

UPLOOK

FEBRUARY 1991

HANGING BY A THREAD

THE OTHER WAR

ERIC'S SECRET

Is the Church Holding Up?



Is the Church Holding Up?

J. B. Nicholson, Jr.

Here are, it seems to me, three kinds of pillars. Some are merely for decoration. Superfluous structurally, they are there nonetheless to give the *appearance* of strength and stability. There is a famous one like that in the south of Spain. The architect designed an arch that was thought to be too wide to support the roof. In apparent acquiescence, the designer installed a pillar halfway across the arch. It was some time before it was discovered that the capital was a half inch short of reaching the arch it was supposedly supporting.

Some pillars were once meant to carry the weight of magnificent structures of the ancient world. These pillars, however, are now only shadows of their past glories. Broken, like fingers protruding from the earth, they hold up nothing.

Then there are pillars that satisfy the claims of both form and function. Such is "the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

That the truth holds up the Church is taught in Scripture (Eph. 2:20), but it is also the solemn privilege of the people of God to hold up the truth of God to declare His glory. So we come to our question: "Is the Church holding up?"

Do you remember Boaz and his companion, Jachin, in the Old Testament? They stood over thirty-four feet high. Strong as molten bronze, they guarded the entrance to "the house of God" in the glory days of Israel. Around their brow they wore garlands of lilies interwoven with pomegranates.

Pillars they were, not people. There were hundreds of pillars gracing the temple precinct, but only these two were named. Jachin means "stabilized"; Boaz means "strength." Could this have been the image in Paul's mind as he wrote 1 Timothy 3:15? The promise to the overcomer in the church of Philadelphia is: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God . . ." (Rev. 3:12).

Here, then, are characteristics of God's pillars. The truth which we uphold should be *fragrant*, like the lilies around the capitals, and *fruitful* like the pomegranates, full of potential. The base of

the pillar should be *stable* like Jachin and *strong* like Boaz. And the columns themselves should be *grounded* — "go(ing) out no more." A pillar is of little use if it leaves its post when the pressure is on. They should also be *glorifying*, inscribed with the name of God.

So are we holding up the truth? Or are we imbibing the world view? C. I. Scofield states: "The danger-point today is the effort to divert the Church from her appointed pathway of separation from the world, and her appointed task of testimony to the world, into efforts for world betterment apart from individual salvation."¹ R. A. Torrey adds: "If the Church is to accomplish the work that God has called her to do, she must understand God's plan and God's method, and must conform to that. It is not God's plan in the present dispensation to save society but to save individuals and to call out from the world a people for His Name."²

What should we be holding up to our lost fellow-travelers to eternity? Is the truth to us a magnificent and intricately detailed capital? Is its foundation solid and immovable? Are its columns vast and straight? Then let us not hold up to the world our credentials and scholarship; our programs and entertainment; our opinions and ideas.

Roger Palms has this incisive observation: "So men and women are searching; many are coming to our churches to look there, at least once, because they have a longing and they have looked everywhere else . . . Churches that bring people together to focus on God and Scripture will do better than churches that are acting as if people want only a religious version of secular events . . . Will we offer what television, clubs and style magazines can't offer, or will we simply offer poor imitations of the same, trying to copy what the seekers no longer want?"³

Hold up the truth; it's what the world needs to hear.

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¹ *The Folly of Federation* by R. E. Neighbour; Bible Truth, p. 1.

² *Ibid*, p. 7.

³ *Decision*, March 1987.

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Dealing With the Faults of Others

Robert C. Chapman

PERSONAL DEALINGS

If we would wisely reprove the flesh in our brethren, we must first, after the Lord's example, remember and commend the grace in them.

Let us begin by searching ourselves, if we would be profitable reprovers of others. Much self-judgment makes a man slow to judge others; and the very gentleness of such a one gives a keen edge to his rebukes.

In reproving sin in others, we should remember the ways of the Holy Spirit of God towards us. He comes as the Spirit of Love; and whatever His rebukes, He wins the heart by mercy and forgiveness through Christ. To forgive without upbraiding, even by manner or look, is a high exercise of grace — it is imitation of Christ.

If I have been injured by another, let me think to myself — how much better to be the sufferer than the wrongdoer! The flesh would punish to prevent a repetition of wrongs; but grace teaches us to defend ourselves without weapons. The man who "seventy times seven" forgives injuries, is he who best knows how to protect himself. If in love I speak to a brother of his fault, it is because I hate the sin. If I speak of it with backbiting tongue, it is self-pleasing that moves me. If under the law, when the bond was only in the flesh, the Israelite must not suffer sin upon his brother (Lev. 19:17); how much less should it be suffered under the Gospel, which binds the saints together spiritually and eternally!

