervaded
by a preponderance of pollution
that entices our hearts and minds.

And so, though James was raised
in a Catholic home
and educated in Catholic schools,
his soul was not safe from the influence of Satan –
even these were infiltrated by evil.

I.

1. What Is a Hippie?

What is this creature
the culture has concocted
and put forth as a “hippie”?
I am not a historian,
but will offer a few observations.

It blossomed in the 60’s
but was spawned before that
in the hipsters of earlier decades.
I suppose it may have its origins
in the class known as “gypsies.”

But, again, I am no historian
and this is not my concern;
my story is much more personal,
an autobiography of sorts,
not a case study.

And so I will speak
of what hippies are to me
and the way in which I have been one...
and perhaps still hold some of their qualities
even after my conversion.

Hippie Convert (I)

On the positive side,
hippies are childlike, are they not?
Dealing in ideals as they do
and believing all things
spoken to them...

There is a certain innocence there,
and even a sense of wonder.
But one wonders how much of this
is produced by the haze of drugs
and how much is sincere.

Thus we have leaned in to the negative side:
how real is the peace and love
the hippie proclaims,
and how faithfully does he follow it
in all its travails?

Ahhh, travails! What of suffering?
Here is perhaps the key of my conversion:
the truth is not known or professed
without a willingness to sacrifice –
and this the childish hippie lacks.

Hippie Convert (I)

Jesus has called us to be like children –
we cannot enter Heaven if we are not.
And so innocence and humility
are much to be treasured...
Then where does childishness enter in?

Differentiating the childish
from the childlike
is perhaps the heart of our task:
for when selfishness takes over,
the child loses his savor.

The hippie tends to think of himself,
and so can fall into judgment of others.
He is often able to forgive sins
that are like his own,
but those different he readily condemns.

This is childish
and shows a lack of vision,
a worldview void of understanding –
in him all wisdom is gone,
for his heart is set on his own pleasure.

Hippie Convert (I)

A preoccupation with pleasure
is the downfall of the flower child,
the pleasure of drugs, the pleasure of sex,
and all the sensual delights
the world offers.

The LORD has made us
to delight in His Creation,
to find joy in the life He has given us;
but the brokenness of man
requires such impulse to be tempered.

If he were not fallen,
man would not be inclined
to inordinate pleasures...
and all would be well.
There would be no need for restraint.

But since his godly form is distorted,
he desires what he should not,
and so must learn to control himself.
But the hippie loses all sense of proportion
and gives himself over to every desire.

Hippie Convert (I)

This seems wise in his eyes
because he does not recognize
his brokenness.
All seems well, and even blessed...
and so, blindly he rambles along.

His head is in the sky
and it seems he does fly
with great ease through his days.
Perhaps it is his innocence
that makes him unable to see.

But innocence itself must be tempered
by wisdom, as our Lord has said,
or innocence will be only ignorance
and cause man to sin,
to embrace something quite unlike innocence.

We cannot sin and claim innocence,
for this is utter foolishness –
innocence and sin are opposed
and cannot be drawn together,
except by the ignorant soul.

Hippie Convert (I)

The hippie is a kind of fool,
evoking pity perhaps,
often meaning well,
but sinning nonetheless
against himself and others.

One can claim naiveté
but the results are just the same:
taking drugs and fornicating
do not engender peace and love,
only the very opposite.

Is one unfamiliar with the drug trade
and all the violence it brings?
Does the hippie think he is not a part of this?
And is he unaware, too, of the violence
in the poisoning of his soul?

And does one think nothing
of broken hearts and cut skin,
or of aborted children?
There is no scent of flowers here
in this empty love.

2. What of This Empty Love?

There is more to be said
of the hippie's redeeming qualities,
for there is some sense of peace of love
that may become fruitful
if united with the Cross of Christ.

But it is the dark side
that beckons to be told
as I sit here this morning
in the presence of the Lord.
I must speak more of the empty love.

This love does not seem empty
to the blinded soul,
and indeed some genuineness may be there
in his thirst for pleasure...
but it is pleasure he seeks.

It leads him to ignore the ways
in which the other becomes an object,
an instrument of pleasure
like any other modern tool –
why not just love the one you're with?

Hippie Convert (I)

One wonders where their hearts are.
Are they on the other,
or are they preoccupied with themselves,
with no sense of sacrifice
or, dare I say, commitment?

How this commitment is lacking
where bodies become things
to be used and cast off
when they prove useful no more –
where is love in this?

I remember in college
a talented artist made a drawing
of a man with a void for a heart.
I was attracted to it, I knew not why,
though later I realized it was a portrait of me.

O the emptiness
that fills the soul
so blinded by his pride and lust!
Will he wake one day
and recognize his vanity?

Hippie Convert (I)

How confident he is
that he sees and knows,
that he really cares about others;
how well he is able
to fool himself.

This is the remarkable thing:
they think themselves most compassionate
who most disregard
the dignity of others
and care not even for themselves.

How will they find the humility
not to trust in their own will,
to understand the ways in which
they remain so sinful?
Every mature soul must come to this.

There is a seriousness that is missing,
a failure to recognize that this is not a child's game,
that we hold our lives in our hands
and can severely damage them,
and others in our realm.

Hippie Convert (I)

Are we kings who rule as we please?
Are we led by our eyes
like Lot to the land of Sodom?
We who seem so carefree,
do we care to know where we are going?

It is to a strange town we are misguided,
a place we'd never expected to be,
a place inimical to our souls
where sickness reigns,
where we are plagued by disease.

There we cannot control our hands
for they have a mind of their own,
trained as they have been
by the free rein given them
by what has become a lifeless spirit.

This emptiness, this vanity of vanities,
this hell on earth
is the fate
of those led alone by pleasure –
they find themselves in a barren wasteland.

3. The Wasteland

So barren is the wasteland of this world,
so empty of life;
how the word of the Lord has proven true:
we call blessed
those who never bore children.

How Rachel weeps
for the millions heaped
in piles upon the altars
of a society obsessed with lust
and defensive of its own convenience.

It is hard not to see the hippie's role
in this carnage.
Innocently enough he began
preaching against war and anything
that smacked of violence.

But here is where his free love leads,
to the greatest violence known to man:
the slaughter of his own children in the womb
and the self-assured grin
reserved for those who question him.

Hippie Convert (I)

Contraception seems a facile solution,
a simple means to keep children
from getting in the way
of one's unbounded pleasure,
and of course to limit the race.

Sterility is indeed the ideal
of the soul enclosed in his ego,
of him for whom convenience is king;
and anything that prevents such freedom
is simply a bothersome thing.

And so, let there be no offspring,
no one to care for but ourselves.
Would this not be paradise?
Is this not the goal of our race?
All evidence points in this direction.

Contraception completes the movement
toward making the body an object
to be manipulated to one's advantage,
according to our carnal desires.
And what is there more than this?

Hippie Convert (I)

Nothing. What else could there be?
What else do we need
but freedom to do as we please?
And contraception facilitates this, does it not?
And it keeps the blood from rising up.

Yet the blood rises more and more;
the death such selfishness deals
cannot be undone
by selfishness itself –
should this not be obvious?

The lust is hereby increased;
the blood now boils in the veins...
and the pale mask of contraception
is soon exposed for its failure
to prevent what is dreaded most.

And so the baby must be killed –
we never wanted such a thing anyway.
And by all means this must be done
or we shall not be able to go on.
And so the need for sterility becomes clear.

Hippie Convert (I)

It is indeed a sterile nation,
a sterile world in which we live –
if it can still be called “living.”
For we are entrenched in a culture of death
where life has lost its meaning.

Death is the answer to every problem,
and so sterility is the solution to all;
for if all were sterile
there would be no life,
and so no problem anymore.

How we fear newness of life!
The freshness of a new day,
a new breath from above...
We want no newborn babies,
nor the Spirit that gives them life.

It is curious, is it not,
that he who ostensibly celebrated life,
the hippie in all his glory,
ends inevitably embracing death...
though it may still seem like life to him?

Hippie Convert (I)

Here is the blindness again:
a man stands in a sterile wasteland
but is so lost in fantasy
that his head simply cannot see
the emptiness at his feet.

Beyond his feet
the emptiness creeps
and fills all from head to toe,
from the clouds in the sky
to earth and sea below.

