



The background of the page is a collage. At the top left, two women with short hair are smiling. Behind them is a blue floor plan with labels: 'BED RM. 10'x10'', 'BATH', 'PDR RM.', 'CUSH', 'GAR', '23', 'CL.', 'STORAGE', 'PATIO', 'SIN', 'CL.', and '24'-0\"/>

UPLOOK

JANUARY 1992

The Lord's Time
Is Bigger Really Better?
Teaching the Children
Tour a Model Home



EDITORIAL

Tour a Model Home

J. B. Nicholson Jr.

I had been asked to attend a conference on the south shore of the breathtaking Lake Geneva which lies between the Alps of Switzerland and France, like a blue ribbon uncertain which range should receive first prize for its surpassing beauty. Around its shore lie the historic cities of Montreux, Vevey, Lausanne, Geneva, and Evian (fabled for its clear spring water) near which the conference was to be held.

When they asked me to speak on the subject of the family, I told them they had the wrong man for the job. True, I had belonged to a family as far back as I could remember. The Lord had given me a partner whose price was far above rubies. We now have been blessed with six children. And in my travels, I have been introduced to families in a wide variety of types and situations. But I was still uncomfortable with my assignment.

There is a group of experts on the subject who are kindred with David and Solomon. Sad-eyed, they have learned what *not* to do by bitter experience. They have much to teach us and we do well to heed their advice. By God's grace alone, at that time I did not belong with these experts.

Another contingent have all the answers simply because they have not yet faced the questions. Long on advice, short on experience, they smile vacuously as they hear the difficulty expressed, and before the whole matter is out (Prov. 18:13), they have concluded with an "obvious" solution. They can give you all the statistics. But it is not a statistic I gather in my arms at bedtime and place love's token on their cheek. Each child, composed by the Creator from an infinite number of combinations, is unique. Is this the Master's way of keeping us from becoming self-sufficient and so casting us back upon Him for the wisdom which is from above?

There are some who have had the joy of seeing their children "walk in the truth." If they were of the world, they might find cause to boast, but life has taught them too much of the grace of God to presume so. If you ask them for their opinion on the matter, they will often smile and get a faraway look as they think of the times it could have been very different. But the Lord had graciously intervened and restored the family, perhaps in answer

to some prayer of long ago and far away.

I finally consented to go, but only on the condition that I would not talk experience, or opinion. We would rely solely on the Blessed Book.

Among the multitude of colorful, true-to-life Bible characters, I set out to find a model home which we could tour together to our profit. Surely I could find one. Let's see . . . Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David — the Old Testament families go by, each marked by some fatal flaw. We're not talking about a squabble here, a difficulty there. Each had serious problems. Is the family under siege today? It has been since the first woman overturned the divine order and the first child rose up to slay his brother!

Why is the family under such a virulent campaign of sabotage? Because it was God's idea! He set the solitary in families (Ps. 68:6). And because it is one of the lines of authority He has established in creation, and wherever there is the expression of God's authority, you can be sure the enemy will continue the fight against it which he began in the throne-room of the universe.

The New Testament was not able to provide me a complete model home either. Young Timothy and his mother and grandmother are delightful vignettes, but where are the menfolk? Who could find a more exemplary couple than Aquila and Priscilla but there are no children mentioned.

I did find my model home, however. Earthly relationships will no longer exist in eternity. But there are eternal familial relationships, those after which the families of earth were patterned.

There are only three basic relations: parent and children, husband and wife, brother and sister. Would you like to study parenting? You have the best Father in the universe! Then bring up your children in the way you have learned from your Father (Eph. 6:4). Would you desire the secret of a blessed marriage? Then look to the Bridegroom who loved His Bride and gave Himself for it (Eph. 5:22-33). Would you understand sibling relations? The gracious Spirit, who provides the "bond of peace" between brother and sister in the Church (Eph. 4:2-3) will be your teacher.

Here was my model home. And, by the way, it's always *Open House* in heaven.

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We failed to give credit to John Hopler whose article in *The Cause* provided the information in "The Right to Preach" in the November *Uplook*. Our sincere apologies.

Is Bigger Really Better?

James G. McCarthy

Can a local church become too big to be truly effective? Consider your car engine. It can efficiently produce great power, but only over the range of operation for which it was designed. It is called the power band. Keep the r.p.m.'s within this range and it performs beautifully. Operate it outside that band, and efficiency and power rapidly diminish. I believe God's principles for the church were also designed to work under specific conditions.

One of these is size. Consider three areas essential for church vitality which decrease in effectiveness as the size of the church increases.

SHEPHERDING OF THE FLOCK

A shepherd has his limits. He can care for only so many sheep. Exceed that threshold and the flock suffers. To provide adequate care, the shepherd must first know his sheep, not as a flock, but as individuals. He must know their needs and pray for them regularly. He must be ready to lay down his life for the sheep under his care.

Shepherds must lead by example (1 Pet. 5:3). This requires them to be with the sheep and available for genuine friendships. Sheep need to know the shepherd. "The sheep follow him for they know his voice" (John 10:4).

The anonymous lives we live in our neighborhoods are fast becoming a reality in many of our overgrown churches. Counsel lacks the needed perspective of a personal relationship and history. Sheep stray, and the only one who notices is the wolf. Church discipline is rendered obsolete because it would affect too many people and nobody can keep track of who's coming anyway.

In an attempt to meet these problems and keep growing, more men are added as elders. But once again there is a practical upper limit. The larger the group of elders, the more difficult it is to be of the same mind (1 Cor. 1:10). Where three elders worked together in concert, nine men are in danger of becoming a cacophony. Even with more overseers, no elder can keep up with all the needs. File systems are devised, but burdens on paper can never replace burdens on hearts.

The next step is often to subdivide the flock and assign each part to one elder. Although well

intentioned, the dynamics of a plural eldership are destroyed in the process. Sheep lose the spiritual oversight of several pastors. In effect, they find themselves under one man. Often the different ministries of the church are also divided. One elder takes responsibility for evangelism, another for singles, etc. Soon the elders lose the big picture. They can even become territorial as they compete for resources. Specialized ministries tend to multiply, and elders soon find themselves administering programs rather than shepherding people. These taxing responsibilities put an effective barrier between the shepherds and the sheep.

One day, the Lord will ask elders, "Whatever happened to Bill Brown?" (Heb. 13:17). Woe to the shepherd who must answer, "Bill who?"

EXERCISE OF GIFT

The expertise required for ministry in a large church limits the use of spiritual gifts. Consider once again the eldership. As the church grows, the demands on the eldership increase exponentially. A working man who would have made a fine elder in a small church finds it impossible to keep up with a large church. The church becomes increasingly dependent on full-time staff. Slowly we creep toward professionalism as specially trained men are hired.

The same trend can be seen in the public ministry of the Word. Something is wrong when the pulpit is reserved for those of conference level ability or celebrity status. Even the dynamics of an open meeting such as the Breaking of Bread are adversely affected by big numbers. First, few men are willing to address a large crowd. Second, even of those willing to speak up, only a small percentage will have the opportunity. Most resign themselves to being dumb priests. Finally, because a truly open meeting in the large church would have unpredictable results, the leadership finds it necessary to restrict and orchestrate the meeting.

It can be argued that in the large church there is more opportunity, not less. There is some truth in that statement. But the ability of the oversight to effectively direct large numbers of people in ministry must also be considered. My experience has been that in the smaller churches men and women

grow more quickly in the exercise of their gifts. In the larger church there tends to be what one successful church planter described as "too many folded arms."

CORPORATE IDENTITY

One of the greatest strengths of the smaller assembly is that it is conducive to a sense of belonging — a family atmosphere. In the large church the members, out of practical necessity, soon resign themselves to nothing more than a superficial relationship with the majority. The result is a marked decrease in corporate loyalty, commitment, and vision. The blessings of God which encourage and inspire the church are often lost. I was in one church where four adults professed faith in Christ in one week. Yet most of the members had never prayed for any of them or even knew that it had happened. Contrast that with the small assembly where even the visit of a neighbor can create corporate excitement.

Sorrows are also lost in the crowd. 1 Corinthians 12:26 could often be revised, "If one member suffers, most of the members don't even know."

Aware of these problems, the large flock is yet again subdivided into cell groups in an attempt to have the best of both worlds. But treating the larger flock in smaller units is only an admission of an inherent strength of the small church.

Have we lost our way? Why do we want to be so big anyway? Is it because Christians have certain expectations which only a big church can deliver? Special ministries for every member of the family are becoming standard. Popular speakers, expensive facilities, and large numbers are often equated with success and blessing.

We may envy the assets of a large church, but do we applaud the results in people's lives? Personally, I am not impressed. In fact, I can't recall anyone championing maturity as one of the benefits of being large. The Scriptures tell us that real spiritual maturity comes as the church grows "up into Him who is the Head, that is Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Eph. 4:15-16, NIV). Here is where the large church fails to deliver what the saints need most. Ralph Shallis, in his book to new believers, writes, "In a small church, you will find a purpose in being alive; you will be a valuable and important member of the family; you will have a real contribution

to make. If, on the other hand, you are in a very large church, you will probably be submerged in an anonymous mass — which is very bad for your spiritual health. You become lazy and useless, or just frustrated."¹

We need to stop competing with the big church down the road. Certainly they have their strengths, but let's not sacrifice ours while attempting to mimic them. Teach the saints the strengths of the small church, and teach them what is of real value. Never compromise principles for parishioners. Remember that numbers are a poor index of success. Vance Havner writes of an approach to real growth all but forgotten today:

"Actually, we need a thinning instead of a thickening. I learned long ago that growing corn and cotton must be thinned. We reduce the quantity to improve the quality. Gideon had to thin his troops, and a similar procedure might help God's army today. Jesus thinned His crowd."²

How big is too big? There is not one answer to this question. Factors which affect the number include the ability of the elders and the culture in which the church resides. Certainly the church is too big when the elders find the flock more than they can handle, the gifts of many of the saints lie dormant, and the saints think of the church as something they go to.

What is the alternative? The answer is not to de-emphasize evangelism. We have been commanded to make disciples of all nations. Our churches should be growing. There is nothing spiritual about being small and stagnant like a puddle evaporating in the sun.

Expansion during the first century was through the planting of new churches. To relieve overcrowding, experienced men should lead a portion of the flock out to establish a new assembly. This is usually referred to as a hive-off. In late spring, the crowding of the hive stimulates their swarming instinct. The queen bee and a portion of the bees migrate to a new location and establish a second colony. Soon both hives are back to full capacity, and the process repeats itself.

Size is only one parameter of church vitality, but if your work has become ineffective, maybe you are too big.

¹ Shallis, Ralph, *From Now On* (Bromley, England, 1973), p. 143.

² Havner, Vance, *Hearts Aflame* (Westwood, N.J., 1952), p. 114.

Front Lines

SOUTHEASTERN WORKERS' CONFERENCE

This year, Lord willing, the Southeastern Workers' Conference will be held at the Shannon Hills Chapel, 900 W. Vandalia Road. For information, contact:

W. L. Batts
4109 Southeast School Road
Greensboro, NC 27406
Phone (919) 674-7718

THE OLD, OLD STORY FROM THE BOOK

William and Karen Howell write of blessing at Story Book Lodge in northern Minnesota.

"We have just completed a large (perhaps the largest) and unique winter retreat with a full dining hall and close sleeping quarters for all! The camp included 20 foreign students, a testimony time, profitable messages from Steve Anderson on serving the Lord, tasty food, and the sharing of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the Muslims approached me privately before leaving camp requesting a Bible-read-thru plan (which 12 others had signed up for publicly)!"