The figure of the mote in the eye shows what skill and tenderness he has need of who would be a reprovor to his brother. Who would trust so precious a member as the eye to a rough, unskillful hand? The Lord loves to manifest peculiar tenderness towards those who have been brought low, even though it may have been through their own folly. "Go tell His disciples, and Peter" (Mark 16:7).

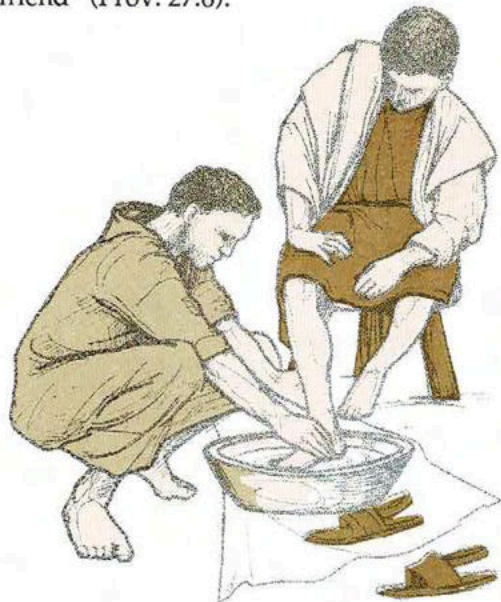
CHURCH DISCIPLINE

The discipline exercised by the church of God should be a picture of our heavenly Father's character. A sober mind, a tender heart, a watchful spirit, should mark those who put away the evil doer. All God's corrections and judgments are designed to bring to repentance. So likewise any

censure pronounced by an assembly of saints, while manifestly righteous, should be as a medicine to restore, that the spirit may be saved in the day of Christ (1 Cor. 5:5).

In how many instances, alas! where sharp or bitter reproof is given, heavenly wisdom would deal in tenderhearted counsel and admonition. Let us imitate our Lord in His pity toward those who have erred from His way; thus we best discountenance their sins and help them to make the confession that obtains forgiveness from God.

The love of Christ filling our hearts, we shall be keen-sighted to discern, whether in ourselves or others, whatsoever pleases not the Lord. This love, and this love only, will enable us to maintain the order and discipline of the house of God, so as to be approved by the Son of God, the Lord of His own house. We shall thereby, while observing the laws of Christ as to offending brethren, be raised above the fear of man that bringeth a snare; and, what is higher still, be free of false love, which spares the rod when God would have us smite. "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness" (Ps. 141:5). "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Prov. 27:6).



This article was taken from *Choice Sayings* by R.C. Chapman (1803–1902), and is available in tract form from Gospel Folio Press.

Front Lines

TORONTO ANNUAL EASTER CHRISTIAN CONVENTION

Lord willing, on March 29 and 30, 1991, the conferences will be held at two locations:

TORONTO EAST (Friday, March 29 only)

Cedarbrae Collegiate, Markham Road and Lawrence Avenue East, Scarborough, ON

Speakers expected:

Mr. Harry Thompson

Mr. Sandy McEachern

Mr. Joe Reece

Secretary: Mr. Hugh Beattie
8 Briarwood Terrace

Agincourt, ON M1W 1N8
(416) 499-2398

TORONTO WEST

Martingrove Collegiate, Eglinton Avenue West and Martingrove, Etobicoke, ON

Speakers expected:

Mr. William Burnett

Mr. Liddon Sheridan

Mr. Sandy McEachern

Mr. William West

Secretary: Mr. Ian McNeil
5 Lakefield Road

Brampton, ON L6W 2T2
(416) 254-0379

FIRST ANNUAL CONFERENCE AT FROSTPROOF

This Florida city received its name from the assertion that from this point and south, the State is free of frost. While that may not be true, you can expect a warm reception at the Shepherd Retirement Village, especially for their first annual conference to be held February 16 and 17, D.V. Speakers expected are Jim McKendrick and Alan Parks.