And though it utterly surrounds him,
though he is thoroughly immersed in it,
still he thinks it is life he celebrates
and not the exultation
of his own desires.

It is a sad state, certainly,
and one not easily remedied:
how can mankind reclaim its dignity
when it closes its eyes
to the sacredness of life?

4. The Sacredness of Life

Life is sacred.
This is what all should see,
if they have eyes,
if their vision has not been polluted...
if they are what they were meant to be.

Some may say, "What of priests and nuns,
who do not have children;
are they not refusing life?"
But these give due reverence
to the creative power of man.

They do not seek their own pleasure
but offer it as a sacrifice,
making themselves a holocaust at the service of all,
not denying life
but nourishing it with all their hearts.

Theirs is not sterility artificially conceived
but celibacy engendering purity.
It enables them best to see
the sacredness of life
and cherish it entirely.

Hippie Convert (I)

There is hope the hippie will realize this,
and more than one has sought religious life,
taking the desire for love
that overwhelms their souls
and channeling it to a chaste call.

Then the birds' song becomes clear,
ringing with morning purity;
and the flowers bloom in innocence,
opened by the breath of God.
By lust they are no longer marred.

How freeing is this blessed embrace
of chastity for the LORD's sake,
for thus the LORD comes
to dwell in one's heart...
and with such a lover nothing could compare.

It is like pure, white clouds
in a clear blue sky:
a surpassing peace envelops the soul.
To this peace there is no end,
and by it no one is harmed.

Hippie Convert (I)

John Lennon proclaimed peace
and said, "Imagine there's no Heaven."
But how can there be peace
if the place of peace, home of the Prince of Peace,
does not exist?

It is a man-made peace
of which he speaks,
and this is no peace at all;
it is selfish and vain
as man himself.

John Lennon proclaimed love
but beat his wife
and used scores of young women
as tools for his pleasure:
adultery and fornication are not love.

I realized the hypocrisy of this one day
as I looked at my dad and mom.
I had been taught to scorn such faithfulness...
but love was with these two
who remained faithful fifty years and more.

Hippie Convert (I)

John Lennon declared
the Beatles more popular than Christ,
and in this he did not lie;
for indeed they had captured the hearts
of millions of impressionable youth.

And such possession of soul
by the idols of the world
stays with many throughout their lives:
they grow only further from the truth
and deeper into fantasy.

In the end Lennon seemed to awaken,
making “God bless our love”
one of his final lyrics.
And for his sake let us hope he was wrong
about the presence of Heaven.

For he is dead now,
along with other prophets
who looked only to this world for peace.
But this world will end
and, with them, exist no more.

Hippie Convert (I)

And so, let us not throttle
the sacredness of life
and the transcendent nature of peace;
if there is nothing surpassing our understanding,
there is no hope anymore.

But as it is there is the glow
of a woman at peace
with her pregnancy;
and the child she brings forth
shines with the newness of God's majesty.

Of such is the Kingdom of God,
the children who know the LORD and love,
who do not deny their blessings
and turn instead
to drugs and sex.

Innocence is all
and it will carry us home;
it never leaves the patient soul
who will be brought thereby
to the glory of Heaven.

5. The Glory of Heaven

The glory of Heaven
is not like the artificial lights
that shine in this world,
the glamorous ideologies that capture
corrupted minds and souls.

The glory of Heaven
shines with a purity and truth
that cannot be imitated
by the instruments men make,
by the theories they proclaim.

The hippie cannot see this
but is rather caught up
in a false sense of glory,
a dying, pretentious light.
The devil tries always to seem like Christ.

And it is the devil
that leads his heart astray.
It does not seem so to a culture
so used to his wiles, his ways...
but evil manufactures the idols of this age.

Hippie Convert (I)

World peace is nice to think of,
but when it requires the killing
of those who are inconvenient to its goals,
who do not walk lockstep in its path,
is it really desirable at all?

They come speaking of peace and love,
but to achieve their idea of these
they will sacrifice peace
and redefine love
as they see fit.

For men's hearts cannot wait
for the blossoming of true love and peace;
they cannot consider the sacrifice
needed to sense them in this place...
They would take matters in their own hands.

A flower here, a flower there,
it all seems very beautiful –
but point out that the flower wilts
and their hands will cover their ears,
and they will soon rush upon you like Stephen.

Hippie Convert (I)

But Stephen saw the glory of Heaven;
it was this fact
that caused his persecutors
to pounce upon him –
it was simply too much for them to bear.

But he saw the glory of Heaven
and declared it to all,
unafraid of the consequences...
and with forgiveness of his killers
upon his lips.

Into the LORD's hands
he commended his spirit,
much like Jesus Himself.
His spirit was joined to Christ's own,
and so he knew the glory of Heaven.

This is the peace all should seek:
the peace that endures beyond death,
the love that cannot be quenched
even by torture –
this peace comes from God alone.

Hippie Convert (I)

The peace of Christ be with you, my brother.
His peace fill your soul.
Then you shall indeed draw near to Him;
then you will be the LORD's own.
This peace is all that has worth.

There is a hippie who has come to see this,
who has found the peace
he sought so vainly.
The emptiness and insanity that was all around him
has been cast far from his soul.

Now a genuine peace breathes within him;
now a true love beats in his heart.
He has been converted from vanity
to the fullness of God's light...
and every day draws closer to His side.

In the Eucharist especially
he has found this peace;
in the truth of the LORD's presence
he makes his home –
and it cannot be taken from him.

6. Conversion

How blessed is he now!
And not only to be free
of drugs and fornication –
though how sweet that freedom is! –
but to be in the heart of the Church.

It is almost impossible to imagine,
considering where he had been
and how polluted he had become,
that he should now be clean,
indeed, free to sing the praises of God.

How can it be he is in church every day,
and every day receiving the Sacrament?
How can it be
he spends hours each day in prayer,
and has done so for years?

He is blessed beyond words,
free from all bonds
to the world and all it holds.
Though far from perfect, with a long way to go,
he has come in truth to a place of freedom.

Hippie Convert (I)

Perhaps it is not so impossible.
He was raised Catholic after all,
and though he understood none of it,
he did always sense the presence of Jesus,
even in the midst of his sin.

He could not imagine Jesus is not God;
it would be like saying he has no fingers
or doesn't breathe the air,
so undeniable was this truth to him.
And so I suppose his conversion does make sense.

He always had been a quiet soul,
contemplative by nature,
and so the spiritual life suited him.
But he had doubted every teaching
the Church proposed.

Who is this Pope,
and what is this "one Church"?
How dare they assert such authority!
And shouldn't we rebel against the powers that be,
for look at what corruption is there?

Hippie Convert (I)

Let us rather be free
to do as we please –
isn't Jesus full of compassion for all?
This adolescent spirit was strong in him,
for it was truth he sought.

Of course, truth without wisdom
is not worth much,
and can indeed be a detriment to truth;
it becomes a blunt instrument,
like the one rebelled against.

And so, much the man needed to learn;
very far he had to go.
But conversion came to his soul,
and eventually he welcomed it whole...
and became a model Catholic.

It is in this House truth rests;
the Spirit is upon this bark.
Peter we need to steer us to port,
lest, adrift at sea,
we get dashed upon the rocks.

Hippie Convert (I)

But as he sits daily in the adoration chapel,
still it is remarkable to him
that he is here,
so close to the Lord and His Church...
so much at peace in His presence.

One could say it comes with age,
but his conversion began by twenty-two,
and though it took a decade
before he came truly into the Church,
it has been decades he has been home again.

One can't say this hippie
ever consciously, knowingly rebelled
or left the House of God...
As with all hippies, he just drifted along
wherever the tide seemed to take him.

Today they say, "It's all good,"
no matter how bad it may be;
then we said, "It's cool,"
without thinking...
and so all sort of things entered in.

Hippie Convert (I)

The thing that mostly entered in
was the lyrics of songs
repeated ad infinitum
and so training his mind
to think in a certain way.

Not all were terrible
and some were good,
or could at least be taken positively...
but on the whole the message was one
of doing what one will.

They painted a picture of a corrupted world –
and the world is indeed corrupt.
But their solution was just as corrupt,
though couched in altruistic terms.
The singers were no better than the Pharisees.