"We presently are housing 20+ Olympic hopefuls who are competing in the national cross country championships at nearby Giants Ridge. We praise the Lord for the unique opportunity to share the Word daily with these intense, disciplined souls. Several are believers and are encouraged that their teammates have been asking them questions about the devotionals shared at mealtimes. The staff at camp are getting a real education in cross country skiing at the upper level."

FAINT YET PURSUING

Brother Les Rainey has, over the years served the Lord in

Africa, Israel, Bermuda, and North America, among other places. With his wife Grace, he now makes his home in Victoria, BC. In a letter accompanying his contributions to the 1993 Choice Gleanings calendar, he says:

"For us it's been a year of testing with five painful trips to the Valley of Incision at the Royal Jubilee Hospital. We had hoped the blood loss might have been stopped, and while cancer is not ruled out, it's no doubt the African scourge, Bilharzia, which we had 25 years ago in Zambia. Pray on — Jehovah Rophi!"

LOVE THE CHILDREN

Davis Dixon of Claremont, California writes:

"The Sunday School program ministers to the children of the assembly but also reaches out to the surrounding community through our van ministry. Because of the faithfulness of the drivers, the children can attend Sunday School, Awanas and the other youth activities. Recently, following a chalk-talk on the sinking of the Titanic, a fourth grade girl stayed behind and trusted Christ as her Saviour. The following week, her seventh grade brother accepted Christ after special meetings with Arnot McIntee."

"We are blessed with having teachers who love the children and love to teach and explain God's Word. The work with the children has led to some of their families becoming involved in the assembly."

VANCOUVER EASTER CONFERENCE APRIL 17-19

The annual Easter Conference for the greater Vancouver Area is to be held April 17-19, 1992.

God willing, the speakers will be Dr. James Naismith from Toronto, ON and Mr. Peter Ferry who labors as a missionary to Thailand. The conference location will be:

Granville Chapel
5901 Granville Street
Vancouver, B.C.
For information, contact:
Mr. Norman R. Chandler
3146 West 11th Ave.
Vancouver, B.C. V6K 2M7
Phone (604) 731-1083

MORE THAN ORANGES GROWING

On a recent trip to the central region of Florida, we were encouraged to see the strengthening of some fledgling works there. The Gainesville assembly (a few miles south of town) held a conference that was supported by Christians from area assemblies, which was an encouragement to the local believers.

On the following Monday, there was an evangelistic outreach on the Florida State campus there, using open-air preaching, tract distribution, and personal conversations. A large school, it is an open door, with good weather year-round. Pray for brother Bob Shevelin as he is exercised to see a work started there. He has a nearby office with meeting-room facilities which he hopes to use as a place for further outreach.

We were also privileged to see some of the work being carried on in St. Augustine. One of the oldest cities on the continent, it is now the location of the beginnings of a New Testament assembly. Two sisters, Mrs. Eleanor Shultz (formerly a mis-

FRONT LINES

sionary in Hong Kong) and her daughter, have been joined in labor by Larry Price. He commutes from Jacksonville to help with the book store, book and tape lending library, and Bible studies held in the same building. Recently they have been encouraged by the interest shown by two believing pharmacists who are rejoicing in the sweet simplicity of the New Testament church design.

KURDS IN LONDON

Ric and Darlene Munro have been recently commended to the Lord's work among Turkish-speaking Kurdish refugees in the east end of London. The Christians at the Portal Village Bible Chapel, Port Colborne, ON send them with their prayers and encouragement.

UPSTATE NEW YORK CONFERENCE

The believers who meet at Northgate Bible Chapel and Congress Avenue Chapel in Rochester, NY are planning a missionary conference to be held D. V. March 13-15. Area Christians are warmly invited. For further information, call:

(716) 436-8034

WITHIN REACH

Bill MacDonald's *Believer's Bible Commentary of the Old Testament* is just coming available and is being offered at a special discount by Bible Truth of Wichita Kansas. The normal retail price is \$39.95, but at this time Bible Truth is prepared to sell it for only \$29.95. Add \$4.05 for postage and handling.

Bible Truth still has copies of the *Believer's Bible Commentary on the New Testament*. This is on sale now for only \$19.95. Add \$3.05 for postage and handling.

Or order the set for \$48.90 plus \$6.10 for handling and postage. These prices are in American currency. Canadian orders should add 15%.

From inside the U.S., phone 1-800-733-9262. If ordering from outside the U.S.A. phone 1-316-744-9262. Or write:

Bible Truth
P.O. Box 8550
Wichita, KS 67208

THE RIGHT ADDRESS

There is a change of address for correspondence sent to Braidwood Bible Chapel. The new address is:

Braidwood Bible Chapel
The Correspondent
306 Braidwood Ave.
Peterborough, ON
K9J 1V6

WORKMATES

Brother Jim Boswell has served the Lord faithfully in scores of countries around the globe. He writes:

"We were disappointed the doctors wouldn't allow Agnes to travel to Scotland for our 55th wedding anniversary, but we spelled disappointment as His appointment (Rom. 8:28). The dear saints at Bethel Chapel here (in London, ON) were very kind and we had a splendid time of fellowship October 3, which was appreciated. I can honestly say that half the work I have been privileged to do, would not have been accomplished without Agnes. We raise our Ebenezer . . . As ever in His triumph and love."

COLLEAGUES

Both Brother Neil Dougal (Worcester, MA) and Boyd Nicholson (St. Catharines, ON) have been through some physical difficulty lately. Mr. Dougal underwent a four-hour operation on a large hernia which had

been undetected on several visits to the hospital. Because of its size, the surgery was quite extensive and, at time of writing, the discomfort in the rib cage is quite intense.

Boyd Nicholson's problem developed as a result of an error during a biopsy at which time a blood vessel was punctured, causing internal bleeding whose source they could not locate. It was touch-and-go for a while and, after the immediate crisis had passed, his own doctor held his thumb and forefinger together and said, "We came that close to losing you."

There is some discomfort, but the severe pain has passed; there is still little energy for the pressing tasks. The biopsy results were good, however further surgery is contemplated.

WHAT IS AUTO-LIT?

A group of Christian men, mainly elders from Chicago, IL assemblies, assist brother Mariano Gonzalez and his wife Pearl in their radio, cassette, telephone, and literature ministry to the Hispanic peoples of the world. On 79 stations in North and South America, the 515 weekly broadcasts can potentially reach the whole Spanish-speaking world. The telephone ministry, with over 4,300 calls this past year, is directed toward the Hispanic Chicagoland population.

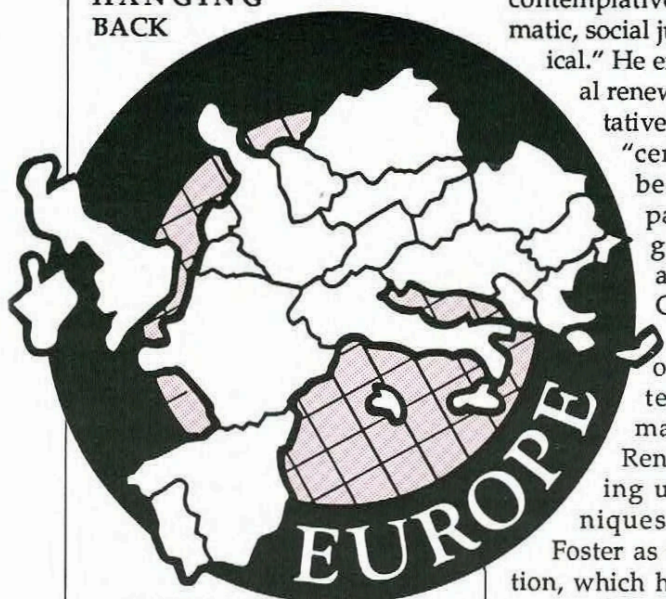


Pearl & Mariano Gonzalez

WHAT'S GOING ON?

News from Around the Globe

HANGING BACK



Romania's evangelicals are still leery of the government's pledged sincerity and are not quick to launch into aggressive, public, evangelistic efforts, says *World* magazine. But the Romanian Orthodox Church is trying to get the as-yet unfinished national Constitution to recognize the country as an Orthodox state; 19 million of Romania's 23 million people are claimed by the denomination to be Orthodox.

OCCULTISM AMONG EVANGELICALS

Renovare, an international organization of religious leaders founded by Richard Foster, recently held its annual conference on Personal Spiritual Renewal in Pasadena, CA. Foster, who praised Pope John Paul II as a "powerful asset of the Catholic movement," spoke each evening. He called for unity in the Body of Christ through the "five streams of Christianity: the

contemplative, holiness, charismatic, social justice and evangelical." He emphasized personal renewal through "meditative prayer" involving "centering down" to become quiet and passive, then using guided imagery and visualization of Christ.

The promotion of such occultic techniques is a major purpose of Renovare. The growing use of these techniques was praised by Foster as the Quiet Revolution, which he called "the new move of the Spirit." He hopes for the greatest harvest of souls in the history of the world and sees the Vineyard and Kansas City Fellowship, with whom he is in contact, as the movement with the greatest hope for his "God-ordained harvest."

Another speaker, Bill Vaswig, a Renovare director, who praised occultist/psychiatrist Carl Jung, spoke of his first experience of "meditative prayer" using visualization, taught to him personally by Agnes Sanford. He was pleased that his pastor was at Taize, France "experiencing spirituality." Taize is an ecumenical community that maintains close ties with Rome. John Paul II has visited Taize and receives the community's leaders each year at the Vatican.

Two nuns spoke at the conference also. One of them, Sister Bernard, director of the Spirituality Center, Archdiocese of Los Angeles, a Renovare Steering Committee member, is involved

in the Buddhist-Roman Catholic Dialogue. She spoke of the need to be in union with God through "contemplative prayer," a favorite buzz-word that embraces visualization and mystical techniques.

Lloyd Ogilvie, another general session speaker, and member of Renovare's Board of Reference, was "thankful to be a part of this vital movement that is so strategic in what the Lord is seeking to do." His church was the first in America to have a pastor of a Renovare "spiritual formation group," a woman, whom he introduced to the conference. Jack Hayford, co-founder with Lloyd Ogilvie of the "Love L. A." pastor's prayer meeting, expressed his gratitude to Foster for bringing all of the streams of the Church together. Siang-Yang Tan, director of the Doctor of Psychology Program at Fuller Seminary, stressed the need to integrate psychology with spirituality. He also advocated inner healing, healing of the memories, and other occultic visualization techniques.

More than 1,000 pastors and leaders attended the conference. Other speakers included Eugene Coffin, a Quaker and part of the ministry team at Schuller's church; H.B. London, Senior Pastor of the First Church of the Nazarene, Pasadena, where Roman Catholic Cardinal Mahoney recently led a prayer meeting; Bob Seiple of World Vision; Don Moomaw, Pastor of Bel Air Presbyterian Church; David Hubbard, President of Fuller Seminary; and Janet Powell, Women's Aglow Bible Study leader. — *CI Bureau Bulletin*

WHAT'S GOING ON?



AIDS IN CENTRAL AFRICA

AIDS in Central Africa continues with devastating effect upon the population. Mark Blair, a Bible college staff person reported on a visit he and twenty students made to a rural area near the Tanzania border. "Visiting from house to house was devastating; hardly a single home had escaped. New graves lie beside most homes, including those of both the prosperous and peasants. Some houses are closed because all have died. Many widows struggle to care for their orphans, fearfully waiting for 'the grim reaper.' In some homes the sole adult survivor is an elderly grandmother, battling to raise several small children.