NEBRASKA MEN'S RETREAT

The 1991 Nebraska Men's Re-

treat will be held, D.V., February 21-23. Speakers expected are: Keith Trevolt and J. B. Nicholson, Jr. For information, contact:

Mike Day

1218 Pine Street

Omaha, NE 68144

Phone (402) 334-4978

THREE-DAY CONFERENCE AT SAULT STE. MARIE, ON

On February 15-17, 1991, D.V., the Riverside Bible Chapel and Maple Ridge Bible Chapel will fellowship with the saints at Bethel Bible Chapel at the Friday evening and Saturday meetings. Dr. James Naismith is the expected speaker. Visitors are heartily invited.

The hand of the Lord appears to be on the work in "The Soo." Brother Joe Reece, who ministers in three of the area assemblies as well as traveling elsewhere for conferences, Gospel meetings, etc., writes of his home assembly: "The Breaking of Bread meeting is packed (two hundred and more most of the time). A good sign! A seventeen-year-old mother of two little children



Joe and Ann Reece

came to the Lord recently. There is much to be done."

GOSPEL OUTREACH AT AIR FORCE ACADEMY

The believers at the Westside Assembly in Colorado Springs have been given "an open door and effectual" at the U.S. Air Force Academy there. A regular home Bible study has borne much fruit among the cadets. On January 28 through 30 they were able to arrange a special three-night Gospel outreach with brother Alan Parks of Severna Park, MD ministering the Word of God. With the reality of war looming in their futures, pray that God will continue to bless the truth spoken to these young men and women. The theme for the series: the claims of Christ in a confused world.

TWO KINDS OF BREAD

Also in Colorado Springs, the Southside Bible Chapel planned a "gospel supper," a catered banquet with the intention that every Christian would bring an unsaved friend. At time of writing a large number of unbelievers have promised to attend the January 25 event.

NEEDHAM, ALABAMA CONFERENCE

The Needham Gospel Center will host its Fifth Annual Anniversary Conference on February 16 and 17, 1991, D.V. Speakers will include J. B. Nicholson, Jr. Meetings will be held Saturday evening and Sunday morning and evening, with lunch served after the Sunday 11:00 A.M. service. For further information, please contact:

FRONT LINES

James Bonner,
Route 1,
Needham, AL 36915
Phone (205) 843-5734

MISSIONARIES ON FURLOUGH

Paul Bramson, who with his wife Carol, serves the Lord in Senegal, West Africa, writes: "Furlough is an interesting word that none has yet been able to properly define — it is, in any case, not synonymous with vacation." Though making their temporary home in Duncan, SC, he recently made two trips into Canada, one to the Vancouver, BC area. One of the highlights was to participate in a college and career camp. He says: "It



Paul and Carol Bramson

was a joy to minister to, and be ministered to by so many serious-minded young people. Just recently I returned from a three-and-a-half week trip to Quebec, Ontario and Michigan where I enjoyed an equally wonderful time among the Lord's people." We should remember to utilize the vast resource of missionary zeal, wisdom and information by contacting missionaries home on furlough for a visit to our areas. *Missions* magazine will

keep you posted on anticipated arrival and departure dates of many of the missionaries. We should also pray for these servants of God while they are in North America — for safety over the miles, for grace to readjust to weather, culture, language, etc. They could also use a little rest!

CMML SPRING MEN'S CONFERENCE

Serious-minded men from the U.S. northeast should make plans to attend the CMML sponsored Spring Men's Conference at Terrill Middle School in Fanwood, NJ on March 16, 1991. Dan Smith and Ross Rainey will speak on "Biblical Priorities in an Age of Drift." The time is 10:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.

CROSS-COUNTRY MINISTRY

Recently George Heidman and his wife Frances have returned home to Fredericton, N.B. after more than three months of laboring across the continent. The journey began August 29 after seven weeks of DVBS in the Maritimes, four of which were shared by Brother Clark McClelland of Westbrook, ME. Some professed faith in Christ.

The trip west, which concluded November 22, included ministry in Sardis, White Rock, Vancouver, Victoria and Vernon, B.C. There was also a week with his model of the Tabernacle in Seattle, WA, two series en route at Edmonton and Calvary, AB and weekends in Chicago and Sault Ste. Marie, ON. God willing, a return trip is anticipated for this coming fall. Bro. Heidman writes: "The good hand of our God was upon us guiding, guarding, girding, and giving. What a privilege to lower our heads, like the ox, to take His

yoke of service upon us."

Once, when preachers traveled by train, the scattered communities of saints across the continent were visited frequently and encouraged. Air travel has changed that. We are thankful for those who go out of their way to visit the saints like this to build them up and set their sights on glory.