These artists were often as filthy rich
as those they condemned for their money;
and the adulation they received
had no compare,
and so could not have been more troubling.

Hippie Convert (I)

How great is the hypocrisy
of those who condemn the washing of hands
yet care not for the filth upon their souls.
They are equally as contemptible
as those advocating vain washing.

It is not the washing of hands
that should concern any man
but the purity of his heart
and the love he bears
his fellow man.

But one does not love the soul he condemns,
and only thereby condemns himself;
for no man is above the law
or without merit for condemnation...
though all men think themselves so.

The hands to the throat of one's enemy
serve only to strangle oneself.
What will raise us from such futility;
who will save us
from dying in pride and pretense?

7. Salvation

We will only be saved
by the one who cries out our sins
like John the Baptist to Herod,
like Jesus to the soul of every man –
it is only the truth that will set us free.

But the cry must come
from a heart of love,
a heart concerned for the salvation
of the one to whom it speaks,
else all shall die in judgment.

He who cries out without love
condemns himself in his judgment,
and he will never serve
to convert the soul of the other...
who will thus likewise die in his sin.

But the truth must be spoken
and spoken with strength –
all men must be called to repentance.
Ignorance of sin will not save us
but only encourage the path to destruction.

Hippie Convert (I)

Salvation or condemnation,
these are the only two options.
We will be saved or we will be condemned;
and likewise we offer others
salvation or condemnation.

And so we must each check our soul
to see if love of the other
we have at heart,
or if we ride on a high horse
as the hippie so often does.

Never trust anyone over 30
was the foolish theme of the hippie generation;
thereby he condemned as useless
anyone not like himself,
presuming thus that he knew best.

But we must first distrust ourselves
and the judgment we invoke.
One would hope the hippie
might at least heed his own words
as his decades go well past three.

Hippie Convert (I)

But even at 70
the hippie remains angry at others
and blind to his own sin.
What hope for salvation can there be
for a fool full of years?

Foolishness can almost be expected,
certainly more easily understood,
in the young who are ignorant.
But ignorance in old age
is an obstacle difficult to surmount.

Particularly if the blindness is willful,
it grows harder with age,
for the soul becomes more self-assured
it is traveling the right way...
and who can tell it anything then?

But those called to cry out in love
must continue regardless of results:
it is not up to them to judge
the reception they get
but always to hold out hope to all.

Hippie Convert (I)

We know that salvation comes
only by the blood of Christ,
but so many cannot see this
and so rely only
on their own mind and will.

Some mock such an idea;
some see no need for salvation at all,
or at least not their own.
We know that salvation comes from Christ,
but many cannot or will not see this truth.

And so, what does the devout soul do?
How does he relate to the unbelief
and even antagonism
of those who reject the faith we know?
Salvation comes by the blood of Christ.

We must be ready to die,
to give our lives for those
who make themselves our enemies,
and enemies of the Lord.
We must wholeheartedly embrace the Cross.

Hippie Convert (I)

This is the sign of a genuine Christian;
this is the way we know
our conversion is becoming complete:
if we are ready to die
for the salvation of those who hate us.

This is Christ's message,
this is His call
and the way He showed us to walk.
It is indeed what He did,
and so a Christian can only do the same.

When the hippie thinks no more of himself,
of what he wants and desires,
what benefits him most
and what he thinks is right,
then he begins to grow in faith.

Then salvation is on the horizon
for him and for those around him,
for then he begins to live
not for himself
but for the good of all.

8. The Good of All

In love and peace we are all to live –
is this not the cry of the hippie?
Everybody love one another;
let there be no more war...
Let the flowers grow, man!

And James came to realize
that this overriding ideal
of the hippie movement
was fulfilled in Jesus Christ.
All else is a pale imitation.

Only in Jesus is love, only in Jesus is peace –
I think I've said this before,
but it bears continual repetition:
God is love, true love,
and only in Him peace is found.

Heaven is where the good of all
is truly known;
and Heaven comes to earth now,
for Jesus walks among us...
and we must walk along with Him.

Hippie Convert (I)

If we truly care about the good of all
and not our own selfish concerns,
then we must know that the good of all
is found only in the One
who is Goodness itself.

And those who seek the truth,
who really desire the good of all,
cannot but know, do know,
the goodness found in God alone
and the union of all mankind in Him.

Otherwise we are distracted;
we are living an illusion
if we fail to see this truth,
if our hearts do not generously seek
the good of all souls.

For apart from Him
we will designate some
as unworthy of being called
into the ranks where the good of all
is measured by human judgment.

Hippie Convert (I)

And so, some, if not many,
will inevitably suffer,
will inevitably be persecuted
for not fitting the definition
of those deserving the treatment of the good.

Men will thus be in the place of God,
who in the end separates sheep from goats.
They would make this separation now
according to their own thinking,
their own will to power.

But in the end they will be powerless
before the One who judges all with Justice,
whose mercy pours down
like a river from Heaven
upon those who welcome such a gift.

Those who need not mercy,
who harden their hearts against His love,
cannot receive the mercy
they are so unwilling to give...
and they will not know the good of all.

Hippie Convert (I)

And so the hippie passes the peace pipe,
he takes another toke of his joint
and dreams of a world
where all live as one...
but he knows not that he is dreaming.

He thinks this cloud of smoke is reality,
and it is for him for a short while.
This is where he lives and breathes free...
but the air he breathes is not clear:
there is poison in it.

But this poison in his lungs
he does not recognize,
till it takes over his mind
and leaves him stultified,
unable to face down the paranoia.

It does us no good to live in a dream,
to seek to escape our problems
in whatever way we may conceive.
For the problems will only
come rushing upon us with greater force.

Hippie Convert (I)

We cannot really be concerned
for the good of all
if we care not for the good of our own lives;
if we are not holy and healthy ourselves,
we will bring no good to anyone else.

It is only in the hand of God
we find the meaning of our lives,
the good all men are made for.
If we do not live in His grace,
no good can come to us.

And if there is no good in us,
indeed, what good can we be to others?
What good can we bring to the world
if we are mired in its corruption?
All but wilt in such a state.

The petals of a flower
is what we are
to the living LORD and God.
He cares immensely for the good of all
and calls us to nurture our brothers.

II.

1. Biography

I have mentioned few specifics of my own life
as I have expounded in general
about the hippie milieu
and the dangers present therein –
I suppose his sins are not unlike any man's.

And when I say “his sins”
I refer of course to my own,
and in this manner
compose a story of my life...
Still, perhaps I should become more particular.

One hesitates, of course,
to speak of oneself,
especially when the things one must say
are not very flattering
(though flattering words I would fear as well).

And so I must stop to pray
that the LORD will allow to be said
what He would have said,
and let silence remain where it should.
LORD, you are my surety in this.

Hippie Convert (II)

James strayed far from the presence of God
without ever realizing where he was going
until it was too late
and he found himself in a strange town
with no direction home.

It all happens little by little, really,
though there are milestones along the way.
The influence of music and lyrics
leads to interest in sex and drugs
and eventually the practice follows.

The practice increases
and grows in intensity
till one is quite addicted to sin,
though of this addiction
one remains unaware.

Then one day a ray of light
pierces through
and we glimpse our desperate state.
Conversion does not come all at once,
and so our only hope is patience.

Hippie Convert (II)

But how wonderful conversion is!
Even if there is considerable pain,
even if one must wait...
even if one is wrapped in darkness
with no apparent escape.

This darkness is far more desirable
than the darkness of sin,
for that darkness debilitates
whereas this darkness is but a prelude
to birth into new life.

Is this not what we find,
all those subject to conversion?
Whether we be hippies or squares,
the dark night must come upon all
who seek the Kingdom of God.

For the darkness of sin spares none
(save Our Lady),
and so it must be purged from us –
and this purgation, even here,
involves a certain suffering.

Hippie Convert (II)

But, again, how blessed the suffering is!
And James felt this as deeply as any
for he had fallen as deeply as any
into the darkness of sin,
and so knew well the need for suffering.

There is great cleansing that comes
from the tears we cannot but cry
when our sins are raised
before our eyes
and we see them clearly.

How blessed are the tears,
how blessed is the recognition
of our faults,
of the depth of our sin...
and the lifeline Jesus throws us.

