

**THE NEW BOX, THE OLD BOOK,  
AND ONE MORE BEREAN**  
*Bird the Fourth*

In the foothills of the Blue Ridge  
Our peculiar Brother Bird  
Had grown weary from his effort  
Just to get his message heard.

For he'd wrote about the wresters,  
And the creedalists for hire,  
And had made a list on *perish*,  
And designed a chart on *fire*.

And had proven that our Master  
Did not say the more on hell,  
And that "holy wrath" was made up  
And unscriptural as well.

And had labored o'er the rich man  
The real meaning to discern,  
And had studied smoke and ashes  
Just to see what he could learn.

And had lengthy conversations  
With the gentle and the gruff,  
And had tried to answer questions  
From the easy to the tough.

And was quick to quarrel and query  
With the few who pitched a fit,  
And debated Benton Cherry  
Until Bent just up and quit.

And though Sister Smoke conceded,  
And became an ally true,  
And though Ernest was a champion  
Of the anti-endless view,

Still it seemed that few had int'rest  
In the subject anymore,  
And to even read a poem  
Was for some an irksome chore.

Quite a few, like Willie Waver,  
Said they just could not be sure,  
And in apathy and ignorance  
Were lethargic'ly secure.

Thus our Brother greatly wondered  
Of this lack of thoughtful search,  
And he couldn't help but long for  
More Bereans in the church.

(The Bereans were "more noble,"  
In the book of Acts, you know,  
For they searched the Scriptures daily  
Just to see if things were so.)

So he up and went to visit  
Okie Dokey in his home,  
And though Okie was quite cordial,  
Still he left the TV on.

Okie was a friendly brother -  
Never meant or did no harm;  
Had a way with dogs and children  
On his modest little farm.

First they talked about the weather,  
Of the recent ice and snow;  
Then they couldn't help but comment  
On the funny TV show.

Then our Brother said to Okie,  
"What I've come to talk about  
Is why many Christians never  
Ever search a subject out."

And then Okie said, "It's shameful  
How when Pastor reads the Book,  
That so few who brought their Bibles  
Even turn to take a look.

"But not me," said Okie Dokey,  
Ev'ry Sunday I expect,  
I have always read the verses  
Of the pastor's sermon text."

Then the flicker from the center  
Captivated once again,  
And the two friends watched the TV  
'Til the news came to an end.

And then Brother Bird continued,  
And he would have said much more  
Had not Okie changed the channel  
To check out the latest score.

And just then this one commercial  
Took the brethren by surprise  
For a couple awkward seconds  
'Til they turned away their eyes.

Thus for just about an hour  
Brother Bird and Okie met,  
With their visit dominated  
By that crazy TV set.

And our brother was discouraged  
As the snow turned into sleet,  
When a sudden thought inspired him  
To take victory from defeat.

So when Okie went to find some  
Cherry cough drops for his cough,  
Just like *that* the lights and TV  
And electric heat went off.

"Must be ice," said Okie Dokie,  
"Downin' limbs upon the lines -  
So let's get a fire a-blazin' -  
And'll be just like old times."

Well, that fire sure did some kindlin'  
In the mind of Brother Bird,  
And his mem'ry went a-driftin'  
As his heart was greatly stirred.

And he reminisced of childhood,  
Of a box inside the den -  
How it captured the attention  
Of the people way back when.

Thus inspired by his nostalgia  
From the point the fire was lit,  
And with joy of grand discovery,  
Brother Bird exclaimed, "That's it!"

"Yes, a *box* could be the secret  
Of a captivated mind,  
And a *box* could be the answer  
I was hoping I could find."

And the fire in that old wood stove  
Glowed a mellow yellow red  
That reflected on the dark screen  
Of the TV set now dead.

And he thought of how the TV  
Interfered that very night,  
And divided their attention  
In its hypnotizing light.

And he looked right at that TV -  
Like a looking glass it seemed -  
And as though he saw a picture,  
He then spoke as if he dreamed:

"All the family sat around it  
Once the sun had settled down,  
And it warmed them while they watched it  
As they gathered all around.

“With a blue glow in its belly  
It would shine its light about,  
Which would flicker even brighter  
When the lamps were all put out.

“Oh, the memories made around it -  
How it filled the room with light,  
And they could not live without it  
On a boring winter's night.

“Yes, that box gave such a pleasure  
With its flicker and its glow,  
And that box was such a treasure  
In the days of long ago.

“Oh, the stories in its presence,  
And the laughter in its view,  
And the many an adventure,  
And a tear a time or two.

“Dad would be the first to start it  
Not to miss his favorite show,  
And he'd be the last to watch it  
Just to keep it all a-glow.

“And the mother loved it dearly,  
And it kept the children in,  
And the family all together  
As a true and trusted friend.

“And was on most ev'ry morning -  
What a way to start the day -  
There to fill you with its vision,  
And to warm you on your way.

“And the news was heard each evening  
And the scores of ev'ry game,  
And sometimes the kinfolk joined 'em,  
And sometimes the neighbors came.