SPIRITUAL BATTLE OF WATERLOO

The work of the Lord continues to go ahead in this area of the Lord's vineyard with many encouraging things to report. At Bethel Chapel in Waterloo, ON, a group of college-age students meet every Monday night in the chapel basement for a half hour of prayer and then an hour of study in the Gospel of John. The studies are conversational and are directed by the young men. However, two devoted older brethren from the assembly come faithfully every week to provide guidance and additional helpful insights into the study passages. This meeting is also used as a springboard for putting the results of the studies into practice. The group has been holding some open-air meetings in the shopping district of Waterloo. Tract distribution is conducted at the local university and market; and in the past year two Gospel campaigns have been held at a local high school with thousands of homes visited in a door-to-door effort and a number of people making professions at the meetings.

"HOW TO STUDY" STUDIES

A group of people from the Listowel Bible Chapel, ON, aged eighteen and over are meeting for "How to Study the Bible" classes. Recognizing that the

FRONT LINES

ability to study the Scriptures effectively is essential for personal growth as a believer and also for a sound, healthy assembly, the participants agreed to an hour-and-a-half session every second Monday night with homework to do for each class. Lessons have included: the use of various study aid books, the breakdown of passages, hermeneutics, and much hands-on participation and discussion. The increased enthusiasm for doing personal, in-depth study of God's Word has been uplifting. Also at the Listowel Assembly, a children's meeting has been held every Thursday since the school year began. The evening consists of games, crafts, singing, and a message that ties in with the theme of the evening. Attendance has been averaging over fifty children, and their response has been encouraging.

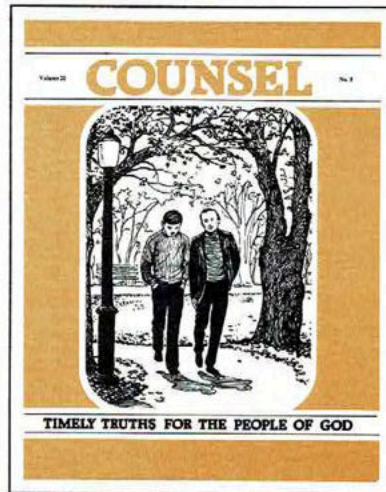
BIBLE PROPHECY & BIBLE MEMORIZING

On the weekend of January 18-20 a group of believers from the West Hill (Toronto), Markham, Bethel (Waterloo), Listowel, and Southdale (London), assemblies got together for a retreat at Joy Bible Camp in Bancroft, ON. Brother Boyd Nicholson, Sr. ministered a number of sessions on "The Believer in Prophecy." The saints were greatly refreshed by these sessions from God's Word concerning our glorious future, especially in these violent last days. Another noteworthy event during the weekend was a talent night. A young man named David Bell quoted the Sermon on the Mount as his talent. This was a tremendous challenge to all who heard it, to discipline ourselves to hide God's Word in our heart. David has been mem-

orizing Scripture systematically for over a year and a half, and has managed to learn over 1,800 (that's correct, one thousand, eight hundred) verses while carrying on with fourth-year studies at the University of Guelph. His example is a blessing to many.

COUNSEL MAGAZINE

More than twenty years ago, a group of concerned brethren met with Robert McClurkin,



who had been sending out some Bible study notes on his own. It was felt that there was a need among the Lord's people for a solid ministry magazine to "bring the Word of God to bear on the confusion of thought that exists in many places today," and to "give a variety of ministry to meet a variety of needs by edification and exhortation and comfort." The bi-monthly is now read by believers in eighty-six countries. The magazine is sent to those who request it and is sustained by gifts from the Lord's people. If you wish to receive it, write to:

Counsel
P.O. Box 427
St. Catharines, ON
Canada L2R 6V9

TAMPA BAY MISSIONARY OUTREACH

The annual missionary conference will be held, D.V., at Central Bible Chapel in Tampa, FL on Saturday, February 9, 1991 from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. Missionaries expected will include Ken Hardisty of the Phillipines and Paul Bramson of Senegal. Ministry is to be brought by Myles Beers and Alan Parks.

NEWS FROM ISRAEL

The January issue of *Echoes*, the British assembly missionary magazine, included a quotation from a letter sent by Miss Mary Kilbride, who serves the Lord faithfully in Jerusalem. She writes:

The situation here is, as you can imagine, very tense although I sometimes stop and think we don't realize the momentous days we live in. Life goes on, "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage," while we cope with Intifada (Arab uprising) and the Gulf crisis, not to mention the mass immigration of Jews from Russia and Eastern Europe arriving in their thousands weekly.