You must know what I mean, my brother.
You must have experienced this grace.
Could there be anything more blessed
than the forgiveness
of even our darkest sins?

Hippie Convert (II)

And so, suffering should be embraced
for the fruit it brings
to our lives
and the lives of those for whom we pray,
for whom we suffer.

Yes, our suffering can benefit
more than ourselves,
it can serve to purge more than our own souls,
if it is united with that of Christ,
who suffered always for others.

His suffering leads to glory,
to His own glory now in Heaven
where He reigns supreme,
and to the glory of any soul
that suffers with Him on this plane.

And so, though James regretted all his sin
(and, one must say, still does),
he rejoiced in the fruit his suffering brought
to the very depths of his heart,
a heart that had been so broken.

2. Broken Heart

The LORD looks upon the brokenhearted,
and so He looked upon James,
whose heart, whose life,
had been so broken by sin...
but was then healed by repentance.

I want to speak of the sin
that broke his heart,
that broke down his dignity
so gradually but so completely...
but still I do not know where to begin.

It is true I have spoken of the music
and even mentioned a couple of names...
but this barely scratches the surface
of his immersion in drugs and sex
and his blindness to the light of Christ.

Light of Christ was the name of the prayer group
that served to finally lift him forever
from the sin of cohabitation,
but this was three decades along in his life...
and still the spirit of fornication was not banished.

Hippie Convert (II)

The drugs were conquered much sooner,
even in his early twenties;
there was but a single toke of a joint
a few years after that...
and this demon has not raised its head again.

It took possession of him in earnest
when he was only 15:
after hearing so long of the sweetness of the leaf
and the enlightenment from LSD,
he bought his first bag of dope.

He smoked it alone
in the park where he had grown
and played as a child.
He rolled his first joint incorrectly
in a cellar infested with photos of nudes.

There he had discovered pornography years before
(as early as age nine or ten),
and it had become a constant pastime;
now he had begun another vice,
one which would quickly take over his life.

Hippie Convert (II)

He soon was smoking marijuana or hashish
every day, usually twice a day (or more),
and taking mescaline or acid
on the weekends.
It was what he lived for.

And he started to grow his hair long
and put those patches on his jeans,
and attend any number of rock concerts.
Back in the 70's nobody cared
where or when drugs were taken...

So we smoked pot in Washington Square Park
or on the streets or in graveyards...
Only once near school
were we accosted by a cop,
but he let us go with a warning.

There was one policeman in the neighborhood
for whom we had to look out –
he was on a personal mission to bust kids –
but on the whole security was lax,
and so there was really no one to stop us.

Hippie Convert (II)

And James didn't seem at all broken:
he had become rather popular
and was now quite adept
at recognizing what was cool
and following the latest trends.

But the emptiness of this time was growing
as gradually he lost his own identity;
it was only being cool
that preoccupied him,
and saying and doing what cool people do.

In its social acceptance
how is one to recognize one's emptiness?
If all around are more or less empty,
who can tell the difference?
Anyone who was not empty didn't matter.

Those "squares" were souls to be ridiculed
for their ignorance of what mattered,
for their terrible ordinariness.
It was cool to burn oneself out with drugs –
those who rusted into old age were useless.

Hippie Convert (II)

There were glimpses of reality through the haze,
senses of what it was to be wholesome,
and that this was not a foolish thing...
but remembrances of childhood and family life
were rather quickly dispelled.

What could one do but sex and drugs?
What mattered but rock 'n' roll?
School was something he took care of,
and he would regularly get money from his parents
for making the honor roll...

But that money was used for drugs,
as was the dollar provided for lunch.
All was geared toward getting high;
that was all anyone would do.
There was nothing more important than this idol.

But as all idols are empty,
so is the soul that follows them.
And the brokenness cannot be hidden forever,
or one would find oneself in hell.
Only its recognition can set us free.

Hippie Convert (II)

Peeling back the layers of darkness,
the mask that had so covered his heart,
James somehow began to breathe once more
and light began to touch his eyes.
He began to see that he was blind.

His heart beat again,
and blood coursed through his veins...
And that love still exists
he began to understand.
But in the process he was torn by pain.

As his conversion took hold
he renounced the things of this world,
especially the milieu of rock 'n' roll –
selling or giving all his albums away...
but also his books and whatever else he owned.

And then freedom came;
though he cried every night
for the sin still in his heart
and in his memory...
how sweet was the freedom that came.

3. Still Bound

Though there were distinct struggles
in conquering the demon of drugs –
once he threw a bag of marijuana
out a second-floor window,
vowing never to partake again...

And though he returned even after that
(he never bought drugs again
but did often and wholeheartedly
join in with others around him getting stoned),
a decisive end soon came, as has been said.

But the break was not so clean
with the spirit of fornication.
Of this there sometimes seems
no complete end, no final victory on this earth...
though it may be substantially overcome.

The reach of this spirit
was so deeply ingrained in his memory –
exposed to pornography at such a young age.
And since sex is so fundamental to our nature,
its perversion can be particularly severe.

Hippie Convert (II)

And so James found himself
still bound to it,
still faltering into it,
well after his initial time of repentance,
and even after his conversion to the Church.

It is remarkable the excuses
the human mind can make,
the way it can smooth over
even the most obvious (and grave) sins –
and how tragic it is to trust our own judgment!

Once a priest said quite simply in Confession
that it was not right for him
to live with a woman outside marriage
or to have relations with anyone thus...
but he could only argue they would one day marry.

But they never did marry,
and later – upon receiving the Spirit's grace –
it became clear to him
how wrong the relationship had been,
and how very wrong he was.

Hippie Convert (II)

And this incident was by no means isolated,
nor was it the final one.

Though he never lived with a woman
or engaged in coitus again,
still he made excuse for sexual sin.

Eventually he began to run to Confession
each time he fell into sin;
and though he may have been sincere
at the time of each penance,
all too soon he would fall again.

It was very much like a demon
had a hold of him,
something almost beyond his control.
Then there were those who made excuse for him...
and he was certainly ready to listen.

We hear what we want to hear
and ignore the rest
when truth hasn't really taken hold of our soul,
when, as St. Augustine said,
we tell the LORD, "Yes, but not now."

Hippie Convert (II)

We tell ourselves we are in love –
how terribly that word is misused! –
and so presume to know what we do...
but love is something of which we have no sense,
though we are well acquainted with lust.

Or at least vain fantasy,
a relationship we invent in our minds;
and if someone says we have no clothes,
we think it must be they
who refuse to see the truth.

Thank God James came to see the truth
any number of times;
it was very unfortunate
he repeatedly fell into blindness,
but by grace he was continually raised.

It is not an easy path to walk,
especially when everyone else
speaks so confidently of “love”
and encourages us along the way.
But, still, the blindness we must conquer.

Hippie Convert (II)

We cannot blame others
for our falling into sin,
no matter how much they influence us,
no matter how guilty they may be –
we must take responsibility when we stray.

For it is *our* feet that take the steps,
our heart that gives its assent,
and it is we who are thereby afflicted...
and so it is we who must seek a cure.
It does no good to point to others' disease.

All are so sick and in need of a physician!
The society has a cancerous sore.
The question is who will face
his own immorality,
his own turning away from the light of the LORD.

May the LORD come to heal us;
may we beg His assistance.
May we see that our salvation is beyond us
and call out for the hand of God.
Only He can keep us from sinking into the deep.

4. The Cesspool

We may have all jumped
into the cesspool together,
we may have celebrated
our liberation as a whole...
but we must be pulled out one by one.

The LORD will judge each individual soul;
we will have to give account of our lives
alone before His face.
And then what shall we say?
We will not be able to excuse ourselves that day.

It is true,
the pull of the cesspool is very strong.
There is no question
that the culture would carry us away...
but we can't be dead bodies floating downstream.

We must fight against the tide –
this is where we will find our lives.
We prove our worth
and the purpose of our breath
by how we stand up against evil.

Hippie Convert (II)

Who was able to recognize
the mud that swamped
the ground at Woodstock
as a cesspool rising
beneath our feet?

Who could have predicted
how deep we would sink?
This was our way back to the Garden,
back to innocence and truth...
not the dawning of an age so bleak.

