

# Peculiar Brother Bird

1 In the foothills of the Blue Ridge,  
A peculiar Brother Bird  
Started teaching a new doctrine  
That no one had ever heard.

2 For he held that John the Baptist,  
Who had warned of coming wrath,  
Said the Lord His wheat would gather,  
But would “burn up” all the chaff.

3 And he emphasized the “burn up”:  
“Yes sir, *burn up* I have read!”  
And he said it was just simply  
What the Bible clearly said.

4 Then he turned in his old Bible  
To the book of Malachi,  
And he read, “The Day is comin’ -  
Yes, a comin’ by and by.”

5 “And The Day that is a-comin’  
Like an *oven* it’ll burn,  
And’ll ‘burn up’ all the wicked-  
Thus from Malachi we learn.”

6 And he emphasized the “burn up”:  
“Yes sir, *burn up* I have read!”  
And he said it was just simply  
What the Bible clearly said.

7 Then he turned to Jude and Peter,  
Where “eternal fire” had burned  
In ol’ Sodom and Gomorrah -  
Yet to “ashes” they were turned.

8 And he said that Jude and Peter  
An “example” did proclaim  
Of how *ashes* was the endin’  
Of that dread eternal flame.

9 And he emphasized the “ashes”:  
“Yes sir, *ashes* I have read!”  
And he said it was just simply  
What the Bible clearly said.

10 And some folks got sorta bothered  
At the words of Brother Bird,  
And a “heretic” they called ‘im,  
And they said he was absurd.

11 And they championed endless torment  
In a hell the lost to scare,  
And they wondered if without it  
Why would anybody care?

12 Then he took ‘em to a passage,  
One of which they were so fond-  
In the sixteenth verse, third chapter  
Of the gospel of St. John.

13 “For it says, and says so clearly  
*Life*, and *everlasting* too,  
Or it’s *perish*-don’t you see it -  
That word *perish* is a clue!”

14 And he emphasized the “perish”:  
“Yes sir, *perish* I have read!”  
And he said it was just simply  
What the Bible clearly said.

15 “And that final Day of Judgment,  
And that lake of fire,” he saith  
Is *destruction* everlasting,  
And is called “the Second *Death*.”

16 “For the punishment eternal  
Is an everlasting thing;  
But it’s punish-*ment*, please notice-  
And it’s not a punish-*ing*.”

17 “And the punishment’s ‘destruction’-  
It’s an everlasting *death*-  
It’s destruc-*tion*, not destroy-*ing* -  
That’s exactly what is saith.”

18 And he emphasized “destruction”:  
“Yes *destruction* I have read,”  
And he said it was just simply  
What the Bible clearly said.

19 Then they shook their dusty Bibles  
As they murmured and they cried,  
“He’s a-tamperin’ with the Scripture,  
And the *truth* he has denied!”

20 And they said that hell was endless  
As recorded in the Word,  
And they told folks not to listen  
To that “lib-ral” Brother Bird.

21 Then he said, “We’ve all been brought up  
To believe the endless way,  
And it’s all we’ve ever thought of  
Right up to the present day.”

22 And he told ‘em he was certain  
That the Bible was inspired,  
And preserved both pure and perfect,  
And was all that he desired.

23 “But we thought we knew the meanin’  
Long before we ever read  
Just to find out and be certain  
What it really, truly said.”

24 “And is *says* that sin has wages,  
And the wages, yes, is *death*,  
But the *gift* is *life eternal* -  
That’s exactly what is saith.”

25 And he emphasized the “wages”:  
“Yes sir, wages I have read!”  
And he said it was just simply  
What the Bible clearly said.

26 And this caused some folks to wonder,  
And this made some folks to squirm,  
And some argued ‘bout the rich man,  
And the never-dying worm.

27 Then he showed ‘em that the sayin’  
Of the worms and fire so hot  
Was an excerpt from Isaiah,  
Yes, Isaiah, was it not?

28 And he showed them in the passage  
Of “the *carcasses* of men” -  
The *consuming* of the wicked -  
And they looked at it again.

29 “And our blessed Lord and Master  
Would not quote a *temporal* end  
Out of context as *eternal*  
And confuse the minds of men.”