“And sometimes they'd pop some popcorn,  
And sometimes they'd pop some more,  
And just sit and look at pictures  
By that box upon the floor.

“And a way up on the rooftop  
Was a thing to let you know  
That by looking in the window  
You could see its glory glow.

“But that box has been forsaken -  
Oh, I wonder where it's gone;  
There's a new box in the house now,  
There's a new one in the home.”

And then Okie said, “Now brother,  
I had thought I got your gist,  
But now speakin' of a new box  
Makes me wonder what I missed.”

In the foothills of the Blue Ridge  
On that white and wintry day  
Brother Bird knelt by the firelight,  
And to Okie he did say:

“Yes, that old box is discarded  
As a relic from the past,  
And you've asked me of the new box,  
So, I'll tell you, since you asked.

“All the family sits around it  
From the dawn 'til set of sun,  
But it chills them while they watch it,  
And it numbs them every one.

“With a blue glow in its belly  
It still shines a light about,  
With a flicker most bewitchin'  
When the lights are all turned out.

“But the memories made around it  
Are the kind that fill the sight  
With a thousand scenes of evil  
In the middle of the night.

“Now this box will render pleasure  
With its flicker and its glow,  
But this box is not the treasure  
Of that box of long ago.

“Many stories in its presence,  
Lots of laughter in its view,  
While it's undermining values  
Of the good and of the true.

“And in many an adventure,  
Many kill and many die,  
And while watchin' folks pretendin'  
Men and women sit and cry.

“And they lose their sense in sensing  
What is real and what is right,  
And get used to all the darkness  
In the absence of the light.

“Dad should be the first to stop it,  
And be wise enough to know  
That it's dang-er-ous to watch it  
When it really ought to go.

“And the mother should see clearly  
What its doing in the end -  
That it's harming all her children  
And is *not* the family's friend!

“When it's on most ev'ry morning  
At the start of ev'ry day,  
It will fill you with a vision  
That won't help you on your way.

“And to hear *its* news each evening,  
And the scores of ev'ry game  
Will just cripple any Christian  
'Til his walk with God is lame.

“And that dish upon the rooftop  
Might link up the satellite,  
But the blue glow in the new box  
Will black out your gospel sight.

“And the pictures you are filing  
In the cabinet of your mind  
Will just cater to the carnal  
And will make the spirit blind.

“But that old box was a dandy -  
Was a wonderful delight -  
For that old box was a *woodstove*  
With its fire a-burning bright.

“Was a blessin' to the family -  
Brought 'em all around the heat,  
As they'd read or sew or whittle  
With the fellowshipin' sweet.

“But this new one's a disaster,  
And companionship it drains,  
And it teaches what it shouldn't  
While it crudely entertains.

“And it keeps us from our Bible,  
Squanders time and pilfers home,  
For this new box is a *TV*,  
And it's almost always on.

“We could truly live without it -  
Truly *live* is what I say,  
For it's not a life we're livin'  
Watchin' *that* thing ev'ry day!

“We could get to know each other,  
Have more time to sit and talk;  
Be a blessing to a brother,  
Read a book or take a walk.

“In the room we call the 'living'  
We could have some heat and light  
If we'd bring back that old woodstove  
With its fire a-burning bright.

“Swap that new box and its pleasure,  
With its flicker and its glow,  
For that old box and the treasure  
Of a *life* of long ago.”

And so Brother Bird completed  
His oration on the box  
As a somber Okie Dokey  
Fiddled with his thermal socks.

In the foothills of the Blue Ridge  
Our peculiar Brother Bird  
Is sure that entertainment  
Hinders searching of the Word.

“Entertainment is the culprit,  
And amusement is the cause  
Why so many Christians seldom  
Take a meditative pause.

“Yes, it's true that most are fearful  
Of the label 'heresy,'  
But it seems that entertainment  
Is the root of apathy.

“Internet and big-screen movies,  
Videos and DVD's,  
Radio and sporting contests,  
And of course the Dish TV.

“Why, if evolution's truthful,”  
Brother Bird said, and I quote:  
“We would all be one big eyeball,  
With one finger for remote.”

Okie Dokey curled one finger,  
As his eyes expanded wide,  
Glancing at his handy remote  
And disheveled TV Guide.

Then he eyed his idle Bible,  
Where some sneaky little runt  
Had wrote “Read Me” with his finger  
On the dusty Bible front.

And he wondered who had done it,  
For it cut him to the quick,  
But that two-word admonition  
Was a sermon that would stick.

Then he stirred the amber embers,  
And put on another log,  
While our brother was still musing  
As he patted Okie's dog:

“The word *muse*, it means *to think*, see -  
*A* means *no*, and as a link,  
You can see what it's suggestin -  
Yes, *amuse* just means *no think!*”

“Thus amused by entertainment,  
And entranced with silly show,  
We *no think* about the sober,  
But embrace the status quo.

“And the precious Holy Scriptures  
Should receive its due respect,  
But the dust upon our Bibles  
Testifies to our neglect.

“Have we less days in our years now?  
Or less hours in our days?  
Do we labor even longer  
In our fast, indulgent ways?