"The end of this plague is not in sight. Elders lament that there has been almost no change in people's behavior. It is widely held that AIDS is transmitted through witchcraft. Perhaps this area depicts the future of the entire nation of Uganda.

"Though we thought ourselves well prepared for this evangelistic mission, we were silenced. Invited into dozens of homes to pray for the sick, we saw dying young people, drained of all vitality. Yet I have

never seen greater receptivity to the Gospel. Church leaders tell many bitter-sweet stories of deathbed conversions. The Gospel is the ultimate answer, but the questions are extremely complex."

— *Facts for Faith*

SAUDI ARABIA

Christians in Saudi Arabia are forbidden to gather for worship and prayer, even in private homes. In August, the *metowah* (religious police) raided a meeting of Filipino Christians, arresting and interrogating about 75 of them. All but four were allowed to go. Three of these four have now been deported; the fourth has not been seen since. Rosano Gopez, a Christian Filipino in Riyadh, has also been arrested by the *metowah* and tortured into signing a confession as a prostitute. He continues to be beaten and whipped.

In October, the *metowah* raided a Korean fellowship in Riyadh. The entire congregation of about 130 adults and 50 children was held for four hours. Fourteen women and 10 children were held for one day at the police station. Fourteen men were held for four days. All have now been released, via the intervention of the Korean embassy. — *International Institute for the 'Study of Islam and Christianity,' London*

PASSPORT TO MISSIONS

More than one billion people speak English or are learning to do so. It is now an unofficial but all-pervasive common tongue for crossing international boundaries. With the demand for English comes a need for English teachers, and alert Christians realize the possibilities.

Otherwise closed countries are inviting in English teachers. Mainland China presents the greatest opportunity of this sort. Deng Xiaoping ended China's post-1949 isolation with his "open-door" policy. The country quickly discovered that English is the key to making the "open-door" a functioning passageway with the rest of the world. An estimated one out of four Chinese people now study English in some way; English is required from the earliest school years.

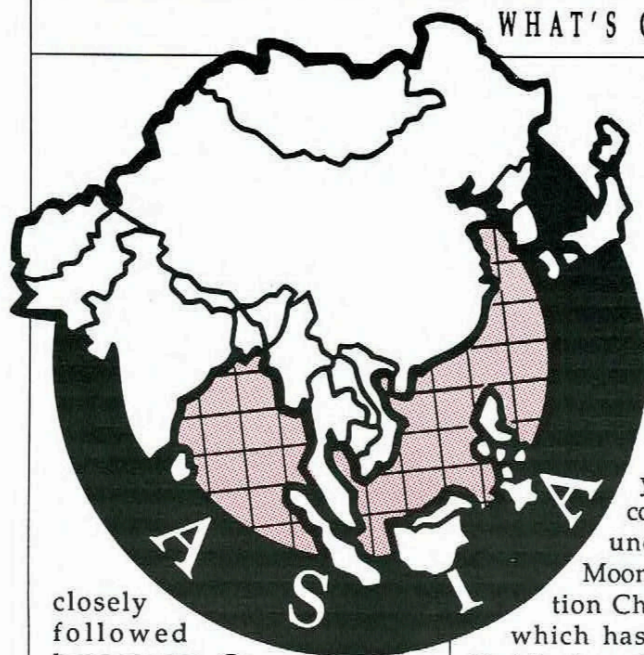
How many of us thought we could ever become missionaries in places like Albania? Today a wide door has opened in Eastern Europe. Prior to 1989, there was little or no opportunity to learn English there. But the dramatic upheavals since 1989 almost instantaneously created a wide demand for English.

Fifteen years ago, a young believer told me he intended to go to Russia as a missionary. I thought, "Preposterous! The probability of you going to Russia as a missionary is about as great as the Berlin Wall being taken down."

FAR OUT

There may not be much to choose from on Moscow's grocery shelves these days, but never before has there been a more bewildering array of cultural, social, and spiritual choices facing the formerly regimented people of the former Soviet Union. In some respects, Moscow seems to be undergoing its own version of America in the 1960s — questioning authority, flouting moral taboos and turning to distinctly far-out beliefs, many of which have been imported from California (the land of fruits and nuts). Newspapers publish specific and

WHAT'S GOING ON?



closely followed horoscopes. On television, a program called the "Lotus Longjump" showed earnest Russians, locked into yogalike lotus positions, rocking themselves into high-energy states and then shooting like circus clowns out of cannons. Soviet sightings of UFOs and vegetarianism are on the rise.

— *Wall Street Journal*

HARDER LINE

Christians are active in Mainland China, but that does not mean it is an open country. Mainland China's government continues to crack down on the Church. A new Chinese Communist Party document urges authorities to fight "illegal" assemblies and accuses "hostile foreign forces" of promoting subversion. The government wants to halt the delivery of Bibles and other Christian literature to Chinese believers. Local rules also say itinerant evangelists should be arrested, along with people who help them — or even know of their activities. It is also illegal to listen to foreign Christian broadcasts. Some observers believe that the new,

harder line is in response to the failed Soviet coup. — *Pulse*

Following complaints of brainwashing, Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia have yanked the welcome mat out from under Sun Myung Moon and his Unification Church. Thailand, which has arrested eight Thai leaders of the cult, is looking for the South Korean Moon and his wife as well. Thailand's military rulers regard the group's rapid growth to be a threat to national security.

Out one door and through another, it seems that cult leader Sun Myung Moon has signed an agreement with North Korea's Stalinist "Great Leader" Kim Il Sung. The two men, both with large personality cults, are at opposite poles in ideology, but they have agreed to allow Moon access to the financially strapped, closed country in exchange for millions of dollars in investment money. Moon has also been working with officials in China and the former Soviet Union on similar deals.

— *News Network International*

NOT TO OFFEND

The Toronto Sun (Dec. 2/91) was right to editorialize that "in this politically correct world run by the NDP (the ruling party in the Ontario government), Christmas is a word on the banned list. Now we're supposed to have holiday concerts and sing a safe chorus of Jingle

Bells and pretend the roots of why we have these holidays and parties have nothing to do with (Christ)." *THE SUN* refreshingly called on Christians to resist this new secularism.

And who, in Canada seems most resistant to evangelism? "The Canadian Council of Churches": according to "Religion Roundup" (in the *Toronto Star*, Nov. 23/91): "A suggested international theme for the world week of prayer for Christian unity, urging Christians to go out and evangelize . . . has been rejected as inappropriate by the Canadian Council of Churches." The reason given was that evangelism might suggest to non-Christians that they become Christians.

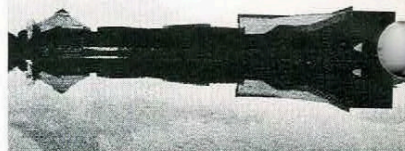
— *The White Paper*

HOW SUPER IS THE SUPERCHURCH?

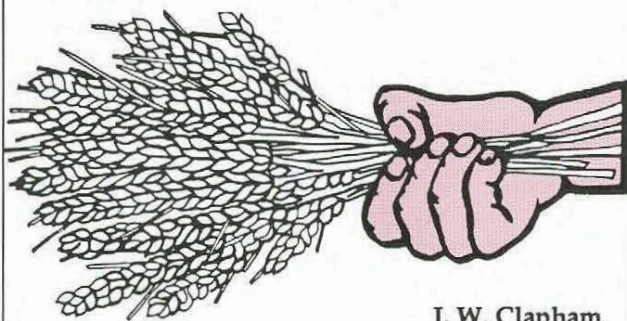
In a recent article in *Moody Monthly* on "The Changing Church," one of the churches featured was the Willow Creek Community Church of South Barrington, IL. It states:

From a gathering of 125 people in a rented movie theater in 1975, Willow Creek — shaped by a targeted "customer survey" — has grown to become the nation's second-largest Protestant congregation, with 14,000 attending weekend services.

Analysts consider Willow Creek a prototype of the future . . . "Seekers can be anonymous here," says Bill Hybels, senior pastor. "You don't have to say anything, sing anything, sign anything, or give anything."



The WIDOW & The JUDGE



J. W. Clapham

Under the Mosaic law, it was permitted for the poor to pick up the gleanings of the harvest. The rule is still observed (at time of writing) in Palestine. I notice that a poor widow has been following the harvesters all day, methodically gleaning straw by straw. By the time the western sun dips down behind the Carmel range, filling all Galilee with delicate shades of color, the widow is wending homeward with three or four fat sheaves.

Through faulty reasoning, this modern Ruth has decided to give the threshing floor a wide berth where a small percentage would be taken as tax. "What are three or four sheaves to a great government?" seems to be her line of argument. But it so happens that this very day the governor of Nazareth has ridden over to visit the village. He is an abrupt young Australian who served here in the first Great War. The woman, bowed beneath the weight of her sheaves, her eyes fastened to the ground, is traversing the last narrow alleyway leading to her stone hovel, when, to her great surprise and consternation, she finds herself confronting the governor.

"What is this? Where are you taking these sheaves?" he demands.

The woman pleads her poverty and widowhood, but the officer of the law is adamant. Soon many heads are thrust from neighboring doors to listen to the angry chiding. As he turns away, he bids her appear, without fail, at the local court at Nazareth on the following morning.

That evening, as we addressed the villagers who had gathered on the rooftop of our host's

house in the moonlight to hear the Gospel story, we heard some rather unfavorable comments about the harsh conduct of the British governor.

Next morning, the widow came to my host's house to borrow a donkey, placing upon it the sheaves she had gleaned the day before. We saw her wending her way slowly, and no doubt sadly, up the steep ascent from Cana to Nazareth.

At the court, the governor was still adamant. "If I acquit you, others will do the same thing. No! The law must be carried out. You must know you have no possible right to take wheat home from the harvest field. I must fine you twelve piastres!" (about 60 cents). Then with a quick, almost unobserved movement, as he calls for the next case, he flings twelve piastres from his own purse across to the clerk, bidding him in an undertone to make out a receipt in favor of the poor lawbreaker. Completely mystified, the woman does not know for what reason she has received the paper.

No wonder there was much discussion that night in Cana concerning the strange case of the widow and her fine.

"These English are very strange people," said certain of the wiseheads of the village.

"Who before in the history of the land ever heard of a judge who wanted to fine himself?"

Once more, stillness has descended upon the sleeping village of Cana. From my bed on the rooftop, I can look down upon the whole enchanting scene, and again I muse upon the widow and her fine. Is it not a delightful epitome of the Gospel story? We, the poor ones of earth, bowed down from the gleanings from this world's field, our eyes bent downwards as we traverse, with guilty conscience, the crooked byways of sin, we, too, have run full into the arms of Justice! What have we to say for ourselves? Our case is indeed desperate, for "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." But I heard those stanzas of the prophet Isaiah: "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:5-6).

Thank God! The penalty has been paid in full at Calvary. There *was* another Judge who wanted to fine Himself!

J. W. Clapham was for many years a missionary in Israel (then called Palestine). This article is from Palestine, the Land of My Adoption, pp. 113-115.



*T*he Christian home should be the happiest spot on earth, not only to the "grown-ups," but to every member of the family. Let us see that we make it so, even to the youngest. Never mind if they make a little noise and tumble the house about with their innocent games, or shout choruses when some of us older ones are trying to concentrate in the next room. Thousands upon thousands of young people have gone to utter destruction for the reason that, having cold, dull, stiff firesides at home, they sought amusement elsewhere.