And who can see it now?
How many still wear
rose-colored glasses
and hide themselves
behind a wall of smoke and ash?

But as the ash heap rises,
as the death toll mounts,
how long will they be able
to convince themselves
that this is the way to Paradise?

Hippie Convert (II)

How could we be so fooled?
Why do we not say,
“My God, what have I done?”
Why do we turn our eyes
from the enveloping sin?

How are we able to rationalize
the burning and dismemberment
of the most innocent among us
as the right of a woman
to do with her body as she pleases?

How can we institutionalize
relationships between man and man
and woman and woman,
equating them with marriage
as it has existed from the beginning?

How can we be so blind?
It is true that as the cesspool
creeps in and surrounds us
we can lose all sense of truth –
but still the will must give its assent.

Hippie Convert (II)

The depths of the cesspool
are not known to the many
who avert their eyes in ignorance
of the prevalent horror,
and so it gains strength and greater depth.

There is a clarion call to convenience
that lulls the souls of all
to sleep, to ease,
to addiction to comfort –
and it seems nothing can penetrate such apathy.

They prefer not to see,
not to know the truth
of the way their leaders promote
the end of civilization,
the sinking into the cesspool.

Perhaps they do not know their complicity –
the ability to ignore or excuse
the consequences of our actions
is truly remarkable in man...
but always we are responsible for what we do.

Hippie Convert (II)

But who is responsible;
who even cares if they support
the killing of the unborn
or the leading of impressionable youth
into sexual and moral malaise?

And do not think the LORD will be appeased
when we say, "But we helped our neighbor."
Do not think He can be
as ignorant of evil
as we are wont to be.

He knows the depths of the cesspool.
He sees the complicity of souls.
And unless we repent,
when the end comes
our sins will be dreadfully raised to our eyes.

But if there is no sin,
why not continue on,
why not persist in ignoring
the blood rising, the disease spreading...
the lost generation of man?

Hippie Convert (II)

And the greatest woe is of course
that the filth has entered the Church,
that even here refuge is threatened.
Yes, there is still light in this House,
and it continues to grow...

But the darkness has also found space
in this place where darkness
should never be,
in the abode of the LORD on earth –
it, too, has its human side.

Nothing will ever conquer the Spirit;
the darkness cannot overcome the light:
a purity ever remains in these walls
which the cesspool cannot reach.
But still the devil does what he can.

And even priests and bishops
go along with him,
fooled by their own weakness and sin,
giving in to the blindness that pervades this age...
We can only pray for them.

Hippie Convert (II)

And let us pray for our own souls,
that we will be purged of any filth
and preserved from its clutches
as the darkness closes in.
The way to the Kingdom is indeed narrow.

James struggled much
to lift himself out of the cesspool,
to free himself of its filth...
and though still he is far from perfect,
God's grace is at work in him.

It has helped that he has married
a woman seeking the LORD as he,
for whom faith is most important
and not the world's security.
He is not alone anymore.

And he is not so bound to the sin
that held him fast for so many years;
now with his wife there is a breath of peace,
a certain relief from anxiety
and the whisperings of the devil in his ear.

5. Death

Death is prescribed by the LORD
as a remedy for man's sin,
for his succeeding misery.
The LORD wills the death of no man,
but man's disobedience makes it necessary.

How shall we attain to the glory
the LORD intends for all
if we remain forever in the darkness
of this forsaken world?
It simply cannot be.

And so death is provided
as a release from the bonds
that chain us to the darkness,
that keep us in our sin.
All of this must be left behind.

And we must trust in the LORD,
in His power and will for our good.
For it will certainly seem
as if all is lost –
but by Him all is redeemed.

Hippie Convert (II)

Even the flowers wilt and die;
the sun shall rise and set
no more.
On that day we will clearly see
the illusion of peace we have devised.

When the glamour passes,
when its deception is revealed –
when the emptiness of our platitudes
can no longer be ignored,
how great the pain will be.

All that we set our hearts upon,
all the selfishness we conceived,
will be seen for the nothingness
it truly is.
And what is true will be far away.

Why do we seek such emptiness?
Why mock obedience to God?
On the day we die we will see
we are not He...
Let us pray He does not flee from us.

Hippie Convert (II)

The end is certainly upon us.
Jesus is coming, and soon.
Then there will be no denying His presence;
there will be no hiding from His face.
And where will we be without His grace?

James came to know how close the LORD is,
how near is the end of all things
and the beginning of His Kingdom.
Repenting of his sin,
what really matters became evident to him.

And death was not so much to be feared anymore,
since he was not so attached
to the things that pass.
His sin he no longer treasured
but saw it as something to be cast aside.

This is the beginning of new life:
death to this world.
This brings the joy and peace
that passes understanding,
for then we know what does not pass away.

Hippie Convert (II)

We seem like fools,
we who do not pursue
the things of this world.
And our death seems a terrible affliction,
particularly for all we have missed.

If there is no resurrection of the dead,
truly we are the greatest of fools;
if there is nothing beyond this life,
what do we have,
we who sacrifice this life?

Nothing. Nothing at all.
We hold to nothing of this world,
and so if there is nothing but this world,
we have nothing at all.
But there is more than this world.

There is something living and true;
even in this place it is known to us.
And we shall have everything
when the nothingness of this world is gone
and only the LORD remains.

Hippie Convert (II)

Then there will be love and peace
and flowers in abundance.
Then there will be no violence
on all the LORD's holy mountain.
Then the lamb will lie down with the lion.

But this will come through death,
not through the latest designer drug.
This will come only
in leaving the fantasies of the mind
distinctly behind.

All we imagine is good
falls short of the vision of God,
and so only by giving our vision to Him
will we find the desire of our hearts.
Only then will the band play as one.

And we will be as brothers and sisters,
and there will be no mud.
And we will hug one another
and greet each other with a kiss...
and the purity of the LORD will be with us.

III

1. The Garden

How shall we find our way back to the Garden?
We can't. We have destroyed it.
Both our souls and Creation itself
have been irreparably damaged.
And so the Garden exists no more.

And for those who set their sights
on Nature alone,
who cannot see beyond the horizon
or the trees before their noses,
things are thus quite hopeless.

If the Garden has been plundered,
if our souls have been polluted by sin,
if we have defaced the image of God
throughout Creation,
how shall we find a place of peace?

We have no home here on this earth;
our only home is in Heaven.
And the coming of that Kingdom
does not depend on the will of man.
It is a gift of God Most High.

Hippie Convert (III)

James came to understand
that all we must really do
is breathe for a living,
if that breath is of the Breath of God.
He will do the rest.

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God,
and all else will be added unto you –
James found this to be remarkably true
in his own life:
when we serve the LORD, all is provided.

We need not worry
or be anxious about anything –
we need but breathe and be at peace,
for, truly, He will take care.
The Garden is in our midst.

This is still God's Creation;
we cannot escape His presence anywhere.
Though much energy is spent
manufacturing darkness,
it is all as nothing in the end.

Hippie Convert (III)

A particular witness James could offer
regarding the providence of the LORD
are the blessings that came to him
when he began to tithe –
he never had a money worry afterward.

A new priest had come to the parish
who encouraged giving 5% to the Church
and 5% to other charities...
but James had only \$200 in the bank
and very minimal wages.

But a friend had begun his tithe
despite being married with two young children
and work prospects less than his own.
So, inspired by that example,
he began tithing.

That was more than twenty years ago,
and the blessings could hardly be counted:
finding work when there seemed none,
considerable increases in wages,
apartments at very low cost...

Hippie Convert (III)

Money and gifts seemed to come
from nowhere (and from everywhere),
as when more recently an insurance company
contacted his wife about policies about to expire,
ones she had forgotten she had.

The notice was mailed to an address
where she hadn't lived for twenty years,
but somehow arrived in their box 1200 miles away.
What comes when we practice poverty
and entrust our lives to the LORD!

There can be no more generous boss
than our Most Holy God,
who holds all the world in His hand
and seeks to share His favors with everyone:
those dedicated to Him live in His Garden.

He indeed cannot be outdone
in His tremendous generosity –
how often James found the more he gave,
the more he received in return...
until he had an abundance.

Hippie Convert (III)

He now has more the problem
of what to do with stored-up finances;
and though income is still needed
to meet certain requirements...
this too continues to come (as shown above).

