



"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

08/20/08

Program 51 "The Great Speckled Bird" © Guy Smith



I wasn't around in 1936 when Roy Acuff recorded this song, but my Dad was. Dad, accompanying himself on an old Martin acoustic guitar, would occasionally croon this number back in the 1950s when I was a kid. I remember trying to figure out, "What does some big bird with spots have to do with anything, let alone Christianity!

I also recall baseball great Dizzy Dean, when he was a co-host with Peewee Reese announcing major league baseball games back in the 1960s, would often break out singing this song during lulls in the game. But, mysteries and old memories aside, this classic provides several "Cross Connections" for our review and discussion.

The Song ¹ –

- Written by a preacher – Rev. Guy Smith
- Recorded by Roy Acuff (1936), Johnny Cash ('59), Hank Locklin ('62), Jerry Lee Lewis.

The Artist – Roy Acuff ² –

- Roy Claxton Acuff (1903 –1992) -- country musician from Maynardville, Tennessee
- Known as the "King of Country Music"
- Played semi-pro baseball; aspired to play for the NY Yankees
 - Sunstroke in 1929 and a nervous breakdown in 1930 ended his hopes
- Played fiddle in a traveling medicine show, often performing in blackface
- His other enduring hits include "The Wabash Cannonball", "The Tennessee Waltz", "The Night Train to Memphis", and "The Wreck on the Highway"
- Debuted at *Grand Ole Opry* in 1938; became a regular with his backup band, the *Smoky Mountain Boys*; by 1940 he was the star of the show.
- Recorded "House of the Rising Sun" in 1938 – the song's 1st known commercial recording
- Appeared in 8 movies in the 1940s
- Formed Acuff-Rose Publishing Co. in 1940; owns all songs of Hank Williams
- 1st living musician elected to The Country Music Hall of Fame (1962)
- Lost campaign bids for office of Governor of Tennessee in 1944 and 1948
- Initiated in Freemasonry in 1943; made a 33rd Degree Mason in 1985.

What a beautiful thought I am thinking,
Concerning the great speckled bird.

"To me, the speckled bird means the church – not A church, but ALL churches -- with the other birds gathering round to peck and find fault"

-- Roy Acuff ³

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Speckled_Bird_%28song%29

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roy_Acuff

³ <http://fountaincitytnhistory.info/People1-Acuff.htm>

Remember her name is recorded,
On the pages of God's Holy Word.

Here's the apparent Scriptural reference -- *"Has not my inheritance become to me like a speckled bird of prey that other birds of prey surround and attack? Go and gather all the wild beasts; bring them to devour"* -- Jeremiah 12:9

So what is this "speckled bird"?

Does the Bible indicate a name for it?

All the other birds flocking 'round her
and she is despised by the squad.
But the great speckled bird in the Bible
is the one with the great Church of God.

Who or what are these other birds? From *The New John Gill Exposition of the Entire Bible* ⁴ --

"The birds round about are against her; or, "are not the birds round about against her?" the birds of prey? they are; meaning the neighboring nations, that under Nebuchad-nezzar came up against Jerusalem to take and destroy it.

Come ye, assemble all ye beasts of the field, come to devour; this is an invitation to the enemies of the people of the Jews, comparable for their fierceness and savageness to the beasts of the field, to come and destroy them; and shows that their destruction was by divine permission. and according to the will of God."

All other churches are against her,
They envy her glory and fame.
They hate her because she is chosen
And has not denied Jesus' name.

Desiring to lower her standard,
They watch every move that she makes
They long to find fault with her teachings,
But really they find no mistake.

What other churches? Does the Bible mention others?

- **The Great Apostasy** is a term used by some religious groups to allege a general fallen state of traditional Christianity ⁵ Thus, the term "Apostate Church"
- *"The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods..."* -- 1 Timothy 4:1-3
- Other entities call themselves "churches", e.g., -- Church of Satan, Church of Wicca, etc.

She is spreading her wings for the journey,
She's going to leave by and by.
When the trumpet shall sound in the morning,
She'll rise and go up in the sky.

In the presence of all her despisers,
With a song never uttered before,
She will rise and be gone in a moment
'Til the great tribulation is o'er.

What does the Bible call the true church?

Examples include – **Bride** (Rev. 21:9), **Body** (Eph. 1:22-23), **Flock** (1 Pet. 5:2), **Fold** (John 10:16)

I am glad I have learned of her meekness.
I am glad that my name is on her book,
For I want to be one never fearing
The face of my Savior to look.

And when He cometh descending from Heaven,
On a cloud like He writes in His Word
I'll be joyfully carried to meet Him
On the wings of that great speckled bird.

"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words."
– 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

Final thoughts:

Every true Christian can eagerly look forward to the day that Jesus Christ will return to gather those who have put their faith in Him for salvation. I'm not sure we'll be carried into His presence on the wings of a "great speckled bird", but we can still sense the excitement and hope of the author as he considers being "caught up" to the clouds to meet Jesus! Are you ready for this event? Is your name recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life? Simply call on the name of Jesus and ask Him to take away your sins, believe in Him, trust in His Word, and live for Him!

⁴ <http://www.searchgodsword.org/com/geb/view.cgi?book=jer&chapter=012&verse=009>

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Apostasy