How many sad parents today would give the world to hear the noisy steps of long-absent children. They would not mind how much the house was turned upside down, nor how dirty the carpets became, if only they could hear once more the cheery voice and feel the clinging arms about their necks and the warm cheeks laid upon theirs. So let us keep them at home by making home to them the place above all others where God is honored and where the whole atmosphere is filled with love and joy and peace. — *Reader Harris*

Hearthside Memories

Here is a tribute from Oswald Chambers, writer, preacher, and teacher: "Our family life in Perth was a very united one. Each evening, after the home lessons were done, was given up to games of various kinds. We found our enjoyment and entertainment in our home; no outside amusements could possibly compare with the fun and happiness to be found there." Again he says: "I feel traits in my character I knew not of before, and it causes me to bow in deeper gratitude for that home training which I have not left, for the training and disciplines of life. Oh! what a mighty influence home life has on us! Indeed, we do not know how deep a debt we owe to our mothers and fathers and their training."

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Catherine Booth, the mother of seven children, said, "One of the most important questions for a parent to answer is: 'To whom does this child belong? Is it mine, or is it the Lord's?' The right answer, as with all stewardship, will start me on the right path in child training.

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One cloud remains, that by thy birth
Thou enterest a ruined earth,
My little One.

But thou shalt find with sweet surprise,
Earth but a pathway to the skies,
My little One.

Such is our trust, for, Lord, we give
Thy gift to Thee! O then receive
Our little One.

Receive her, Lord, and let her be
Thine own to all eternity —
Thy little One.

— *Grattan Guinness*

(The father of Mrs. Howard Taylor. She was the author of many Christian biographies.)

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MEMORIES

When God wished for a mighty deliverance for His people, He began with a mother. On four different occasions in Scripture, God gave early intimation of the coming greatness of the child, so as to impress the sculptress with the importance of her task even before life had begun within her. Hence, with a sense of mission, the mother prepared first herself and then her child for the great task before him . . . It is natural for a young mother to prepare for the coming of her little one by making clothes, preparing a nursery, and purchasing necessary equipment. How much more should she prepare herself and her home for the coming of a soul!

— Anon.



"I understood the loving fatherhood of God as Jesus taught it," said the godly Samuel Zwemer, "because of what I saw in my own father."



Father, hear us, we are praying,
Hear the words our hearts are saying,
We are praying for our children.

Keep them from the powers of evil,
From the secret, hidden peril,
Father, hear us for our children.

From the whirlpool that would suck them,
From the treacherous quicksand, pluck them,
Father, hear us for our children.

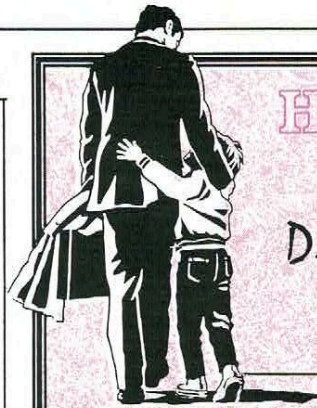
From the worldling's hollow gladness,
From the sting of faithless sadness,
Father, Father, keep our children.

Through life's troubled waters steer them,
Through life's bitter battle cheer them,
Father, Father, be Thou near them.

Read the language of our longing,
Read the wordless pleadings thronging,
Holy Father, for our children.

And wherever they may 'bide,
Lead them Home at eventide.

— Amy Carmichael



Holding a Family Devotional Time

1. Choose a regular time to hold family devotions each day — either in the morning or evening. Consider arranging your family devotional time around your mealtime, since that is a natural and convenient time when the family is together.

2. The father will take the lead.

3. A devotional time should be a happy time, but remember that it must be reverent too.

4. Let the Bible be central. The Bible reading should be clear and careful.

5. Follow a definite course of Bible reading, either going through one book at a time — e.g. one of the Gospels — or choosing passages which contain great verse or prayers, or tell of important events.

6. With small children, it is sometimes better to tell a Bible story instead of reading it, or to read from a Bible picture book, which will help to hold their interest.

7. Children should be given a time to ask questions, but also taught to ask in turn and not interrupt while the Bible is being read, or prayer is being offered.

8. Prayers should be short and children should be encouraged to take part.

9. Invite friends to participate in your family devotional time when they are visiting your home.



The Lord's Time

T. Ernest Wilson

The day in which we live is an age of speed. The craze for speed gets into the blood and the death rate increases. On the contrary, nature's processes move slowly and steadily to their conclusion. But man can't wait. Synthetic pearls replace nature's patient product. But God is not in a hurry, even if people are. With Him, a thousand years are as one day and one day as a thousand years. We often spoil God's handiwork by our overeagerness. Scripture is full of people who tried to take a shortcut across God's time and suffered for it.

In Matthew 22, we have a man who tried to take a shortcut to *salvation*. He came to the wedding feast without a wedding garment. We know the incident has its dispensational bearing, but it is true of many in the present day. The construction of the original implies that he deliberately ignored the garment provided by the king. It was a studied insult, as he knew perfectly well that a provision had been made and he chose to take no notice of it. He might have thought that his own garment was good enough or of better cut or material than the one provided for the wedding. But he was mistaken. When the king appeared, he was found out and turned out without a word to say in his own defense. So today, "Heaven's easy, artless, unencumbered plan" is set aside for men's ideas and opinions, and as a result many will be eternally lost. Filthy rags of human righteousness or fig-leaf aprons are no substitutes for the "best robe" of God's provision.

In 1 Kings 12, we read of a man who took a shortcut to *worship*. Jeroboam was a young man unquestionably brave and industrious, and as such came under the eye of both the king and the prophet. As a result of Solomon's jealousy and persecution, he fled to Egypt, from where he returned to start a rebellion. He would probably excuse himself by emphasizing and enlarging upon Solomon's failure, but at heart he was selfish and egoistic and was only too glad for political ends to perpetuate the division among God's people. To make this effective, he set up the calves at Dan and Bethel and told the people that it was too much for them to go up to Jerusalem. For many, Dan or Bethel would be much nearer and would save a lot of trouble. This is "religion made easy." Those who listened to Jeroboam had a false priesthood, a false feast, and at the wrong time. It was a reversion to Aaron's idolatry, and twenty-one times in the Word of God the man who started it

THE LORD'S TIME

is stigmatized as "Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin." God has only one place today as a gathering center for His people and it is found in Matthew 18:20: "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." To gather to any other center than the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ is a shortcut with which God will ultimately deal (Rev. 18).

Moses was a man specially raised up by God for a special work, but in his younger days he took a shortcut to *service*. While still in Egypt, he went out one day and saw an Egyptian oppressing an Israelite. In the heat of the moment, he took the law into his own hands and slew the Egyptian. If he had been sure of God's call to action, he need not have looked this way and that, nor have bothered to hide the body in the sand. Neither would he have taken the trouble to flee when it arrived at Pharaoh's ears. The truth is that he acted in the flesh and was afraid of the consequences. He had not yet seen the burning bush nor had the threefold confirmation of his commission — the rod, the leprous hand, and the water turned into blood.

Sometimes preparation for special service is a slow, costly thing. But it pays. John the Baptist spent about thirty years in the desert before his short six months of invaluable service, and Paul had his nine years (some say eleven) before his call to a wider sphere. Running unsent is only lost time. We must remember the order of the Lord Jesus with His disciples. He called them (1) that they might be with Him, and (2) that He might send them forth to preach (Mark 3:14).

There is an interesting and well-known story of a man called Gehazi in 2 Kings 5 who took a shortcut to *wealth*, but the methods he took to get it were lying and deceit. Wealth honestly earned

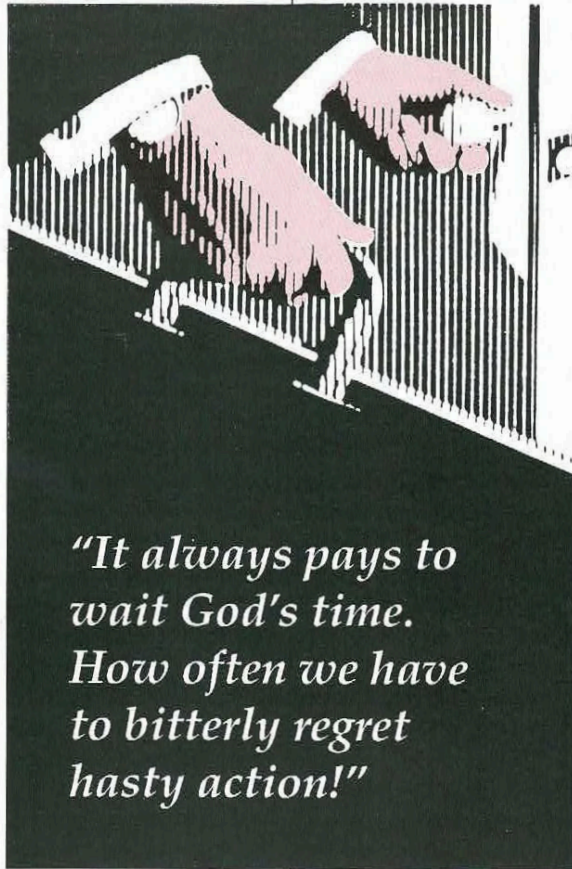
and used as a stewardship from God can be a tremendous blessing and help in the work of the Lord, but covetousness and the love of money are both roundly condemned by the Word of God. How many of God's beloved people, like the man at Bunyan's silver mine, have fallen into this trap and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. Stock market crashes and bank failures have scattered many a nest and broken many hearts. Some suffered through no fault of their

own, but others have been badly bitten by the desire for a shortcut to wealth. The last we hear of poor Gehazi, he is a storyteller to the king of Israel. He could recall past days of blessing but he died a leper.

The last case we wish to mention is that of Abraham, who took a shortcut to *heirship*. God had made certain promises to the patriarch in connection with a son, but many years passed without a fulfillment. At last, Abraham got impatient and took another wife whom he had acquired in Egypt and the result was Ishmael. It seems to be a fleshly attempt to help God fulfill His promise. Hence Abraham's pitiable plea, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before Thee!" But

when the time had come, God ultimately fulfilled His promise, and the result of Abraham's effort has been the agelong conflict between the sons of the bondwoman and the sons of the free.

It always pays to wait God's time. How often we have to bitterly regret hasty action! Sometimes God overrules for His glory, but at other times we carry a heavy heart to the grave on account of some false step — something precipitously done without clear guidance from God. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:5, 6). U



"It always pays to wait God's time. How often we have to bitterly regret hasty action!"

The Neglected Parable

F. W. Boreham

Here is the neglected parable—the Cinderella of the Parables! A million sermons have been preached on the parable of the Ten Virgins, the parable of the Prodigal Son, and all the rest. But here is Christ's crowning parable, a masterpiece of imagery that He left to the last, and only unfolded from the throne of His glory.

"I am Alpha and Omega," He said repeatedly (Rev. 1:8, 11; 21:6; 22:13). And since Alpha is simply the first letter in the Greek alphabet, and Omega the last, it is as if He said, "I am the A and the Z. I am the Alphabet!" It is an arresting simile, and worthy of the closest scrutiny; yet strange to say, we seldom pay it the slightest attention. It is pleasant to reflect that He, who loved all common and familiar things, sparrows and ravens, lilies and wheat, took the commonplace letters that little children have to learn, and transmuted them into an exquisite symbol of His redemptive glory.

The alphabet rises to sudden splendor when the risen and ascended Saviour enlists it in His program of self-revelation. Long, long ago, a startled shepherd was commanded to address a nation and a throne in the Name of the Most High. He asked for the credentials by which he might sustain so august a commission. "Say," he was bidden, "say that I AM hath sent you!"

"I Am —!"

"I Am — who? I Am — what?"