30 “For it speaks there of dead bodies,  
Of the wicked’s certain doom,  
And how fire and worms undyin’  
Will their carcasses *consume*.”

31 And he answered all their questions  
Of the rich man who did die,  
And he showed ‘em he was *buried*  
E’er he made his painful cry.

32 And he showed ‘em how a *spirit*  
Does not have a tongue or eyes,  
Or a bosom or a finger,  
Then he caught ‘em by surprise:

33 "For it was a *buried body*,  
Not a disembodied soul -  
And for Pharisees who scorned Him  
'Twas a piercing *par-a-ble*."

34 Well, sir, *that* word fanned their anger  
From a flicker to a flame:  
"It's no *par-a-ble*-No, never!  
For He used a *proper* name."

35 Then he showed 'em how "*a certain*"  
Was the way the Lord began  
Oft to tell a pointed story:  
"And there was "*a certain* man."

36 "And they could not serve their mammon  
And be servants of the Lord,  
Or call Abraham their father  
If ol' Moses they ignored."

37 "And the *name* He said was *Laz'rus*,  
And he meant just what He said  
For they all knew it was *Laz'rus*  
Who had risen from the dead."

38 "For 'a *certain* man named *Laz'rus*'  
From a poorer family,  
Had been sick and on his deathbed  
In the town of Bethany."

39 "And though *Laz'rus* had arisen,  
And had come back from the dead,  
Those same fellers weren't a-listenin'  
Just as Abraham had said."

40 "And the story of the rich man  
Never says that hell's for aye  
For it's not the final Judgment  
And it's not the final Day."

41 And he showed 'em how that *Hades*  
Is the Greek word for *Sheol*,  
And can mean a *grave* or *gravedom*,  
And denote a *hole* or *whole*.

42 And that "*Sheol* in the Scripture  
Is the *Gravedom* of the *Dead*,  
Of the righteous *and* the wicked" -  
And he proved just what he said:

43 "In that precious psalm of David,  
Of God's presence he did tell,  
How the Lord would still be with him,  
Though he made his bed in *hell*."

44 "And, 'what man is he that liveth,  
and shall *not* see death' said he;  
For the *Sheol* of a grave hole  
Is our common destiny (89:48)

45 "In the belly of the great fish  
In the belly of a whale-  
Is where Jonah cried in anguish  
From the belly of a...*hell*."

46 "And it's perfect in the King James,  
Just the way they worded it-  
It is *hell* if it's the *gravedom*;  
Otherwise it's *grave* or *pit*."

47 "And of all the *Sheol's* mentioned,  
There's not one in sixty-five  
That e'er speaks of endless torment,  
Or of souls that are alive."

48 "Nor do any of the prophets  
Though of dearth and death do tell,  
Ever mention any torments  
In a never-ending *hell*."

49 "In the Acts of the Apostles-  
There in sermons quite a few  
You will find the gospel message  
Doesn't give a single clue."

50 "In the words and in the writings  
Of the dear apostle Paul,  
Though he speaks of wrath and judgment  
Never mentions *hell* at all."

51 "Don't it seem a bit abnormal,  
That in all the Word of God,  
That the sum of these is *zero*?  
Don't that seem a little odd?"

52 "For if *hell* is really endless,  
And eternal torment's true,  
It should be a *couple hundred*,  
Or at least a *one* or *two*."

53 "And the *words* that God has chosen  
And the *pictures* He has drawn,  
Were not used to be confusin'  
But to make it clearly known."

54 "For they're *clear* words like *destruction*  
That describe the sinner's doom,  
Such as *end* and *death* and *perish*,  
And *devour* and *consume*."

55 "With a plain word such as *perish*,  
Could somebody tell me why  
We have turned it inside outward  
Til' it means to never die?"

56 "And we know just what a *fire* is,  
And we know what it will do-  
And we understand it clearly,  
And should need no other clue."

57 "When the fire of God has fallen  
From the God of fire in wrath,  
It *destroyed* its prey *completely*,  
And *consumed* all in its path."