I pray the LORD will bless you
with trust in Him and in His providence,
for this is truly the greatest of His gifts:
to know that indeed by Him
all the hairs of our head are counted.

Do not be anxious for tomorrow;
the troubles of the day are sufficient.
Look at the birds of the air
and the flowers of the field –
how they are cared for by the LORD!

And you are worth more than many sparrows;
learn simply to breathe
and you will be blessed.
Trust in Him even in your darkest hour,
and His great light you will know.

2. Exile

In His Garden there is ample food and clothing,
so why would anyone go anywhere else?
Why is man not satisfied
with what God provides?
Why does he wish to leave this place?

It is his own will
that casts man from the Garden;
it is his desire that is thus fulfilled.
The LORD wishes to keep him near –
He made the Garden especially for man.

But man turns selfishly away.
Lacking gratitude for God's gift
and without sense for what is good,
he prefers something other than love...
He chooses darkness over light.

It is indeed foolishness
to bite the hand by which we are fed,
to renounce the One
who has our interest at heart.
But this is what man does.

Hippie Convert (III)

He turns to so many things
that are less than God,
that lack of His undying love.
He prefers instead to die,
to lose the life planted in him.

And so he goes into exile;
so his heart becomes void.
Hardened like Pharaoh
against the voice of the LORD,
he even oppresses the children of light.

But it is he who is most oppressed,
he who is under slavery,
who cannot escape from exile...
for our only home is with the LORD
and those furthest from Him are most to be pitied.

Even in forced labor
the children of God remain free;
even under religious persecution
their faith stays strong,
and grows ever stronger.

Hippie Convert (III)

But the soul that rejects the LORD,
that in his pride turns from the Light
to make a light of his own invention,
to take life and death in his own hands...
what can he be but cast from the Garden?

Indeed, he casts himself out;
by his own choice he leaves.
What has become of the hippie soul
who fancied himself above it all,
above all human weakness?

He was to make a brave new world,
one transcending all man's flaws.
On a mountaintop he set himself,
looking down on all the peasants below...
but how far into the pit he has fallen!

Now he embraces the culture of death
and the ideology of the superior man –
there are many he sees as expendable
(the child in the womb, the disabled, the old...),
and so he has exiled himself from humanity.

Hippie Convert (III)

Exiled where he stands,
a foreigner in his own skin,
he seeks to shed the flesh
that he might find freedom.
(Thus he justifies the killing of others as well.)

He seeks an escape,
a way outside of himself...
but finds no exit.
He tries drugs, alcohol, sex,
and the current fad of the passing day.

But nothing satisfies,
nothing brings joy to his soul;
for he has renounced the source of joy,
the source of truth and innocence,
and the love that is life itself.

He needs no God,
sees Him as but a fantasy –
and so his life becomes a fantasy,
a pale imitation of the reality
that is life in the Garden.

Hippie Convert (III)

And in his stubbornness,
in his prideful despair,
he remains apart from God.
There is, of course, also fear,
fear that He might exist.

For then he himself would be called to life,
called to walk according
to the LORD and His ways,
and so have to abandon
the path to which he has grown accustomed.

And he would have to face his sin,
that there are actually things he's done wrong,
things that require atonement.
He cannot imagine himself on his knees
before anything or anyone.

For certainly he knows best –
what trust he has in his own mind!
He gives no thought
to whence his mind has come
or the One who made him.

Hippie Convert (III)

How he cherishes his despair
and the relief it seems to give him
from carrying any cross.
It is easier this way...
one hardly has to think.

There is sloth in his pride,
an unwillingness to do the work
necessary to address the truth
and live in its presence.
He does not wish to be set free.

There is fear, too,
that it might not be real,
like so many things he has found unreal;
he fears another illusion
will overtake his soul.

But we cannot fear the darkness
or run in an effort to escape,
for then it indeed takes hold of us,
as is its evil purpose.
Face the darkness and let it pass through!

Hippie Convert (III)

Pity the poor lost hippie
who knows not which way to turn,
who clings so tenaciously
to the illusions of his youth,
to the blindness he refuses to see.

He is but a part
of the overarching culture
and its insistent call
to do as we please.
The selfishness encompasses all.

The child that never grows up,
that remains spoiled all his life...
pity him for he knows not the beauty
of self-sacrifice,
of the love to which all souls are called.

And so he lives in exile,
far apart from his true self –
he rejects being a child of God
in favor of some useless ideal,
and so he toils quite alone.

3. The Spirit of the Age

How easily, and readily,
we confuse the spirit of the age
with the Spirit of God.
Both are of the spirit, of course,
but they are usually polar opposites.

And this confusion has perhaps never been greater
and more troubling
than it is in our own day,
when people think that all they do
is in the will of God, their Maker.

There is no sense of sin anymore,
no need for repentance,
for we have made our own perfection,
or rather baptized all we do
as inherently blessed.

And such foolish blasphemy
is taught even in some Catholic schools,
where impressionable students are told
whatever they think is right,
with no recognition of the evil this brings.

Hippie Convert (III)

There is certainly a difference
between the will of God
and our own conscience,
for the conscience must be formed
and conformed to the mind of Christ.

If not it cannot be Christian;
if not it is not of God.
And this formation does not occur naturally –
we are more inclined to wickedness
than the spirit of self-sacrifice.

It is the spirit of the age
to which we more readily listen;
it surrounds us all the time, after all,
and is followed by the rest of the world...
Why should we not go along?

And it easily becomes our god.
Without our even realizing,
we follow it without reserve.
It enters into our eyes and ears
and we become as its children.

Hippie Convert (III)

We are indeed its offspring,
for it forms our minds and hearts
and makes us who we are:
our very identities are inextricably linked
with this pervasive culture.

And it is indeed a culture of death,
a culture that kills the life of the soul,
destroying not only the unborn, sick, and elderly,
but all whom it embraces
and who embrace it without reserve.

But how can this be?
Surely I exaggerate?
What we see on TV is innocuous,
is it not?
The media is our friend.

And all our friends watch and listen attentively
to that which is widely proclaimed
for the consumption of the masses...
and the masses swallow it whole
without a thought for their souls.

Hippie Convert (III)

Should we not embrace homosexuality,
which appears so natural and fun?
Should we not remain silent
in the face of abortion,
understanding the rights of the woman?

Should we not accept that many people
are simply better off dead?
And should we not help them along that path,
especially if they are depressed?
Where would our compassion be otherwise?

We could not go against the tide
even if we wanted to;
it is just too overwhelming.
There is left no choice –
our wills have been stripped from us.

And so we float with resignation,
if not joyful acceptance,
downstream with the dying things...
There is no time to stop and think
or question our presumed compassion.

Hippie Convert (III)

And so the spirit of the age takes hold
and becomes the new religion,
one which must be abided
by all who live under its rule...
All must offer their pinch of incense.

For the idols of the age are jealous gods
who will countenance no compromise –
the word of these gods must be heeded.
And if you dare to speak up,
you will be thrown into prison.

And as the climate grows worse
for all who believe in the LORD,
ironically those who oppress the believers
become more confident they are doing right:
their hearts harden beyond remedy.

They are sure the “love” they profess
is true and full of reason;
they excuse their persecution
as necessary to protect their definition
of love as license to sin.

Hippie Convert (III)

“Make love, not war.”
This is the battle cry
of the hippie generation.
Of course what it means
is to have as much sex as you like.

The equating of love and sex
is perhaps the greatest tragedy
of these lost years.
O what the sexual revolution has wrought!
Broken hearts, broken lives, dead bodies...

In this war how many have died?
As I write this, nearly *60 million* unborn children
have been legally killed in the U.S.A. alone.
Is this not where “free love” leads –
does it not cost human lives?

And what of the broken marriages,
the broken families, the lost children...
We wonder from where
the pervasive violence comes –
has not this “love” led to such destruction?

Hippie Convert (III)

And the emptiness of this spirit,
the void in the soul of man...
how shall it be filled?
Not by further sinking into the pit.
Only by turning to the LORD of true love.

But it is our backs we turn to Him,
not our faces:
our heels are raised to run from Him.
And so how can He embrace us
who want no part of Him?

We have our religion set,
and it is set against God.
It seems right in our own eyes,
and we are the enlightened ones.
(Perhaps some shall see this is a creed of death.)