For centuries that question stood unanswered, that sentence remained incomplete. It was a magnificent fragment. It stood like a monument that the sculptor had never lived to finish; like a poem that the composer, dying with all his music in him, had left with its closing stanzas unsung. But the Sculptor of that statue was not dead; the Singer of that song had not perished. For, behold, He liveth for evermore! And in the fulness of time, He reappeared and filled in the gap that had so long stood blank.

"I Am —!"

"I Am — what? I Am — who?"

"I am — the Bread of Life!"

"I am — the Light of the World!"

"I am — the Door!"

"I am — the True Vine!"

"I am — the Good Shepherd!"

"I am — the Way, the Truth and the Life!"

"I am — the Resurrection and the Life!"

And thus, verse by verse, He worked His way to the sublime climax of that closing stanza: "I am Alpha and Omega!" "I am — A and Z!" "I am — the Alphabet." The art of symbolism can rise to no loftier altitude than that. What, I wonder, can such symbolism portray?

THE INEXHAUSTIBLE CHRIST

"I am the Alphabet!" I have sometimes stood in one of our great public libraries. I have surveyed with astonishment the serried ranks of English literature. I have looked up, tier above tier, gallery above gallery, shelf above shelf, the books climbed to the very roof, while looking before me and behind me, they stretched as far as I could see. And what do all these tons of tomes contain? They contain simply

the 26 letters of the alphabet, arranged in kaleidoscopic variety. Each poet and novelist juggled with the letters, shuffled them, and marshalled them in an order that they had never before assumed; but each drew only upon those 26 letters for every line that he penned. And have all these hundreds of thousands of writers, penning these millions upon millions of books, begun to exhaust the alphabet? Not a bit of it! The writers of tomorrow will find the alphabet as fresh, as unworn, and as ready to do their purpose as did the writers of yesterday and yesteryear. "I am — the Alphabet!" The Saviour means that, in His redemptive fulness and splen-



THE NEGLECTED PARABLE

dor, He is absolutely incapable of exhaustion. The ages may draw upon His grace; the men of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues, a multitude that no man can number. A host that no statistician can count may kneel in contrition at His feet, availing themselves of His pity and pardon and peace, but they are drinking of a fountain that can never run dry. Like the alphabet, He is inexhaustible.

*His love is as great as His power,
And knows neither measure nor end.*

THE INDISPENSABILITY OF CHRIST

Literature, with all its hoarded treasure, is as inaccessible as diamonds on the moon until I have mastered the alpha-

bet. I may wander through the most gigantic and glorious libraries, with all the wealth of poetry and history and science and travel and philosophy and romance ranged in bewildering luxuriance around me; but, unless I first become acquainted with Him, I can enjoy neither

the choicest treasures of this life nor the radiant raptures of the life to come. I must know the Lord Jesus Christ, the Key to Life!

As the disciples discovered on the road to Emmaus, I cannot understand my Bible unless I take Him as the Key to it all. I cannot understand the processes of historical development until I have accorded Him the central place in the pageant of the ages. I cannot anticipate with equanimity the august unfoldings of the days to come until I have seen the keys of the eternities swinging at His girdle. At every point, Christ is life's supreme indispensability.

THE INVINCIBILITY OF CHRIST

He is at the beginning, that is to say, and He goes right through to the very end. There is nothing

in the alphabet before A; there is nothing after Z. However remote the period at which your interpretation of the universe places the beginning of things, you will find Him there. When things first began, it was because He began them. When the drama ends, it will be because He brings down the curtain. And all the way through, He is marshalling the pageant of the aeons. He is everlastingly in command. The story of the ages — past, present, and future — may be told in a sentence: "Christ first, Christ last, and nothing between but Christ." Having begun, He completes. He goes right through!

THE ADAPTABILITY OF CHRIST

Nothing on the face of the earth is as adaptable as the alphabet. No two of us are alike, yet we can each express our individualities through the agency of the alphabet. In whatever mood I find myself, I can set pen to paper and express that mood exactly. The alphabet is the most fluid, the most accommodating, the most plastic device known to men. The lover takes these 26 letters and makes them the vehicle for the expression of his passion; the poet transforms them into a song that shall be sung for centuries; the judge turns them into a sentence that sends a shuddering wretch to a felon's cell and a hangman's rope. What could be more adaptable than this?

And just because of this remarkable quality in the alphabet, Jesus employs it as an emblem of Himself. He adapts Himself, with divine exactitude, to the individual needs of each of us.

I do not need Him in the precise sense in which Paul needed Him, or Augustine, or Luther, or Bunyan, or Wesley, or Spurgeon. But I need Him in a way of my own, and He can match that peculiar need of mine as the alphabet can lend itself to each separate man and mood. To each individual, the spiritual experiences of others sound unconvincing. Their case is not my case. I may not have sinned more than others, but I have sinned differently. "We have turned each one to his own way." The narratives of other pilgrims do not quite reflect my condition. But the beauty of it is that, like the alphabet, Christ adapts Himself with the most perfect precision to my own peculiar and desperate need. Until we have discovered the amazing facility with which Jesus can meet our distinctive yearnings and needs, we cannot possibly appreciate the power and value of the cross.

U



BOUQUET OF BLESSINGS

The Home

God wants time with us alone to tell us secrets for the sake of our children. Oh, the inexpressible and lasting blessing of having a father and mother who were familiar with God, a man and a woman to whom He whispered, told His secrets, and who lived out in their own lives the grace and glory born of such communion. Let us be very careful lest, by our neglect of hospitality to God and of listening to His confidences, our children miss the way. For the sake of the children, God told Abraham His secrets.

— G. Campbell Morgan

Whatever merit there is in anything that I have written, is simply due to the fact that when I was a child my mother daily read me a part of the Bible and daily made me learn a part of it by heart.

— John Ruskin

Happy the home where Jesus' name

*Is sweet to every ear;
Where children early lisp His fame,
And parents hold Him dear.*

*Lord, let us in this home agree,
That thou alone shalt reign,
For those who love and worship Thee,
In joyous peace remain.*

What a significant thing is a little child to God! Do we stop to recall that, in a million years, that soul will be living and mounting higher and higher, or dropping lower and lower? And the solemn thing about it all is that it will bear the impress which we place upon it. This makes the position of a parent unutterably solemn.

God's purpose in sending a little one to the home is twofold. He not only seeks a parent to train the child, but He often uses the child to beckon the parent back to the Father Himself.

And ye fathers . . . bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (Eph. 6:4)

"I was in the company of a talented Christian lady when a friend said to her, 'Why have you never written a book?'

" 'I am writing two,' was the reply. 'I have been engaged on one for ten years, the other five.'

" 'You surprise me,' cried the friend. 'They must be profound works!'

" 'It does not appear yet what they shall be,' was her reply, 'but when He makes up His jewels, my great ambition is to find them there.'

" 'Your children?' I asked.

" 'Yes, my two children. They are my life's work.'

— Christian Age

Fleeting, O mother, are the days of childhood, and speckless windows, snowy linen, the consciousness that everything about the house is faultlessly bright and clean will be poor comfort in that day where we shall discover that our poor child's feet have chosen the path that shall take him out of the way for all eternity.

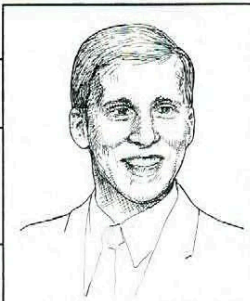
Discipline without affection provokes children to rebellion. Affection without discipline spoils them for life. — Anon

Behold, children are a gift of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward. (Psalm 127:3)

A family altar would alter many a family.

Susannah Wesley, tells one of her secrets: "I take such a proportion of time as I can best spare every night to discourse with each child by itself. On Monday I talk with Molly; on Tuesday with Hetty; Wednesday with Nancy; Thursday with Jacky (John); Friday with Patty; Saturday with Charles; and with Emilia and Sukey together on Sunday." It is touching to read a portion of a letter written by her son, John, in later years when he was in deep perplexity:

"In many things you have interceded for me and prevailed. Who knows but that in this too you may be successful? If you can spare me only that little part of Thursday evening, which you formerly bestowed upon me in another manner, I doubt not it would be as useful now in correcting my heart, as it was then for forming my judgment."



HEROES

C. H. Spurgeon

John A. Bjorlie

Surveying the mammoth ministry of C. H. Spurgeon, D. L. Moody was heard to remark, "It is not Mr. Spurgeon after all; *it is God.*" Who was this man that the Lord used in such a singular way?

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) was born of Huguenot stock, the son and grandson of Independent preachers. Due to stringent economic conditions, at eighteen months, Charles was sent north to live with his grandparents. The grandfather, James, was a staunch congregational Puritan preacher.

At the age of six, little Charles happened into a musty room in the manse. The room exuded the odor of old leather-bound volumes. He had discovered a hidden treasure! Being already able to read, he poured over Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. It fascinated him. Actually, he claimed he read it over one hundred times during his life. The Bunyan classic became a pattern for his own spiritual pilgrimage.

At the age of fifteen, Charles was under conviction and desperately seeking salvation. One snowy Sunday in January of 1850, in a primitive Methodist church in Colchester, an illiterate preacher looked at him and said, "Young man, look to Jesus." Spurgeon said, "I looked and I lived."

Study of the Scriptures in 1851 led to the conviction that he should be immersed. His mother said, "Ah, Charles! I often prayed the Lord to make you a Christian, but I never asked that you might become a Baptist." Charles could not resist: "Ah, Mother! the Lord has answered your prayer with His usual bounty, and given you exceeding abundantly above what you asked or thought."

Spurgeon hit the ground running. He preached his first sermon in a cottage at Teversham, near Cambridge, at the age of sixteen. His gifts were recognized, and the fame of the "boy preacher" spread. Soon he was preaching in chapels, cottages, and in the open air in as many as thirteen stations in the villages surrounding Cambridge.

HOW TO PREPARE THE PREACHER

Was this stripling teenager qualified to preach? He did not think so, and was sure he needed a seminary education to equip himself. He made an appointment to be interviewed for admittance. After arriving on time, he waited two hours in Mr. McMillan's home for Dr. Angus of Stepney College who was waiting in another room, neither knowing that the other had already arrived. A negligent servant girl failed to tell the McMillans that anyone had called and had sent Spurgeon into the drawing room to wait for Dr. Angus. Finally the doctor could wait no longer and left for London.

Charles Spurgeon's ambition for college had been frustrated. As he dragged himself across the Midsummer Common that afternoon wondering about it all, Spurgeon later wrote, "In the midst of the Common I was startled by what seemed a loud voice, but which may have been a singular illusion. Whichever it was, the impression was vivid to an intense degree. I seemed very distinctly to hear the words, 'Seekest thou great things

for thyself? Seek them not!' Had it not been for those words, in all probability I would never be where and what I now am. I was conscientious in my obedience to the monition and I have never seen cause to regret it." So by this strange providence, Spurgeon was happily preserved from the stifling atmosphere of the seminaries. His formal education was scant, and he never had any formal theological training. This fact continues to confound the academic crowd. He abominated the title "Reverend" when applied to men, and refused to accept degrees, either honorary or earned. This does not mean he put a premium on ignorance, for he was a voracious reader and serious Bible student.

Spurgeon's spirituality demanded disciplined Bible study. He said, "There is a style of majesty about God's Word. It's the living and incorruptible seed. It moves, it stirs itself, it lives, it com-



Charles Haddon Spurgeon

HEROES

munes with living man as the living Word. You do not need to bring life *to* the Scriptures. You should draw life *from* the Scriptures."