“No, there's time for Bible study,  
And there's time to read the Word  
If above our entertainment  
It was something we preferred.

“If we spent just half an hour,  
Just the time of one short show,  
We could read all of Colossians,  
And could read it good and slow.

And Philemon we could handle  
In the time that it would take  
To see sev'ral advertisements  
In a short commercial break.

“Just ten minutes ev'ry morning  
In the Scripture cheers and calms -  
In a month we thus could finish  
All one hundred-fifty Psalms.

“And the time to watch a movie  
Of a moderate duration,  
Could be used to read and study  
Half the book of Revelation.

“In a year, if we are willing,  
This is what we each could do -  
In but fifteen minutes daily  
We could read the Bible through.

“Keep a Bible in our bedroom  
And a Testament close by;  
And another in our pocket  
So it oft will catch our eye.”

And then looking out the window  
At a water drop so clear,  
Dripping from the frosty rooftop,  
Musing on the Word so dear:

“It is water, pure clear water,  
And it washes from within;  
And it cleanses, yes, it cleanses  
All the heart and mind of sin.

“It's a hammer, such a hammer,  
And it comes down with a quake,  
And however hard the rock is,  
Into pieces it will break.

“It's a sword, and even sharper  
Than the finest, sharpest sword,  
And it pierces soul and spirit  
By the spirit of the Lord.

“It's my Bible, Holy Bible,  
Perfect law of liberty;  
It's the book above all others,  
And it is the Book for me!

It's a lamp that burns so brightly  
For the pathway of my feet,  
And it's sweeter than the honey,  
And the honeycomb so sweet.

“It's the sincere milk of newborns,  
It is meat for those with age;  
It is bread for all believers,  
Full of life on ev'ry page.

“It's a mirror, God's clear mirror  
That reflects the image true,  
Guides the pilgrim on his journey -  
Tells the puzzled what to do.

“It's my Bible, perfect Bible,  
Just as pure as it can be-  
Filled with timely truths eternal,  
And it is the Book for me!

“It is called the Holy Scriptures,  
It is called the Word of God,  
And its words paint such a picture  
Of the paths the saints have trod.

“It is filled with laws and lessons  
And with poetry and psalms,  
And it's proved itself a blessing,  
With its words of healing balm.

“And its stories of adventure,  
And of triumph of the right,  
And of romance of redemption  
Bring the love of God to light.

“It's my Bible, wondrous Bible,  
It's the truth that makes me free -  
It's the library of the ages,  
And it is the Book for me!

“Oh, its author is the Father,  
And its subject is the Son,  
And 'twas written thru the Spirit,  
And the Three agree in One.

“Brings salvation to the sinner  
As it quickens from the dead;  
Doesn't need to be rewritten -  
Only needs to be reread.

“So I'll read it, yes, I'll read it -  
Oh, such pleasure there I'll find!  
And I'll hide it, memorize it -  
What a treasure that is mine!

“It's my Bible, precious Bible,  
Helps me live, dear Lord, for Thee,  
And I love it, yes, I love it,  
Oh, it is the Book for me!”

And then Okie clutched his Bible,  
As he made a gritty face -  
“I am *really* gonna read it -  
May the good Lord give me grace!”

Then the two friends read together,  
And did muse and meditate,  
And got out a Strong's Concordance,  
And the fellowship was great.

And they studied 'bout the judgment,  
And of *hell*, and *death*, and *life*,  
And of *perish*, and *destruction*,  
And *eternal life in Christ*.

And they searched the text and context  
All around and in-between,  
And of course they did some musing  
On John three, and verse sixteen.

By the firelight of the wood stove  
They delighted in the Word,  
And ol' Okie the Berean  
Sure delighted Brother Bird.

Then they heard somebody knockin'  
On the icy window pane-  
Ernest Ladd had come a-callin'  
Through the snow and freezin' rain.

And he came in with a “howdy,”  
And then asked the two of them  
Why the neighbors all had power,  
Yet the Dokey house was dim.

And then Okie said, “Oh, really?  
Well, I'd say that's strange indeed,  
But it's truly been a blessin',  
And has helped me see my need.”

Then he told him of the boxes,  
And then said to Brother Bird,  
“Let's show Ernest what we're findin'  
In our searchin' of the Word.”

So the three continued reading  
In the Scriptures for a while,  
And the taste of buttered popcorn  
Brought a satisfying smile.

And the firelight from their wood stove  
Was reflecting in their eyes,  
When the time came for departing,  
And for saying their “goodbyes.”

So then Okie Dokey thanked 'em  
And he said, “I feel most blessed,”  
Which made Brother Bird uneasy,  
And he more or less confessed.

For he reached down in his pocket,  
And took out a fuse or two,  
And revealed a dusty finger  
As he bid his friends adieu.

And as Okie took the fuses,  
He responded with a grin,  
And he still could see the “Read Me”  
On his Bible in the den.

In the foothills of the Blue Ridge  
Our conniving Brother Bird  
Is still huntin' more Bereans  
Who will read and search the Word,

And find joy in Bible study  
And the wonders it unlocks,  
And choose truth above their pleasure  
And the Book above the box.