58 "And the pictures of the judgment  
Well, I'd say they're *clear enough*-  
For the *chaff* and *tares* and *stubble*  
And the *briars* will *burn up*!"

59 "Now if God had really meant it  
To be endless, I inquire,  
Would he picture only items  
That'll burn up in the fire?"

60 "As the fire *devours* the stubble,  
And the flame *consumes* the chaff,  
So the *tares* cast in the furnace  
Will be *burned* in final wrath."

61 "And if firemen were not able  
To put out a fire, let's say -  
Do you think the thing a-burnin'  
Would burn on and on for aye?"

62 "Thus the quenchless flames of Hades,  
And the fire you can't put out  
Will not keep these things a-burnin' -  
They'll *burn up* without a doubt."

63 And he emphasized the "burn up":  
"Yes sir, *burn up* I have read!"  
And he said it was just simply  
What the Bible clearly said.

64 In the foothills of the Blue Ridge  
This peculiar Brother Bird  
Got some fire and brimstone preachers  
Not a little bit disturbed.

65 And although he'd try to answer  
Just whatever they would ask,  
It was clear they weren't as willing  
To perform a sim'lar task.

66 But they harped on Revelation  
Of the “torment day and night,”  
And for ever cried “Forever!”  
As they made an “endless” fight.

67 And they called the theologians,  
And they checked the hist'ry book,  
And they even searched the Hebrew  
And the Greek to take a look.

68 And they thought they finally had 'im,  
When with glee they did extol  
How “the Scripture clearly teaches  
Immoral'ty of the soul.”

69 And they waited for his answer-  
Ah! They knew they had him *there* -  
When he opened up his Bible,  
And he asked them, “Show me....*where*.”

70 Then they were a good bit puzzled  
E'er they even took a look,  
Yet they said that they were certain  
It was written in the Book.

71 Then they checked in their concordance,  
But they couldn't help but squirm,  
For the best that they could muster  
Was the never-dying worm.

72 Then he asked them to consider  
Chapter six of Timothy,  
How's there's one, and just one “*only*  
Who hath immortality.”

73 And he emphasized the “only”:  
“Yes sir, *only* I have read!”  
And he said it was just simply  
What the Bible clearly said.

74 And he turned to many verses  
With that wiggly little term,  
And he showed 'em from the Bible  
That a worm is...well ... *a worm*.

75 “And our hope's in resurrection -  
'In the twinklin' of an eye' -  
And in *bodies made immortal*  
Not in souls that never die.”

76 And he showed them “life eternal  
Is a *gift* that we *receive*,  
And the gift is in the Giver,  
Just for those who do *believe*.”

77 “And his sheep will 'never perish'  
For they know and follow Him,  
And He *gives* them *life eternal* -  
Yes, He *gives* it unto them.

78 “For the wicked surely perish,  
While the saved know endless joy -  
Thus we fear naught but the God who  
*Soul* and body can *destroy*.”

79 And he emphasized “destroy”:  
“Can *destroy the soul*,” I've read,  
And he said it was just simply  
What the Bible clearly said.

80 Then he scolded torment peddlers  
With this gravest of concern:  
“Are folks *truly* trusting Jesus,  
Or just tryin' not to burn?”

81 “And your view on Revelation (14:10,11)  
Is a little bit bizarre,  
For it places hell in heaven  
Where the Lamb and angels are.”

82 And he showed 'em what the “weepin'  
And the wailin' was about:  
“*When ye see*” the righteous gathered  
And “yourselves” have been “thrust out.”

83 “And thrust out in 'outer *darkness*'  
And 'the *mist of darkness*,' well -  
Are not words of endless torment  
In a blazin', fiery hell.”

84 “You can talk of cruelest torture  
In the hottest flames of black,  
But the mist of darkness surely  
Means they're never comin' back.”

85 “And that wicked city Bab'lon  
In an *hour* will be gone,  
Yet the smoke of their great torment  
Will ascend up on and on.”

86 “And the smoke tells of *consumption* -  
Somethin's burnin' up for sure -  
And bears witness to *destruction*,  
Not more torments to endure.”