A DAY OF VISITATION IN LONDON

At the age of nineteen, after preaching two years in Waterbeach near Cambridge, Spurgeon was invited to preach to a congregation in Southwark, South London. John Rippon, Benjamin Keach, and John Gill had been his predecessors at this significant church. So the "boy preacher" began his London ministry of nearly four decades. His first message at the New Park Street Church was heard by about eighty people. In six months, two thousand were being crammed into the old building, while a throng was being turned away, unable to get in. The congregation moved to Exeter Hall, then to Surrey Music Hall where he preached to audiences numbering ten thousand people. At twenty-two, he was the most popular preacher of his day. Soon the Metropolitan Tabernacle was constructed and Spurgeon preached to six thousand every Lord's day. It became the largest evangelical congregation in the world.

Spurgeon was opposed to the use of organ, choir, or soloist, to create a mood. D. L. Moody was awed by the reverence for God that he saw and heard when visiting the congregation. The acappella singing was majestic. On the first day of each week, in his home or at the Tabernacle, Spurgeon celebrated the Lord's Supper. He testified that the oftener he obeyed the command, "This do in remembrance of Me," the more he found the Saviour precious to his soul.

Awakening came to the New Park Street simultaneously with his arrival in London. And Spurgeon was a harbinger of the Revival of 1858, which reached all of Britain by 1860 after its inception in America.

Often his success is explained merely on the grounds that he was a great preacher. But oratory alone does not explain the phenomenon. Spurgeon recognized this: "The times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord have at last dawned upon our land. There are signs of aroused activity in increased earnestness. A spirit of prayer is visiting our churches, and in its path is dropping fatness." But how deep was the revival?

For three years, there were over one thousand people every Sunday turned away from the ten-thousand-seat Surrey Gardens Music Hall, where he preached before the construction of the

Metropolitan Tabernacle building. The Tabernacle, seating six thousand people, was opened in 1861. Here he ministered with great power until his death in 1892.

WHAT WAS HIS PREACHING LIKE?

In Spurgeon's day, it was commonplace for preachers to read, word by word, their sermons from the pulpit. Spurgeon's style was extemporaneous. He prepared his Sunday morning message on Saturday night and his Sunday evening message on Sunday afternoon.

With joy he drew water from the wells of salvation. In a day when morose preaching was more commonplace than it is today, Spurgeon had a uniquely refreshing manner. He was chided for using puns in the pulpit. He would answer that they would not reprove him if they knew half the funny things he did not say. Again he said, "I would rather have thirty seconds of laughter than thirty minutes of profound sleep." He became known as "a happy preacher." Even in dealing with sin, death and hell, he rejoiced in the Gospel of redemption through Christ and the Cross.

Spurgeon preached from the whole Bible. He felt as much at home in one hemisphere as in the other. His own conversion he attributed to a humble man's sermon from Isaiah 45:22: "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." In volume after volume, by actual count, at least half of Spurgeon's sermons came from the Old Testament. He often declared that the text and not the sermon was used to save the sinner. Spurgeon proclaimed the old doctrines. He kept close to such basic Christian truths as the inspiration of the Scriptures, the deity of Christ, the atonement, the resurrection, the return, and the judgment.

Spurgeon was committed to evangelistic preaching. He said, "I now think I am bound never to preach a sermon without preaching to sinners. I think that a minister who can preach a sermon without addressing sinners does not know how to preach." Near the end of his days in September 1890, he said, "The ordinary sermon should always be evangelistic." How we need to heed the old preacher! Often today we hear topical messages or "how-to" sermons in which Jesus Christ is not the theme, but is only incidental to the argument. If Christ is not the core of our message, then what we are hearing may be little better than the sermons given in the Kingdom Hall or the Moslem mosque.

HEROES

One sin he did not want to be guilty of was of being a bore. He varied the messages to cultivate what he called "the surprise power." His messages had a stunning effect. He ministered in one of the poorer districts of London, though not among the slums, and "the common people heard him gladly."

He said that a sermon without illustrations would seem like a house without windows. When a student objected that he could not find good ones, Spurgeon replied with a smile: "If you do

not wake up, but go through the world asleep, you cannot see illustrations. But if your minds were thoroughly aroused, if you could see nothing but a tallow candle, you might find in it enough illustrations to last you for six months." Seeing that the hearers were dubious, he prepared and delivered a series of messages later published as "Sermons in Candles."

His dear wife might object to my saying so, but Spurgeon looked quite homely. But from that odd shape came a voice that could sound like the roar

Spurgeon's Controversies & Quirks

Spurgeon was not bashful about confronting error. In 1868, he published the tract, "A Fable for the Time," complete with an engraving of a pig and a clergyman feeding out of one trough, the clergyman in full vestments and the pig with pope's mitre and keys. A torrent of criticism ensued, the press letting him know they were not amused.

He opposed the evangelicals in the Church of England on the doctrine of baptism, and published a work on "Baptismal Regeneration." He then withdrew from the Evangelical Alliance.

He deplored the Baptists' inclination toward biblical "higher" criticism, and launched into what was called the "Down Grade Controversy." The Baptist Union Council censored him, Spurgeon's own brother voting against him. Finally Spurgeon withdrew from the Baptist Union in 1887.

This step cost him dear friends but encouraged many who were in danger of doubting the foundations of their faith. Spurgeon said, "The pain of heart I have endured I would not wish any other man to bear." A warrior had been wounded deeply. Those near him saw his health deteriorate. Spurgeon died within five years.

Spurgeon revelled in the old Puritan writers, and let his Calvinist leanings be known, but local Calvinists were wary of him. He offered the Gospel too indiscriminately and they chided him for it. Spurgeon would not be narrowed by bigotry, as evidenced in his treatment of D.L. Moody, who was anything but a five-point Calvinist. If Moody held to Calvinism at all, it was on the one point of perseverance of saints. Yet Spurgeon found Moody a kindred soul, defended his doctrines from the pulpit and in print, invited him to speak in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and went to hear him in his evangelistic meetings. We conclude that Spurgeon was indeed a Calvinist, but an inconsistent one. At one prayer meeting, he supplicated, "Lord, bring in Thine elect, and when they are brought in, elect some more."

In that day, most Christians disdained "that filthy poison — tobacco" but there was an element that admired the curative properties of the "herb." Our friend Spurgeon was among them. When his Monday headache came, he felt it prudent to smoke a cigar "to the glory of God" and the soothing of his nerves. Passing a shop, he saw an advertisement for "Spurgeon's Brand" and thought, "Shall I be remembered for the cigar I smoked, or the Christ I preached?" He never smoked again.

John R. Rice remarked, "Spurgeon gave up smoking shortly before he died — and his Calvinism immediately after."



of ocean breakers, or like the cooing of a mother dove. Without seeming loud to those who sat near, he could make himself understood to one who sat in the far corner of the largest amphitheater in London. His deep, rich resonant voice vibrated with a warmth. He did not strain his voice, or scream. He took care of his voice as if he had been an opera singer. Spurgeon felt that the lyrics of the Gospel should sound like the melody of heaven, and not like wailing from the slough of despond.

South London became full of life and motion, beauty and color. He made the unbeliever long to become a Christian, and the child of God eager to know Him better so as to love Him more.

The spell of that voice once appeared at the Crystal Palace. During the erection of the New Tabernacle, Spurgeon preached in that massive building, which could seat 23,000. On a weekday, before the first appearance, he went into that structure and from the platform recited the words from Isaiah 45:22. Up near the roof, far out of Spurgeon's view, a carpenter heard that voice as from heaven. He laid down his tools and asked the foreman's permission to go home. There he yielded his heart to the Saviour.

THE SECRET OF HIS STRENGTH

J. Wilbur Chapman, the beloved evangelist crossed the Atlantic to learn the secret of Spurgeon's power. At the end of a Lord's Day that seemed to Chapman as a repeat of Pentecost, Chapman tried to thank the older man, but Spurgeon responded, "Don't thank me! Every day and night thousands of men and women here in London pray for the work of the Tabernacle, and for me. All round the world, day after day, hundreds of thousands of God's people ask for His blessing on me and my sermons. In answer to those prayers, the Lord opens the windows of heaven and pours out so many blessings that there is not room in our hearts and lives to receive them all."

Spurgeon died at Mentone, France in 1892 at the young age of fifty-seven. He had gone there for his gout, rheumatism and Bright's disease. Behind his cheerful preaching, there was a backdrop of anguish and suffering. Whitefield said that "be-

Spurgeon's comment on Psalm 74:5

"A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees." Once men were renowned for felling the cedars and preparing them for building the temple, but now the axe finds other work, and men are as proud of destroying as their fathers were of erecting. Thus in the olden times our sires dealt sturdy blows against the forests of error, and labored hard to lay the axe at the root of the trees; but, alas! their sons appear to be quite as diligent to destroy the truth and to overthrow all that their fathers built up. O for the good old times again! O for an hour of Luther's hatchet, or Calvin's mighty axe!

Treasury of David, Vol. III, p. 369

fore the Lord uses a man mightily, He wounds him mightily." This surely applied to Spurgeon.

HIS WORKS FOLLOW HIM

Besides regular pastoral and preaching duties and publishing of weekly sermons from 1855 on, he founded a college, built a circle of Sunday schools and saw two hundred local churches spring from the London congregation, helped form a society for the dissemination of Bibles and tracts called the Colportage Association, and established Stockwell orphanage, with twelve houses, accommodating five hundred children.

There are more of his books in print today, a hundred years after his death, than any English author. His writings reached an enormous circulation. *The Sword and the Trowel*, his monthly church magazine, published more than two thousand of his messages. Every six months, he issued a volume of Tabernacle Sermons. The Metropolitan Pulpit was a mammoth work (our set measures more than five feet wide on the bookshelf). His other writings include an autobiography (available in two volumes), *The Treasury of David* (a homiletic commentary on the Psalms), *The Saint and His Saviour*, *Morning by Morning*, *Evening by Evening*, *John Ploughman's Talks*, *Feathers for Arrows*, *Salt Cellars*, *Lectures to My Students*, and *Commenting and Commentaries*.

Teaching the Children

George Goodman

The difference between a lecturer and a Christian who is teaching their children is this: the lecturer has as his first aim the imparting of knowledge; the parents have as their first aim to introduce their hearers to a living Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. Their desire is that those who hear may know Him and respond to Him in faith and love, believing upon Him to the saving of the soul.

The lecturer can do his work by natural means; the Christian needs supernatural help. He can only do his work by the Holy Spirit, and is therefore helpless unless his work is accompanied by a holy life and much prayer.

As teachers of the Word, we must aim at the highest and the best. It is true we may not entirely succeed, but what we do must be a good foundation for those who follow after. Our foundation must be deep and strong, so that the superstructure built by others will stand well (see 1 Cor. 3:10). With this in view, I propose stating a few important principles.

Up to a certain age, children must not be pressed to make profession of conversion. I say "pressed." I am as convinced of the real possibility of early conversion as it is possible to be. Many hundreds of testimonies to the early assurance of salvation have come to my notice. It would be impossible to deny or explain them away, for they come from missionaries, teachers, and evangelists, who are proved men and women, and whose word and judgment are unimpeachable. The Lord taught child conversion, speaking of "little ones which believe in Me."

Nevertheless, it is not wise to press children to say that which they may imperfectly understand or still more imperfectly express. Sympathy with every right desire must be shown, but any manifestation of life or expressions of the heart should be spontaneous.

A good moral basis should be laid. This is the outstanding feature of our Lord's ministry, as we see from the Sermon on the Mount.

There is a kind of teaching that seems to disparage morals, from which children might gather that "being good," "trying," and "doing good" are of no value.

