



## "Cross Connection"

Radio Ministry of Hope Wesleyan Church and Wells of Salvation Ministries  
Ultimate Oldies Radio – FM 97.7 and 101.5, Huber Heights, Ohio



Series: Christian Messages In Secular Music

01/30/08

### Program 22 – “He Ain’t Heavy, He’s My Brother”

© 1969 Bob Russell, Bobby Scott



First recorded by Joe Cocker (a version never released)<sup>1</sup>, the Hollies’ 1969 hit recording of "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother" is best known and remembered today. Wikipedia notes that this song "...became one of the most defining and enduring tunes of that era. It has also become an anthem for brotherly love"<sup>2</sup>

- Reached #3 in the UK and #7 in the United States after release in 1969
- #1 for 2 weeks in UK after re-release in 1988, after its use in a Miller Beer commercial
- Featured Elton John on piano, and lead singer Allan Clarke
- The only collaboration between songwriters Bobby Scott ("A Taste of Honey") and Bob Russell ("Little Green Apples"; "The Night The Lights Went Out In Georgia")
- Recorded after Graham Nash had left group to form Crosby, Stills & Nash
- Also recorded by, (among others) – Neil Diamond, Cher, Donny Hathaway, Osmonds, Olivia Newton-John, Barry Manilow, Bill Medley, and Christian music artist Clay Crosse
- Title drawn from motto for Boys Town in Omaha, Nebraska, formed in 1917, where troubled or homeless boys could come for help; Boys Town was also a 1938 movie
  - In September 1924, the first editor of Kiwanis Magazine, Roe Fulkerson, published a column entitled "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother". The article speaks of Fulkerson's inspiring encounter with "a spindly and physically weak lad" carrying a baby and "staggering towards a neighboring park"

*" 'Pretty big load for such a small kid' I said as I met him. 'Why, mister,' he smiled, 'He ain't heavy; he's my brother.' "*<sup>1,2</sup>

The road is long  
With many a winding turn  
That leads us to who knows where  
Who knows when  
But I'm strong  
Strong enough to carry him  
He ain't heavy, he's my brother

So on we go  
His welfare is of my concern  
No burden is he to bear  
We'll get there  
For I know  
He would not encumber me  
He ain't heavy, he's my brother

#### Who is my brother?

*"Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother"*  
– Mark 3:33-35

#### What is my responsibility toward my brother?

*"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' "* – Matthew 25:40

*"Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?"* – James 2:15-16

- Cain to God -- "...Am I my brother's keeper?" Gen. 4:9
- How do we feel about family members?
- What would we do for our children in times of need?
- More blessed to give than receive

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.songfacts.com/detail.php?id=1905>

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/He\\_Ain't\\_Heavy,\\_He's\\_My\\_Brother](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/He_Ain't_Heavy,_He's_My_Brother)

If I'm laden at all  
I'm laden with sadness  
That everyone's heart  
Isn't filled with the gladness  
Of love for one another

It's a long, long road  
From which there is no return  
While we're on the way to there  
Why not share  
And the load  
Doesn't weigh me down at all  
He ain't heavy, he's my brother

He's my brother  
He ain't heavy, he's my brother...

- *"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ"* – Galatians 6:2
  - Addressed by Paul and "... *all the brothers with [him]*" to believers in Galatia (See Galatians 1:1-2)
- *"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another"*-- John 13:35
- Our spirits live forever – what we do as ambassadors for Christ in this life will have eternal impacts!

*"Keep on loving each other as brothers"*  
– Hebrews 13:1, NIV

An excellent article by Jon Zens and Cliff Bjork notes that –

"...these two duties: godliness and faithful witness, sum up our entire responsibility toward unbelievers...Our responsibility toward each other as fellow recipients of God's mercy and love, however, goes much deeper. And there is a good reason why. While we may find ourselves necessarily involved with unbelievers as the result of various human relationships (mother/son, brother/sister, employer/employee, etc.), we have no spiritual union with unbelievers beyond those human ties. When it comes to our relationship with fellow believers, however, human ties are no longer the defining issue. No matter what our previous human relationships, in Christ we have been joined by his Spirit into one body in an organic union not unlike the relationship of arm to hand or leg to foot (see 1 Corinthians 12:12.27)"<sup>3</sup>

### **Final Thoughts:**

Jesus made it clear that we are brothers and sisters in the faith if we do the will of God. I have attended many churches over the years where believers address each other as, e.g., "Brother Johnson", or "Sister Daniels". While we have God-ordained responsibilities toward neighbors, leaders, enemies, etc., let's recognize the special relationship we have with other believers as part of the universal body of Christ. Let's prayerfully consider how we can help our brothers and sisters in Christ, both here at home, and where fellow believers around the world suffer for their faith in Jesus.

*"If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it"* – 1 Corinthians 12:26, NIV

---

<sup>3</sup> "Our Duties and Responsibilities to One Another in the Body of Christ", <http://www.searchingtogether.org/articles/bjork/duties.htm>