LORD, have we not always been the same,
always more ready to oppose you
than to praise you,
always sure that we know best,
blind to our selfishness?

4. Innocence

It is only innocence that will save us,
a genuine innocence,
a purity of heart...
not the childishness that suffuses
the culture of this age.

The LORD is perfectly innocent;
He is childlike and pure,
humble and lowly, obedient in soul...
and we must be like Him
to know innocence at all.

The culture pretends to know Him;
in fact, it presumes to be Him.
But what it knows is indeed a false light,
one opposed to purity and obedience,
one wrought in the filth of this world.

The hippie flashes the smile of a child,
acts indeed so innocently...
but his heart is set on fornication
and the high he can get from some drug –
no child desires these things.

Hippie Convert (III)

There is a beating heart within us all
that remembers the child we have been,
that recalls the love in which we were wrought
by the hand of the LORD.
And it invites us to return.

Here is where innocence dwells
as the solid foundation of all life,
as the substance of our souls.
God is the seed from which all is sprung
and that seed is planted in all of us.

Why do we cover it over with lies?
Why do we allow it
to become calloused and hard?
How is it we lose ourselves
in the evil of this world?

O the selfishness that corrupts our souls,
that separates us from the Spirit
to embrace rotting flesh...
Is this not utter foolishness?
Should we not come to our senses?

Hippie Convert (III)

O the blessing of innocence,
the childlike spirit that enables us
to look with wonder upon the world,
upon ourselves and all around us
as if it were ever new.

And it is.
In the blood of Christ all is a miracle,
all is blessed by God's smile;
He looks down upon us as His children
and is greatly pleased when we look up at Him.

Then all is as it should be;
then the joy of life is fulfilled.
When we are children of our Father,
our joy is complete...
and He is joyful too.

Is it not miraculous
that we have ten fingers, ten toes,
that we breathe and our heart beats,
and our eyes are filled with light?
We are living in a miracle!

Hippie Convert (III)

This miracle cannot be known
by those whose hearts are corrupt,
whose souls are wrought with lies...
for their eyes are veiled,
covered over as by a crust.

There is still a soft heart somewhere within –
we cannot entirely kill the child we have been.
But how hard our exterior can become,
making the heart so very dull...
as if it exists not at all.

Separate yourself not from the innocent heart;
do not become so callous and jaded
that you know not the wonder anymore.
God is calling to you still,
whispering deep inside your soul.

See the false idols
to which you have sworn allegiance,
which have led you so far afield.
All things are good in their proper place,
but make no god of anything.

Hippie Convert (III)

How the hippie worships Nature,
bowing down before sun and moon;
seeking to live closer to the earth,
he sees not how it swallows him,
blinding his eyes to what is above.

There is something beyond the stars,
beyond the limitations of the universe.
Though all is made by the LORD
and blessed by His hands,
none of it can compare with Him.

Earth and sun and sky
are beautiful, wonderful to behold,
awe-inspiring in their majesty...
but in the end they are nothing
if they do not lead us to their King.

The LORD reigns over Heaven and earth,
and He rules our very souls.
He whose reach extends throughout Creation
makes His home in every heart.
Let us make a place for Him.

Hippie Convert (III)

It is in innocence we find our call,
we find who we really are:
as God's children alone are we free
to walk this earth in peace
and come at last to Heaven.

This world was made for us, my friend,
but we must be made (and remade) in God's image
if we are to receive this gift
He offers with a generous heart –
otherwise we will be quite lost.

There is no need to fear,
no need to doubt the love of the LORD
and the goodness in our souls.
It is in this goodness we must make our home;
then we will be dwelling with Him.

O LORD, touch every person you have made
with your tenderness, with your love.
In innocence, as your children,
let us remain all our days
and come quickly to your side.

5. At His Side

It is only at the side of the LORD
we find our home,
we take our rest in this world
and in the next.
There is no other place at all.

What good are any of our plans,
the things we pursue with such zeal,
if they are not founded in the LORD,
if they are not in His will?
They will but come to naught.

And so many things there are that distract us,
that take our attention from what matters.
We thus lose sight of what is important
and wander aimlessly
in our convicted ignorance.

We are so sure of ourselves,
so sure of the latest fad
devised by the princes of advertising
and the current knighted sage
who leads us in his ways.

Hippie Convert (III)

How ready we are to follow false paths,
how easily led astray,
for we would prefer to be anywhere else
than in the arms of the LORD this day.
What is it we are running from?

And what is it we are running to?
This we do not know.
All we know is we don't want the LORD –
let our anxiety take us where it will.
But we will never be successful.

There is no escaping our God
for we are always in His hands:
He is never far from us.
And however fast we run,
we will get no further from Him.

Only from ourselves.
We will flee only further
from who we are,
from our very souls...
and be left quite alone.

Hippie Convert (III)

Does not inconstancy reign supreme
in our age of distractions?

We turn our attention from one thing
to whatever passes before our eyes...

We know not where we are going.

But we are moving quickly,
busy always with this or that.

There is so much to be busy with,
who can tend to his heart?

Who is concerned for the state of his soul?

We have our ideologies, certainly,
which provide a contrived sense of security –
secure they seem indeed (or so we make them),
but the ground is moving beneath our feet
for they are built on sand.

And we must not let the light of reason in
to question the flaws in our plans;
this above all we must not do,
for then what would become of our ideals?
To another idol we'd have to turn.

Hippie Convert (III)

It is a drug-ridden society;
such is our answer to everything.
It is in this haze we take refuge
from any weakness of body, mind, or soul...
And so our hearts are quite forlorn.

Can't you see the emptiness in all this?
Do not be afraid to face the darkness.
For then you will find the way out,
which is only by the grace of God.
Trust in Him and you will be saved.

Cease running away from Him;
turn and look upon His face.
Though your sins will be exposed in that light,
in that light they will also be forgiven.
And you will find true freedom.

Your slavery to the drugs that breed
only vain fantasy,
that only further poison your soul
and keep you from wholeness in the LORD,
must be cast far away.

Hippie Convert (III)

But we would rather medicate ourselves
than fly to the side of the LORD
and come before Him as children.
We are adults and decide for ourselves,
and make for ourselves our own demise.

We cannot recognize the One greater than us,
by whose hand we were made;
we have no humility.
It is embarrassing even to think of Him,
to think of ourselves as His children.

But mostly it is fear that keeps us away,
fear borne in our sin
and our reluctance to admit it
and leave it far behind...
And so, how purity harrows us.

We cannot look upon His face,
we cannot come to His side...
but it is at His side
that we find our peace,
only here and no other place.

Hippie Convert (III)

Come to His side, my brother;
do not be afraid or ashamed.
He has only love for you –
accept the gift of His grace.
His arms He will place around you.

What comfort is there!
There, what a home we make.
Sparrows find a home in His altar
and here our soul is nourished well –
come to the hand that feeds you.

Step away for a moment
from your futile existence
and you will never wish to return;
come to your senses this day
and you will no longer fear tomorrow.

At your side we find our home, O LORD;
let us stay here with you forever.
At your side time is eternal:
your love exists always.
Even now you call us to be with you.

6. Freedom

What is there the hippie heart
and the human heart in general –
and especially the American heart –
desires more than freedom?
It is the core of the modern creed.

We've got to be free.
We've got to be able to do as we please...
and let no one question us.
But of course the freedom of which man speaks
is but a slavery.

In the license to do as we please
we find that what we please to do
leads to chained hands and feet,
spiritually for those who profess this creed,
and physically for those who oppose.

God help the soul who gets in the way
of this train with no conductor;
and God help most of all
those who travel upon it,
for truly their souls are lost.

Hippie Convert (III)

As there is no peace,
there is no freedom apart from God,
no means of centering our lives...
we are so free that we become lost,
traveling in a thousand directions at once.

And we have no control of ourselves,
no reason, no discerning faculty;
and so we are acted upon by outside forces,
which force us into slavery.
How can such a soul be free?

There is no wisdom here
where people do as they please;
how quickly their minds are darkened,
and how pitifully they grope in the dark.
But this they cannot see.

All they see is what they want,
what they think is best...
what pleases them most.
But how quickly that pleasure turns to a pain
from which they cannot escape.