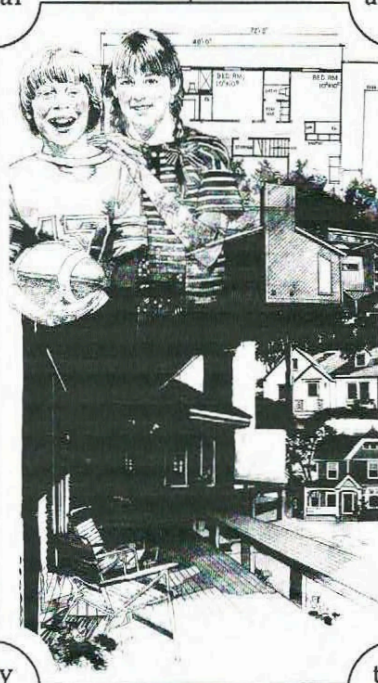
This of course is wrong, as we learn from many Scriptures (for example, Acts 10:35 and Romans 2:6-11). God is well pleased with everything right and good, and every wish and effort in that direction. He is Himself "good."

It is true that "being good" and "doing good works" will not save the soul, but it is as foolish to disparage moral effort as it would be other necessary and excellent things. Eating and drinking will not save your soul, but they are necessary. Tidy dress, healthy exercise, pleasant manners will not save the soul, but who would speak slightly of them?

So obedience to parents, truthfulness, thoughtfulness, kindness, and unselfishness do not save the soul from sin and judgment, but the man who in his zeal against "salvation by works" leads a child to think lightly of them and relax moral effort has done that child a lasting and cruel injury.

It is as if, in pointing out that the "kingdom of God is not meat and drink," he should lead one to think that such things were no use, or worse still, "deadly things," and lead them to starvation. Let every teacher have a strong moral basis in all his teaching.

To this end every child should be taught the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, 1 Corinthians 13, and large parts of the book of Proverbs. They should be urged to commit to memory the books of the Bible, and such scriptures as the parent thinks most desirable (for example, Isaiah 53 and Psalms 22, 23, or 32).



TEACHING THE CHILDREN

Hymns well chosen are a great storehouse of truth, and have, in many cases, been used in later years to bring conviction and lead to repentance.

Conversion should not be taught or urged as the ultimate end of all the teaching. Conversion should be shown to be a beginning, not the goal or end. It is entering the door, so that we may walk in the way. It is being born that we might enter into living. It is coming out of the darkness in order to walk in the light. It is receiving Christ in order to walk in Him.

To keep emphasising the fact that the believer has eternal life is to put the emphasis wrongly. The believer is called to "lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:12). That is, having received it, to live vigorously in the power of it. He should make it clear he has it by manifesting it in life and conduct, and not let his assurance rest in argument, but in manifested life. This is the teaching of 1 John (see 2:3-6; 2:29; 3:6-10; 3:14, etc.).

Constant appeals should be avoided. They lose their value and the ear becomes used to them. There are times when the Spirit of God will lead us to be urgent, but generally let the Word be carefully taught, and let it have time to generate in the heart and bear fruit. If I were asked for the one thing above others from which evangelical Christians are suffering today, I should say premature profession, leading to false assurance. The fruit is picked before it has had time to ripen. Persons who have "been converted once," believe they are safe, though walking obviously as the world does, in diverse lusts and pleasures.

Never let having a past experience be a ground of hope. It is he that believeth that is saved. In other words, faith is a continuing principle, not a past event.

A wide range of truth should be taught. Some Gospel preachers never get further than this: "You are a sinner, God loves you, Christ died for you, you believe and you are saved." These things are blessedly true, but to repeat them endlessly in one form or another is not either a desirable or adequate presentation of the Gospel of God. It does

not meet the need nor remove the difficulties of those who hear it.

You must be a more efficient minister of the New Covenant than that. You must be better furnished if you are really going to preach Christ crucified: the wisdom of God, and the power of God in all His fullness.

The glories of Christ are endless. However true your little creed is, it will not satisfy the hungry soul with the Bread of Life nor lead the seeker to fall in love with the divine Lord in such a way that he can and will receive Him with faith and hope and love.

The Apostle in Romans 10:14 asks, "How shall they believe on Him whom they have not heard?"

Let us put it thus: "How shall they believe on Him of whom they have insufficiently heard?" Is this little creed a sufficient preaching of Christ? I think not.

"The whole counsel of God" should be declared so that Christian character can be formed. The word *Gospel* is not limited in its meaning to the way a sinner can be justified; it includes all good news from heaven.

We want not merely Christians, but healthy, strong, happy, well-established, and well-instructed Christians. That is our aim that they may be "presented perfect in Christ Jesus."

We must prepare honestly and well. In this, if you sin, your sin will surely find you out.

The great Campanile at Venice, after standing many years, cracked and fell. It was found that shoddy material had been built in where it could not be seen. Let us lay this to heart, and build with good mortar, tempered with prayer and patient perseverance. "Let every man take heed how he buildeth" (1 Cor. 3:10). May God give us perseverance in the task. It is patient continuance in well doing that will result, by His grace, in success.





If Jesus Came To Your House

If Jesus came to your house to spend a day or two,
If He came unexpectedly, I wonder what you'd do.
Oh, I know you'd give your nicest room to such an honored Guest,
And all the food you'd serve to Him would be the very best
And you would keep assuring Him you're glad to have Him there,
That serving Him in your home is joy beyond compare!
But when you saw Him coming, would you meet Him at the door
With arms outstretched in welcome to your Heavenly Visitor?
Or would you have to change your clothes before you let Him in,
Or hide some magazines and put the Bible where they'd been;
Would you turn off the radio and hope He hadn't heard,
And wish you hadn't uttered that last, loud, hasty word?
Would you hide your worldly music and put some hymnbooks out?
Could you let Jesus walk right in, or would you rush about~
And I wonder if the Saviour spent a day or two with you,
Would you go right on doing the things you always do?
Would you keep right on saying the things you always say?
Would life for you continue as it does from day to day?
Would your family conversation keep up its usual pace?
And would you find it hard each meal to say a table grace?
Would you sing the songs you always sing and read the books you
read,
And let Him know the things on which your mind and spirit feed?
Would you take Jesus with you everywhere you'd planned to go,
Or would you, maybe, change your plans for just a day or so?
Would you be glad to have Him meet your very closest friends,
Or would you hope they'd stay away until His visit ends?
Would you be glad to have Him stay forever on and on,
Or would you sigh with great relief when He at last was gone?
It might be interesting to know the things that you would do
If Jesus came in person to spend some time with you.

— Author Unknown



LOOK AT BOOKS

Study Bibles

Jim McKendrick

Just one year ago I emphasized the importance of a good Bible and the need to be a student of it. Above all other books the Bible stands alone in its authority and importance in our lives. But the Bible comes in a variety of styles, translations, and formats. I have 22 different Bibles on my desk and book shelves. That, of course, is more than I need, but I happen to enjoy collecting Bibles and find all of them useful in one way or another.

Let me introduce you to the world of study Bibles. In general there are five kinds — the doctrinal, the analytical, the informational, the topical, and the grammatical. These are my own designations and I would like to explain what I mean by each of them.

The first is doctrinal. It is best exemplified by the Scofield Reference Bible. Scofield's notes are excellent in many ways and this Bible has been recognized for many years as the greatest exponent of dispensational theology. First introduced in 1917 it was revised in the mid sixties when the editors felt a need to "update" Dr. Scofield's notes. While it may be considered an advantage by some, the notes are not now exclusively Dr. Scofield's. Therefore, to get his notes, you must have the 1917 edition which by the way is only published in the KJV. All other translations have used the revised notes of the New Scofield Reference edition.

The second kind of study Bible is the analytical. This is best seen in the very good and popular Ryrie Study Bible. Dr. Ryrie comes alongside and helps explain the text. Word meanings, background information, and interpretations of the verses are all part of his notes and as a result he sheds a great deal of light on the Scriptures. By the way, his notes on I Corinthians 11 are very helpful and demonstrate that the headcovering is not a "brethrenism," but a legitimate explanation of the text.

The third type of study Bible is what I call the informational study Bible. The most widely used example of this kind is the Open Bible, published by Nelson Publishers, although I have just been

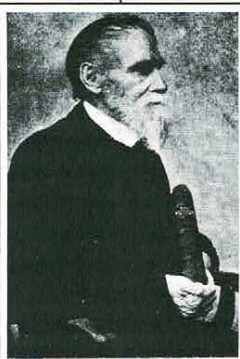
introduced to the Life Application Bible, published by Zondervan. It seems to be very good also and would fall into this category. These Bibles have maps, charts, outlines, key verses and key chapters listed alongside the text. They also have good discussions on the author, time, and circumstances in which the various books were written. With all of this right at your fingertips, your understanding of the text is greatly enhanced.

The fourth kind is topical, which is seen basically in the Thompson Chain Reference Bible. With over 4,000 topics listed in the index and coded in the margins, this helps you trace any topic through the Bible. This becomes especially helpful in character studies. This Bible also features a great number of charts in the back showing, in a graphic fashion, many related topics.

Last, but not least, is the grammatical study Bible which is the chief feature of the Newberry Bible. In a system of keyed notations, Mr. Newberry gives

you some of the intricacies of the Hebrew and Greek languages which are not translatable into English. The good introductions in the front of both Testaments help the student, who does not know the original languages, come to a fuller understanding of the text. The understanding of the names of God in the Old Testament and the prepositions of the Greek language in the New, I have found especially helpful. This Bible is not currently in print in the United States, but I understand that it will become available again this year from Kregel Publications.

You don't need all of these. But all of these will do you good. It is important that we read and understand the Scriptures. As Ezra the scribe gathered Israel together centuries ago, he "read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." May each of us this year not only read the Book but be caused to understand what our God has to say to us.



THOMAS NEWBERRY

Every Day Reading Plan

Section 14: 1 Chronicles — David's Reign

February 1	1 Chronicles 1:1-54	From Adam to the Edomites
February 2	1 Chronicles 2:1-55	Beginning the genealogy of the sons of Judah
February 3	1 Chronicles 3:1-24	Continuing the genealogy of Judah's sons
February 4	1 Chronicles 4:1-43	The sons of Judah and the sons of Simeon
February 5	1 Chronicles 5:1-26	Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh
February 6	1 Chronicles 6:1-81	The sons of Levi
February 7	1 Chronicles 7:1-40	The sons of Issachar, Benjamin, Naphtali, Manasseh Ephraim and Asher
February 8	1 Chronicles 8:1-40	The sons of Benjamin
February 9	1 Chronicles 9:1-44	Inhabitants of Jerusalem after the exile
February 10	1 Chronicles 10:1-14	Saul's last days
February 11	1 Chronicles 11:1-47	David reigns with his mighty men
February 12	1 Chronicles 12:1-40	David's warriors at Ziklag & Hebron
February 13	1 Chronicles 13:1-14	A breach upon Uzza
February 14	1 Chronicles 14:1-17	David is king over all Israel
February 15	1 Chronicles 15:1-29	The ark is brought to Jerusalem
February 16	1 Chronicles 16:1-43	Thanksgiving in Jerusalem
February 17	1 Chronicles 17:1-27	A covenant with David
February 18	1 Chronicles 18:1-17	David goes to war
February 19	1 Chronicles 19:1-19	Defeat of Ammonites & Aramaean Allies
February 20	1 Chronicles 20:1-8	Goliath's kin
February 21	1 Chronicles 21:1-30	Pride, the plague & the purchase
February 22	1 Chronicles 22:1-19	Preparing for the temple
February 23	1 Chronicles 23:1-32	Preparing the priests and Levites for service
February 24	1 Chronicles 24:1-31	The sons of Aaron
February 25	1 Chronicles 25:1-31	Preparation of singers and musicians
February 26	1 Chronicles 26:1-32	Doorkeepers, treasurers & other positions
February 27	1 Chronicles 27:1-34	Officers over military and civil affairs
February 28	1 Chronicles 28:1-21	David's address & encouraging counsel
February 29	1 Chronicles 29:1-30	David's final words and death

Discovered at Megiddo in 1904, this seal engraved with the roaring lion, is inscribed as "belonging to Shema, servant of Yarob'am (Jeroboam)" which probably refers to King Jeroboam II, who reigned in Israel during the times of Amos and Hosea.