87 “And *forever* in my Bible  
Is two words: *for ever*; see  
And it's not always eternal,  
As in Deuteronomy. (15:17)”

88 “It's a phrase of preposition,  
As in *for* a time so long.  
And then *ever* is indefinite,  
As in *for*...and on and on.”

89 “And the Bible clearly tells us  
What the wicked have in store -  
How their thoughts will even perish,  
And that they will be 'no more.’”

90 And he emphasized the “no more”:  
“Yes sir, *no more* I have read!”  
And he said it was just simply  
What the Bible clearly said.

91 And some folks said he was lyin'  
And a twistin' up the Word,  
But some folks began to listen  
To peculiar Brother Bird.

92 And the ones who were not Christians  
Really hoped that it was so,  
'Cause they didn't want to risk it,  
And they didn't want to go.

93 But the ones who were real Christians,  
Also hoped it could be true,  
For they loved their Lord no matter,  
And they had compassion, too.

94 And they could not say for certain  
Whether Brother Bird was wrong,  
For he raised some valid questions,  
And his faith in God was strong.

95 And they would not be like Jonah,  
And be mad it wasn't so,  
But they sorta thought like Spurgeon,  
And were hopin' none would go.

96 And at least they weren't offended  
At peculiar Brother Bird,  
But they thought the subject worthy  
Of more study in the Word.

97 But the preachers and the teachers  
With a thing or two to sell,  
And the great big kingdom builders  
All defended their own hell.

98 And they said it was the *gospel!*  
And were sure that they were right,  
But they didn't even bother  
But a verse or two to cite.

99 And they took no time to study,  
For I reckon they preferred  
Just to cast a doubtful slander  
On the name of Brother Bird.

100 And they shared each other's pulpits,  
And they shook each other's hand,  
And were thankful for the faithful  
Who would firmly take a stand.

101 And with hell they'd sell their tickets  
To a mansion up above,  
But they did not know what manner  
Of a spirit they were of.

102 For they'd burn their wood or garbage  
And they'd feel the heat and say,  
With a calloused air of surety,  
"Folks will have some *hell* to pay!"

103 And they reasoned of its justice  
As if adding up the math-  
How a God of love and mercy  
Was a *holy* God of *wrath*.

104 (As if love could not be holy,  
Or that holy could not love-  
Was He Hyde or was He Jeckyl?  
How much pain would be enough?)

105 In the blood stains of the nail scars  
We His wondrous love may learn,  
But for those who fail to learn it,  
Well, *forever* they will burn???)

106 Though they'd give God all the credit  
They'd absolve Him of the guilt,  
And they'd blame it on the Devil  
For why Hell was ever built.

107 And some "Hard Shells" said God chose it  
And had picked some folks to go,  
While some "Free Wills" said He'd close it  
If we'd just say yes or no.

108 But there's been some noble Christians  
Through the heretics of time  
Who have questioned "endless" reason  
And have doubted "endless" rhyme.

109 And though some were sentimental,  
And a few perhaps absurd,  
There have been some valiant rebels  
Who stood firmly on the Word!

110 But the Endless Hell Defenders  
Were ascendant in the land-  
For ol' Plato in the Credo  
Always had the upper hand.

111 And with Augustine and Calvin  
There to tell 'em what to say  
They could just be good ol' parrots  
And repeat it all for 'aye.

112 But the truth is not the treasure  
Of the great majority,  
And the truth you cannot measure  
By its popularity.

113 When a monk named Martin Luther  
Nailed his theses to the door,  
They were written in the Latin,  
And were easy to ignore.

114 In a time we call "Dark Ages"  
When the clerics hid the Word,  
The prevailin' way of thinkin'  
Thought that Luther was absurd.

115 So now who's to say it's doubtless  
That the parrots will prevail  
And the creeds still go unchallenged  
On the endlessness of Hell?

116 For perhaps a thoughtful poem  
Could inspire some hearts to search,  
And begin a transformation  
Of this doctrine in the church.

117 In the foothills of the Blue Ridge  
Someone's hopin' to be heard  
In this story of the teachin'  
Of peculiar Brother Bird.

118 And to emphasize the "burn up":  
"Yes sir, *burn up* I have read!"  
And to say it is just simply  
What the Bible clearly said.