

## Robert Frost's "Directive" Reconsidered

Robert Frost's matchless poem, "Directive" is, I think, one of the greatest invitations ever for anyone wishing to escape life's daily confusion and the stress it brings. His formula is simple: "Back out of all this now, Too much for us,/ Back to a time made simple by the loss of detail."The word **back** here is both a verb and a preposition, or where, word directing us to his secret retreat.

Frost then directs us us to climb the old trail up "Panther Mountain," until we reach a deserted town and a farmhouse close by. The water supply to that abandoned farm came from a brook flowing down from a glacier. The ultimate aim of this quest is to find that brook and a treasure hidden near the playhouse of the children who once played there.

Then comes the amazing revelation: "I have kept hidden in the instep arch/  
Of an old cedar by the water side/ A broken drinking goblet like the grail/ Under a spell so the wrong ones can't find it,/ So can't get saved as St. Mark says they mustn't.// I stole the goblet from the children's playhouse./ Here are your waters and your watering place/ Drink, and be whole again beyond confusion."

When a friend and long-departed classmate of mine, Margo Larson, always the best student among the 1960 English majors at Moorhead State, read me those lines, I too was touched by the power of those simple words, "Weep for what little things could make them glad."

Certainly many would agree that our life today is way too cluttered. To echo Frost, it's "like a pathless wood,/where one eye is weeping from a branch having lashed across it open."

Many are stressed out; They've "had too much of apple picking," and long to be "far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife." They'd likely envy Yeats,' tending his nine bean rows on the Lake Isle of Innisfree.

But it is in heeding Jesus' cryptic words, quoted by Mark, "Except you become like little children, you may not enter the kingdom of Heaven," that we hear Directive's the true message.

It might help to remember that the grail was the cup Jesus drank from with his disciples at that last supper the night before he went to the cross to endure the hate driven, torture inflicting brutality of the whole fallen human race.

One of the most moving "back out" hymns is the beautiful spiritual, "Steal Away." It goes, "Steal away, steal away steal away to Jesus"/ Steal away home/ I ain't got long to be here./ My Lord he calls me/ He calls me by the thunder./The trumpet sounds/ Within my soul;/ I ain't got long to be here."

None of us really have that long to be here; we need "a secret place," like Sigurd Olson's "Listening Point" on his lake in the north woods. There he could drink in the beauty of the sunset, or the stars, or the dawn, and listen to the call of wood thrush, or loon, or wolf, or even the deeper call of the Spirit's "still small voice."

We all need a 'listening point,' or at least a quiet room where we can close the door and "dwell" for a little in "the secret place of the Most High." Psl 91:1 KJV. "In His presence is fullness of joy." Once you've tasted that "new wine," that Holy Ghost wine, you might just crave addiction.

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