1 Chronicles

The next two books in our study, 1 and 2 Chronicles, like the books of Samuel and Kings, originally formed one volume. To follow our monthly reading scheme, we will view them separately, but it is good to keep this organic unity in mind.

Originally they were located at the end of the Old Testament, in the division the Jews called the Psalms. The book's original title was *Words of Days* or *Daily Journal*. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, called it *Omissions*, emphasizing the material supplemental to the books of the Kings. For example, 1 Chronicles adds the following to our knowledge of the period: the preparation of the building material for the Temple by David (22:1-5); the Levitical divisions and their responsibilities in the priestly service (chs. 23-27); and David's last encouragement and exhortation to the nation and to his son, Solomon (chs. 28-29).

The name, *Chronicles*, is a relatively modern title to this historical compilation (probably by Ezra, see 2 Chron. 36:22-23 and Ezra 1:1-2) from the 4th Century Latin of Jerome's day. It is, as noted, a compilation, with the following sources mentioned for the two volumes: "the book of the kings of Israel and Judah" (1 Chron. 9:1; 2 Chron. 24:27; 32:32); "the book of Samuel the seer, and . . . the book of Nathan the prophet, and . . . the book of Gad the seer" (1 Chron. 29:29, see also 2 Chron. 9:29); "the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and . . . the visions of Iddo the seer" (2 Chron. 9:29); "the book of Shemaiah the prophet" (2 Chron. 12:15); "the book of Jehu the son of Hanani" (2 Chron. 20:34); ". . . did Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, write" (2 Chron. 26:22; 32:32); "they are written among the sayings of the seers" (2 Chron. 33:19).

The book of 1 Chronicles encompasses the widest scope of any in the Old Testament, beginning with Adam and continuing through to the reign of Solomon, covering everything but the division, decline, and departure into captivity (which are covered in 2 Chronicles). However, the material has been selected with great care to provide the divine perspective of history. A most fruitful study, and well worth the labor, is a side-

by-side comparison of the books of the Chronicles with the books of Samuel and Kings. It will be noted that some accounts are *reinforced* by their *repetition*, others are *obvious* by their *omission*, and still others are *accentuated* by their *addition*.

All this is meant to reveal a design, to highlight the working of God in and through history: history is His story! Accurate it is, but selective in content to teach Israel that God is, after all, God.

Assuming the book was prepared during the lifetime of Ezra, how effective it would be to outline in bold strokes the ways of God — and that in a day when Israel had been scattered among the Gentiles, her king deposed (was the messianic hope at an end?), and her capital in ruins. Where was God in all this?

Right where He had always been, declares the Chronicler. To be sure, there were times He had hidden His face from them, but His word would come to pass.

Thus the book speaks of the Lord's hand at work from the creation of Adam to the call of Abraham — the primeval period (1:1-23); during the patriarchal period from Abraham to Jacob (1:24-2:2); and on into the nationhood of Israel (2:3-9:44). As we draw near to the conclusion of the genealogies, it seems we take a side trip to Gibeon but it is to introduce us to the family of Israel's first king, Saul. Having done this, it is simply to paint the dismal backdrop of his disobedience, failure, defeat, and death against which shines the life of David *sans* his own failures.

The central portion of the book (chs. 11-29) is devoted to David's rule, especially as it pertains to the worship of Jehovah. It begins with his pouring out a drink offering to the Lord (ch. 11) and continues through the return of the ark (chs. 13, 15, 16) and his desire to build the Lord's house (ch. 17), his purchase of Ornan's threshingfloor (ch. 21) and preparation of the temple's material (ch. 22), concluding with the ordering of the service of God and the ascent of Solomon in glory.

Yet behind it all, we cannot help but feel that the Chronicler is pointing forward to One greater than Solomon, whom David his father acknowledged as his Lord.

1 CHRONICLES

In Focus

The Lord makes every provision for the establishment of a nation to be in happy fellowship with Him. The four keys of 1 Chronicles are also the principles by which He has established the Church. He has thought of everything! "Ye . . . are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ . . . Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:5, 9).

WORSHIP with a proper CENTER:

**The LORD of GLORY
in the HOLIEST of ALL**

A chosen generation as with Abram, called out of the darkness of idolatry to worship the one true God.

WORKERS in their proper SPHERES

**The PRIESTLY SERVICE
in the TEMPLE PRECINCT**

A royal priesthood as with Aaron, called out of the bondage of the world to serve the one true God.

PEOPLE with a proper BIRTH

**The HOLY CITY
in the LAND of JUDAH**

An holy nation as with Jacob, called out of the wasteland of self to fellowship with the one true God.

A KING with a proper RELATIONSHIP to GOD

**The ROYAL THRONE
in the MESSIANIC LINE**

A peculiar people as with David, called out of the obscurity of the ordinary to rule with the one true God.

With appreciation for the help from Jim McKendrick. — Ed.

Soliloquy While Fishing

Doug Kazen



The warm sun shines down on contented figures sitting on the fantail of the small fishing boat. It's warm, peaceful, quiet. I can almost touch the little trolling motor without moving, yet can hardly hear its pulsing beat as it keeps us just barely under way. There is no newspaper aboard. That's good. No radio blares. That's better. And, of course, no TV! No wonder it's peaceful. The troubles of this sin-sick world seem far away. The boat gently rises and falls on the soft Pacific swells; the rhythmic motion drawing our minds into contented reverie. I glance across at my beloved. One wary eye watches the end of her fishing pole. If it twitches, she'll be all action. I've seen that response before! But now she is lost in thought. Too bad life isn't always this peaceful. But it can be, should be — for we are Christ's ones:

"We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" — united to the Prince of Peace. "There is therefore now no condemnation" — peace regarding sin. "Forgetting those things that are behind" — peace as to the folly of our past. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" — peace as to the years ahead. "That where I am, there ye may be also" — peace for eternity. We should always be at peace within. It's only when we let the world in that we are not.

Two hundred yards to starboard lie the rocky beaches of the Alaskan coast. Back from the beach a short way, mountains rise sharply to cloud-en-shrouded peaks. No one is in sight. No building anywhere. Just pristine countryside. Marvelous beauty; all made by our heavenly Father. Nature's perfect balance here seems undisturbed; all held together by the nail-pierced hand. And now, for a few days, He is letting us share it with Him. This is grace indeed! It bows the heart in thanksgiving. But this is just the beginning. Eternity looms. Home. Heaven. Far beyond the best earth has to offer; better than eye has seen or heart imagined. There, in the Celestial Realm, we'll explore eternal wonders with the Christ who loves us so. Life here is merely a foretaste of eternal bliss.

It's been a while since we had a strike. Glance forward at the fish-finder. It shows fish in depths below — big king salmon. Check the down-rig-

gers; depth seems to be set OK. Bait seems OK. But no fish. Why? The Lord said, "I will make you fishers of men." How long has it been since I caught a soul for Him? None? Not even any bites lately? We'd better check: Are we trolling where the fish are? No sense dragging bait around where there is nothing to catch. Are we at the right depth? Is the bait right? It's got to attract the fish. Am I presenting Christ attractively? If no bites, why not?

The state of Alaska sets limits per day per license: is it two kings, six silvers, five pinks . . . ? We know what will happen when we get back to the dock. Any fish? If yes, did you limit? It would be almost embarrassing to admit we didn't. Yet for the Christian fisher of men, so many days on the road to heaven end with no catch, not even a bite; and we think nothing of it. Talk about limiting! The Lord sets no limit. Yet some go years without a catch. Caught anyone lately? Perhaps it's time to check the gear. How will you feel when you reach Home Port and the Master Fisherman asks: How many did you catch for Me?

Suddenly, a sound breaks in, the thunder of a powerful engine. There it is — a silver jet climbing heavenward. Evidently the afternoon flight from Ketchikan to Juneau. I'm glad we're down here; on the sea, in the sun. But the passing jet reminds us it is late afternoon. Soon time to head for home. And so it shall be for all of us. We glance astern and muse on the wake left behind. We glance ahead at a seemingly endless procession of waves and swells. But not far ahead, perhaps just around that next point of land, lies journey's end. Have we enjoyed the passage? Have we fished well? Are we ready to tie up at heaven's pier?

Aha! The rod tip jumps! Lift the tip. Clear the down-rigger. Rare back on the line. Oh, the thrill of that response! Another big one hooked and probably soon to join its friends in the icebox. It's great to be alive. Best of all to be alive in Christ!

U

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O Most High (Psalm 92:1).

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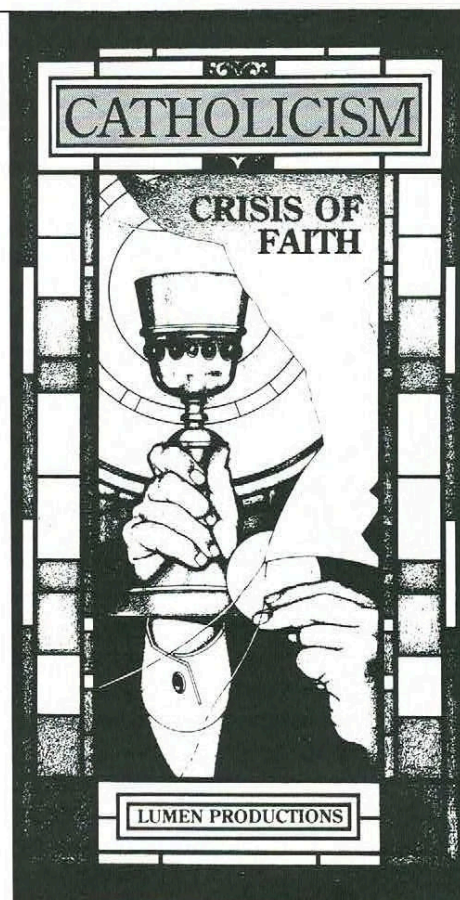
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High Society?

"I dwell among mine own people" (2 Kings 4:13).

A prominent woman in Shunem showed hospitality to Elisha whenever he passed that way. Eventually she suggested to her husband that they build an extra bedroom so the prophet would have his own room. Desiring to reward this gracious hostess, Elisha asked what he could do for her — perhaps an introduction to the king or to the commander-in-chief. Her simple reply was, "I dwell among my own people." In other words, "I am happy with my lot in life. I love the common people among whom I live. I don't particularly desire to move among the upper crust. Hobnobbing with famous people holds no special attraction for me."

She was a wise woman! Those who are never content unless they're socializing with the famous, the wealthy, the aristocratic, often have to learn that most of earth's choicest people never make the front page — or the society page, for that matter.

I have had some contact with big names in the evangelical world but I have to confess that, for the most part, the experience has been disappointing. And the more I have seen of what is ballyhooed in the Christian press, the more disillusioned I have become. If I have to make a choice, give me those humble, godly, solid citizens who are unknown in this world but well-known in heaven.

— William MacDonald

