



"Cross Connection"

Radio Ministry of Hope Wesleyan Church and Wells of Salvation Ministries
Ultimate Oldies Radio – FM 97.7 and 101.1, Huber Heights, Ohio



Series: Christian Messages In Secular Music

6/17/09

Program 86 "Slow Train" © 1979 Bob Dylan

The Song ¹

- Title track from Bob Dylan's 19th studio album, **Slow Train Coming** released in '79
 - Dylan's 1st work after becoming a born-again Christian
 - All songs express strong personal faith, or importance of Christian teachings
- Evangelical nature of the project repelled many of Dylan's existing fans
 - But drew many Christians into Dylan's fan base
- Album listed #16 in book *CCM Presents: The 100 Greatest Albums in Christian Music*
- Album was generally well-reviewed in secular press
 - Grammy-winning single "Gotta Serve Somebody" became his first hit in 3 years
 - Peaked #2 on charts in UK; went platinum in US, where it reached #3

*"The words are rich with the ambiguity of great art."*²

The Artist – Bob Dylan

- For detailed background information, see Cross Connection notes for programs #17 ("I Shall Be Released", #32 ("I Believe In You"), #60 & 61 ("With God On Our Side")

*"THE CHRISTIAN community has not always been kind to high-profile musicians who have espoused Christian beliefs. A prime example is Bob Dylan: although he did some superb Christian albums and a phenomenal gospel tour, and continues to perform faith-affirming songs in concert, I've encountered church musicians who have told me Dylan has "left the Lord." Because of this assumption, they refuse to play his songs, thus depriving congregations of some of the best Christian lyrics ever written"*³

Sometimes I feel so low-down and disgusted
Can't help but wonder what's happenin' to my companions,
Are they **lost** or are they **found**,

have they counted the cost it'll take to bring down
All their earthly principles they're gonna have to abandon?
There's a slow, slow train comin' up around the bend.

*"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but **whoever loses his life for me will find it.**'"* – Mat. 16:24-25

I had a woman down in Alabama,
She was a backwoods girl, but she sure was realistic,
She said, "Boy, without a doubt,
have to quit your mess and straighten out,
You could die down here, be just another accident statistic."
There's a slow, slow train comin' up around the bend.

"Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever" – Dan. 12:3

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slow_Train_Coming

² http://www.rollingstone.com/artists/bobdylan/albums/album/241841/review/6067720/slow_train_coming

³ <http://www.canadianchristianity.com/cgi-bin/bc.cgi?bc/bccn/1297/dylan>

All that foreign oil controlling American soil,
 Look around you, it's just bound to make you embarrassed.
 Sheiks walkin' around like kings,
 wearing fancy jewels and nose rings,
 Deciding America's future from Amsterdam and to Paris
 And there's a slow, slow train comin' up around the bend.

- This lyric was penned in 1979!
- Shows Dylan's patriotic side
- "...for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him" – 2 Pet. 2:19, NIV
 - Might this apply to countries too?

Man's ego is inflated, his laws are outdated,
 they don't apply no more,
 You can't rely no more to be standin' around waitin'
 In the home of the brave, Jefferson turnin' over in his grave,
 Fools glorifying themselves, trying to manipulate Satan
 And there's a slow, slow train comin' up around the bend.

- What's the meaning of this lyric?
 - Read 3 John 3:9-10, and compare to the antics of Diotrephes
- Is the "slow train" the same thing in each of these stanzas?

Big-time negotiators, false healers and woman haters,
 Masters of the bluff and masters of the proposition
 But the enemy I see wears a cloak of decency,
 All non-believers and men stealers
 talkin' in the name of religion
 And there's a slow, slow train comin' up around the bend.

- What discernment for a new Christian!
- "...such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light." – 2 Cor. 11:13-14, NIV

People starving and thirsting, grain elevators are bursting
 Oh, you know it costs more to store the food
 than it do to give it.
 They say lose your inhibitions, follow your own ambitions,
 They talk about a life of brotherly love,
 show me someone who knows how to live it.
 There's a slow, slow train comin' up around the bend.

- "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." – James 1:22, NIV

*I'd rather see a sermon
 than to hear one anyday
 I'd rather one would walk with me
 than merely show the way
 Actions speak much louder
 than all the words can say
 That's why I'd rather see a sermon
 than hear one anyday⁴*

Well, my baby went to Illinois
 with some bad-talkin' boy she could destroy
 A real suicide case, but there was nothin'
 I could do to stop it,
 I don't care about economy, I don't care about astronomy
 But it sure do bother me
 to see my loved ones turning into puppets,
 There's a slow, slow train comin' up around the bend.

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" – Rom. 12:2

Final Thoughts:

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him... And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides for ever" -- 1 John 2:15, 17

Bob Dylan's profession of faith in Jesus Christ has been sorely tested in the court of public opinion over the years. If you enjoy acceptance from those around you, and enjoy a sense of belonging with others, you too will be confronted with a test of your commitment to Christ. Jesus said, *"He who is not with me is against me..."* (Luke 11:23a, NIV). Sitting on the fence is not an option. Where do you stand?

⁴ From "I'd Rather See A Sermon", by Bruce Carroll