

How Manson Made Peace with the Son of Man

by Mikhail Markhasev

I've heard that God does no miracle until all human resources are exhausted. That's certainly true with Charles Manson. Most people believe he is guaranteed a hot seat in Hell, but there are plenty of others, who prayed, hoped, and wrote Charlie about Jesus, seeking to pull this infamous blasphemer out of the pit of his own making...

It's impossible to detail all the conversations about God, life, and death, we shared over our years at Corcoran. Living side-by-side in our concrete aquarium, there's nowhere to hide, and with time I came to know Charlie as a person, not as the nefarious caricature projected through the kaleidoscope of documentaries and interviews.

It's not that Charles hated God: some days he believed he was god, other days he told me that his God-fearing grandma already dedicated seven year-old Charles to Jesus. Over the following seventy years of institutionalized living Charlie figured he had seen all there was to see about Christianity: in the abusive Christian homes for boys where he spent most of his youth, in the huckster preachers whose greed oozed alongside their sermons, in the hypocritical prison converts who spoke of Jesus but denied Him with their lives...

But despite Manson's delusions and doubts, God wasn't done with him. As often happens with old men in or out of prison, there came a day when Charlie was admitted to our prison hospital. For the next three years he was digested in the bowels of this antiseptic wilderness, in this junkyard of broken bodies and abandoned souls. Sandwiched between other dying prisoners, his company was a handful of guards and janitors, as Manson was pushed through a conveyer belt of doctors and nurses, who medicated America's most notorious

prisoner as life ebbed out of him.

As weeks swelled to months and years, strange things began to happen. Gone were the theatrics of years past, the mindless gibberish of a demented guru. Gone was the half-baked radical environmentalism, this rotten foundation of Manson's internet citadel. Only the shriveled spectrum of a dying man remained, trembling on the threshold of death, seeking company and prayer as he prepared to meet his Maker. And there by his death-bed stood Christ the Lord, present in the face of our prison chaplains who visited, prayed with, and listened to Charlie's confessions. Apparently, Manson started refusing his fan mail and began asking the guards to forgive his antics. He asked the chaplain to pray for him (saying he was sorry for what he had done), and asked him to come back again. This is very unlike the "Charles Manson Show" we've seen play out over the years. He seldom missed the chance to be an award-winning actor, but here the performance gave way to a child-like humility and simplicity. In the words of the Psalmist, "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

The restoration of a conscience turned to ashes is the work of God alone, for which none could take credit. And the scandal of Manson's redemption is the fruit of the countless prayers uttered by Christians, who reached out to Manson during the decades of his mad ravings. It is the final seal of his grandma's dedication of Charlie to Jesus almost seventy years earlier. That's how long this wayward sheep spent trying to wiggle out of the Good Shepherd's loving hands.

According to Charlie, his grandma was a Holiness Nazarene zealot, filled with the Holy Ghost. And when Manson died, now it was his God-fearing grandson who claimed his cold body, unknowingly completing the rite of dedication by Charlie's grandma through a memorial service at a local Nazarene church. Wondrous are God's works which He knows from the beginning. "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God" (1Cor. 4:5).