Hippie Convert (III)

Only in God is anyone free,
for only He is truly free;
only He does what He wills
for He wills only good for all,
and only in goodness does freedom exist.

In evil is only slavery,
is only the death of the soul,
the life of man –
evil is like poison:
it makes us unable to breathe or move.

It moves us; it conquers us
and takes control of our hands and feet.
And so we go where it tells us
and reach out according to its demands.
Indeed, it would choke the very life from our souls.

Evil does not wish to see us thrive
but only to bow down before it and die.
God alone provides us with the freedom
to decide where we shall walk,
even if is on an evil path.

Hippie Convert (III)

Our sins are like little kings
invoking their rule over what we do.
They dictate to our hearts and minds
their wishes and desires,
and we can but obey.

How we fear to offend
the dictates of sin;
how trapped we are on the path
sin marks out for us.
It seems we have no choice but to follow its ways.

But God gives us a choice
to turn from sin and be redeemed.
He would break the chains of slavery
and breathe life into our souls again –
and how wonderful this freedom is!

Especially when one has been thoroughly bound
by one's participation in grave sin
(regardless of how willingly we entered therein) –
the taste of freedom is all the more glorious
the deeper the pit from which we emerge.

Hippie Convert (III)

And the pit is very deep today;
it seems unconquerable,
made especially so by our blind acceptance
of its presence in our lives –
we think this is simply the way it is.

But in this way we are not:
we surrender to the talons of death
and slide into nothingness.
But there is something other than nothingness –
there is the call of the LORD to live!

Though freedom may not come easily
because of our having been
so prone to the slavery
the world inevitably brings,
it still may be attained.

However deep we may have sunk,
however much we have lost our souls,
the LORD continues to call us home
and provides the grace to reach there
if we but turn and trust in Him.

Hippie Convert (III)

How many there are
who have come out of the darkness,
out of the pit the devil digs
to capture our souls, our very will,
and cover us over with dirt.

Up from the grave let us rise!
The LORD will dispel
the terrors of death
and bring us to new life...
O let us seek to arise!

I recall reclining on a couch one time
while in exile in San Francisco;
my hand I saw upon my head
but I sensed there would be nothing I could do
if my neck it should decide to strangle.

I've looked upon the rocks below
and the waves crashing upon them,
and I've leaned out over the edge
once or twice...
but pulled myself back again.

Hippie Convert (III)

We must have the will to live,
to leave the culture of death behind
and breathe fresh, clear air,
free of all the pollution of sin
and the lies to which the world subscribes.

There is always hope, my friend,
however long the path may be.
Choose to turn and walk toward the LORD
and He will draw you near Him.
And you will find the perseverance you need.

The father of the Prodigal Son
threw his arms around him,
running toward his ungrateful heir
even as he saw him from a distance...
And for this wretch he called a feast!

The days following may have been difficult
for the selfish young man
who had so embraced the darkness...
but the light never leaves us.
It remains always present to guide.

Hippie Convert (III)

And so, let us come
to the freedom found in God,
however long it takes to arrive there.
Let us not lose hope
but lose all that serves to diminish it.

What the heart of the hippie desires most
it will find in the presence of Jesus,
in the light of the Kingdom of God.
There all souls will join
in one harmonious song.

Praising the LORD is what sets us free
to be joyful all our days
with nothing to fear,
nothing to lose
anymore.

All given over to our God,
it is preserved unto eternity...
We shall ever have all we need.
For all we need is this freedom
found in the One LORD of all.

7. One

What does the hippie thirst for
more than the oneness of all?
For it is in this oneness
peace is found,
the peace of every living creature.

He seeks this oneness in illusory places,
in idols of one kind or another,
and so he is unable to find what he seeks...
But when he turns in faith to Christ,
the spirit of true oneness fills his mind.

And he sees as he walks down the street
that all the older women are his mother,
the younger ones his sisters,
and the men his father and brothers –
for all are one in Jesus.

The Father has only one Son
and those who are joined to Him
become as adopted children
loved by the Father as His own...
and this blessing they see in one another.

Hippie Convert (III)

And joy rings out from the heart of those
who see what the LORD has wrought,
that He has wrought us as His own
and calls us to join together
in the heart of His Beloved Son.

It does not matter our race
or the place of our birth;
of what consequence is the color of our skin
or the appearance of our hair,
how tall we are or how strong?

In those who seem most different than us
we find the greatest joy
when we discover the truth:
that they are indeed our brothers,
our mothers, our fathers, our sisters...

Let us long to rejoice in each other
in the love of God –
is this not the truest of love,
that which loves without condition,
that joins all souls together?

Hippie Convert (III)

And there is only one language
in the presence of God:
we all speak with the same tongue
for we all speak of Christ's love.
What else is there to say?

And so, let us not be separated
as at the Tower of Babel
but join our voices in one chorus
of praise to our holy LORD.
In this we shall find our voice.

Flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone,
truly do we become one;
eating His Body and drinking His Blood,
who can we be but Him?
And He is certainly One.

Let Jesus' blood course through our veins;
in His skin let us make our home...
and not only will we be one
with Him and with one another,
but with all of Creation as well.

Hippie Convert (III)

The earth will sing out to the LORD,
to the Creator of Heaven and earth,
praising Him for all His glory,
a glory He shares with all the earth
and all the creatures thereon.

The birds sing in joy
in the presence of the LORD,
in the light He brings to their eyes.
And the beasts of the field
rejoice, too, at His coming.

Why should they not rejoice
that their Maker has come
to dwell with man
and with all His Creation?
What can they do but sing His praise?

This is as it should be,
as it was meant to be
from the time the LORD
uttered His first Word,
from the time He commanded light to shine forth.

Hippie Convert (III)

And so we find our way
back to the Garden;
in this way the universe
finds its fulfillment –
all partake of the Tree of Life in joy.

The angels stand at our side
to bless us and to guide
our feet into the Kingdom of Heaven;
and they too rejoice as one
to see the fulfillment of Creation.

And the LORD rejoices over His creatures,
singing as one sings at festivals
for the glory come upon all Creation,
for the order of the universe
shining forth in His NAME.

How wonderful it is
when all live as one
in the One who made them!
It leaves us without words
to describe...

Hippie Convert (III)

It is perfect,
this we can say
in all truth;
it is filled with grace
and the light of His face.

Can you imagine
looking into the face of the LORD?
Can you imagine seeing Him before you?
You will see Him face to face
in all that surrounds you!

It has been said
that to look into the face of the poor
is to look into the face of God.
And this is true.
But the face of God is seen best in our enemy.

When I say “our enemy,”
I mean him who seems most against us.
(I think of how looking into the face of Esau,
who had pursued his life so tenaciously,
Jacob saw the face of God.)

Hippie Convert (III)

For God is in all and everything.
Though quite apart from all things,
His glory shines in everything and everyone
and His face may be perceived everywhere
by the enlightened heart.

And our hearts will be enlightened
on that day the LORD comes,
on that day He fulfills
the oneness of all Creation –
we will not be able to look away.

This we should fear
if we still cling to this earth
and our own concept
of the oneness of all...
for that will be taken from us.

No more will false light shine;
no more will man be able to deny
the truth of God's presence
in the world
and in himself.

Epilogue

Come home, sweet hippie,
the LORD is calling you
away from the license you hold to so tightly
and into His loving arms,
where freedom is found.

Why should you be so faithful
to a love that is so false,
to an illusion that leaves you wanting
something of substance in your life?
Let the LORD take you to wife!

He is the world's only lover
worth the time of day –
all else will but lead you astray
into a yawning darkness
when its essence is revealed.

In Him you will find flowers
that do not wilt and fade,
that do not rot with the passage of time
but grow more beautiful
with each coming year.

Hippie Convert (III)

You have no reason to fear
the reach of His arms,
the light that surrounds you
in His glorious presence.
Here there is only hope and joy.

Put down the pipe
and take up the Cup;
you will only find truth and goodness
in His holy Blood.
There is no high like the heights of Heaven.

Let your heart be purified
by the touch of Christ:
Jesus is God,
He is the Resurrection and the Life,
and that life is upon us now.

You need look no further
than His wounds
to find the surpassing love
upon which you set your heart –
absolute peace is in His arms.