**Born Again Experiences**

**Suddenly, the room lit up with a great white light. I was caught up into an ecstasy which there are no words to describe...and then it burst upon me that I was a free man. *(Bill Wilson, A. A.’s founder)***

**The congregation began to sing a hymn and Nona Brooks’ voice rose with the others. “Nearer my God to Thee, nearer to Thee,” sang Nona fervently. Yes! Yes! Nearer to God! A great exaltation possessed her.  “E’en though it be a cross--” Nona’s voice stopped. A cross! Something more! Something yet more than all that she had already endured!  All along she had known that it must be that way. All along she had known that there was no way out. She had taken communion, and even communion was without avail. Even yet there was to be a cross! “No!” she cried within herself. “No!  I can’t!  I’ve endured so much!  I can’t endure anything more!” Tears filled her eyes and ran down her cheeks.  She had borne so much. She had suffered so deeply. But God was not content even with that. He wanted to make her suffer yet more!  They were all ill, the whole family, Sister, Mother, Lavinia, Charlie, Brother Charles, Nona herself. They had lost all their money, everything.  Everything was gone, and now God wanted even more! “E’en though it be a cross,” sang the congregation, “that raiseth me” – “It was though all of her previous hours of unhappiness were as nothing compared to this moment. This concerned her whole soul. All of the intense earnestness, all of the pent-up emotion of the Nona who had loved life so avidly and suffered so greatly, all of that Nona surged up and was alive again, and fighting desperately for existence. And against this desperate intense Nona came the still small voice of another Nona, the Nona of the garden in the old Bream place, who, as a child, had cried out, “I want to be close to Thee. I want to be good. I want to be good!” All of the time that the tears ran down Nona’s face and the struggle went on within her the congregation was singing the hymn, verse after verse. Suddenly, somewhere toward the end of the hymn, peace came. The struggle was over.  *(Hazel Deane, in Powerful Is The Light, p. 46)***

**During a speaking engagement in Battle Creek, Michigan, Mr. J.C. Penney broke out with a serious rash, later identified as shingles.  Unable to sleep and in great physical pain, the retailer consulted with an old friend, Elmer Eggleston, a physician. Dr. Eggleston insisted upon hospitalizing him in the world famous Kellogg Sanitarium in Battle Creek. There, day and night, nurses were assigned to constantly watch over Mr. Penney. His doctor ordered that he be kept heavily sedated, hoping that rest and sleep would bring some relief. However, nothing helped.  “I got weaker day by day,” he said. “I was broken nervously and physically, filled with despair, unable to see even a ray of hope. I had nothing to live for.  I felt I hadn’t a friend left in the world, that even my family had turned against me.” He was deeply depressed and very weak, both emotionally and physically.  He slept little and awoke convinced that it was the last night of his life. He wrote farewell letters to his wife and sun, stating he did not expect to live to see the dawning of a new day. After writing the letters, he managed to sleep, but was astonished to find himself still alive the next morning.  “To awake again was a strange kind of surprise.  In some vague way I knew there must be a reason,” he observed. At that point, he left his room and made his way downstairs where he heard singing coming from the hospital chapel.  He recognized the lyrics of an old, familiar hymn that they sang - “God will take care of you.” Curiosity and desperation drew him into the chapel where he sat alone listening to the words of the hymn. What took place in his life during those moments of singing is striking and memorable.  Mr. Penney reported: “Suddenly - something happened.  I can’t explain it.  I can only call it a miracle.  I felt as if I had been instantly lifted out of the darkness of a dungeon into warm, brilliant sunlight.  I felt as if I had been transported from hell to paradise.  I felt the power of God as I had never felt it before. I am seventy-one years old, and the most dramatic and glorious twenty minutes of my life were those I spent in that chapel that morning: “God will take care of you.” Those brief moments completely transformed his life. “A weight lifted from my spirit. I came out of that room a different man, renewed.  I had gone in bowed in paralysis of spirit, utterly adrift.  I came forth with a soaring sense of release, from a bondage of gathering death to a pulse of hopeful living. I had glimpsed God,” he said. *(Victor M. Parachin, in Unity magazine)*
Dennis Quaid regrets all those years he spent doing cocaine, he tells Newsweek. The actor, 57, first tried the drug when he went to Hollywood, in 1974. “It was very casual at first,” he says. “That’s what people were doing when they were at parties. Cocaine was even in the budgets of movies, thinly disguised.” Coming from a lower-middle-class upbringing in Houston, he started using the drug to help him cope with celebrity. By the late 1980s, around the time he was shooting the film The Big Easy, his addiction was full-blown. “I was a mess. I’d wake up, snort a line, and swear I wasn’t going to do it again that day. But then 4 o’clock rolled around, and I’d be right back down the same road like a little squirrel on one of those treadmills.” One night in the 1990s, he says, “I had one of those white-light experiences where I realized I was going to be dead in five years if I didn’t change my ways.” The next day he was in rehab, which thankfully cured him. “Those years recovering actually chiseled me into a person. If I hadn’t gone through that period, I don’t know if I’d still be acting.” *(The Week magazine, April 29, 2011)***

**Captain Eddie Rickenbacker, the famous World War II pilot, crashed into the Pacific after leading a special mission. He and his crew were lost at sea for twenty-one days. He wrote of his experience: “In the beginning many of the men were atheists or agnostics, but at the end of the terrible ordeal each, in his own way, discovered God. Each man found God in the vast empty loneliness of the ocean. Each man found salvation and strength in prayer, and a community of feeling developed which created a liveliness of human fellowship and worship, and a sense of gentle peace.” *(Richard & Mary-Alice Jafolla, in The Quest, p. 31)***

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