There are moments of tension between Jewish and Arab believers over some remark made without a great deal of thought behind it. It is like walking a tightrope and prayer is requested that grace and truth may prevail.

The folk from Bethlehem and district are surrounded by such hatred and bitterness against Israel and favor Saddam Hussein (whom they see as their deliverer), that it is very difficult for them to discern right from wrong and good from evil. They need much prayer.

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The Other War

With all the attention given to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Iraq by the media, there still remain unanswered questions. The largest questions for many Christians are, "How is the Gospel progressing?" and "How are the congregations of Christians faring?" Of course, these questions are far from the thoughts of network newsmen. We know practically nothing about believers in Iraq and Kuwait, although it is said there are some ten assemblies of believers in Kuwait (mainly composed of workers from India). Of these three Middle East countries, we know the most concerning the work of God in Saudi Arabia.

A Snatch of History: Probably the first missionaries to what is now Saudi Arabia were those converted on the day of Pentecost (citizens of Crete and Arabia heard Peter preach, Act 2:11) and the Apostle Paul (Gal. 1:17-18) spent three years there. But if Paul did much evangelism at that time, there is no record. It is likely that the Gospel did reach down into the peninsula. There was a Christian community at Hirah at the end of the fourth century and possibly others at different centers.

The first missionary of modern times to Saudi Arabia (as distinct from the other states of the peninsula) was James Cantine in 1889, followed in 1890 by Samuel M. Zwemer. They spent a period in language study in Beirut and then proceeded to Arabia. Zwemer gave sixty years of his life to the work and was known throughout the Muslim world as "the apostle to Islam." J. H. Kane says of him:

"Zwemer was a rare combination of the pious and the practical, the saint and the scholar. He was a world traveler, a prolific writer, a dynamic speaker, a brilliant scholar, and a great personal worker. He knew more about Islam and the Christian approach thereto than any other man in the first half of the twentieth century. He founded and for many years edited *Muslim World*, a scholarly journal devoted to the Christian mission in the Muslim world."¹

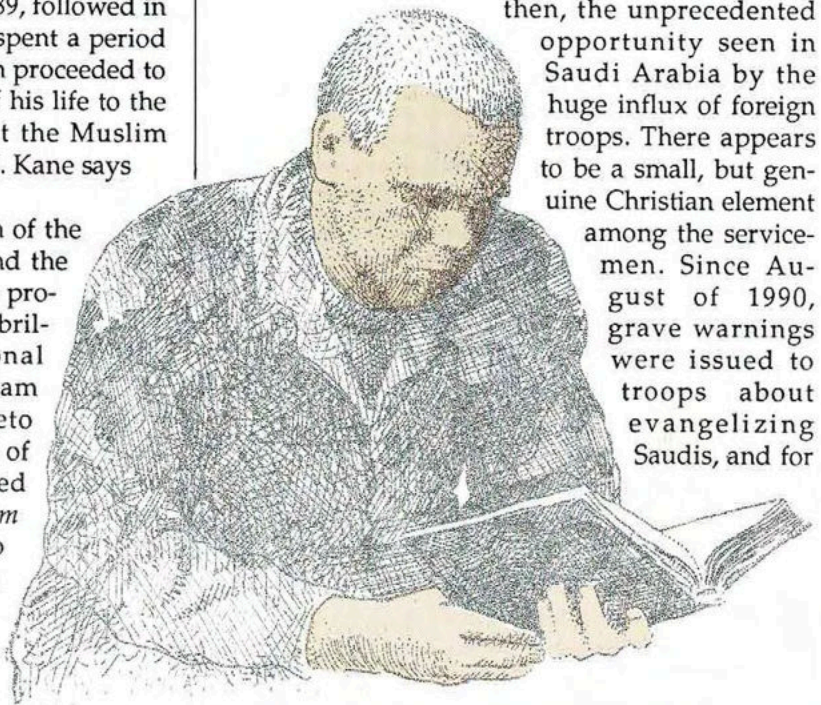
After World War I, the nomadic Arab tribes in what is now Saudi

Arabia came under the control of a strong puritanical Muslim state. All religions other than Islam are denied the right to hold meetings or to propagate their faith. Jews and non-Muslims are not permitted to enter the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Today, Saudi Arabia is the exemplar of an Islamic state. Islam rules the judicial and governmental system and every sphere of life. Only one percent of the population are even considered to be nominally Christian. These are predominantly expatriates, and there are few known national believers.

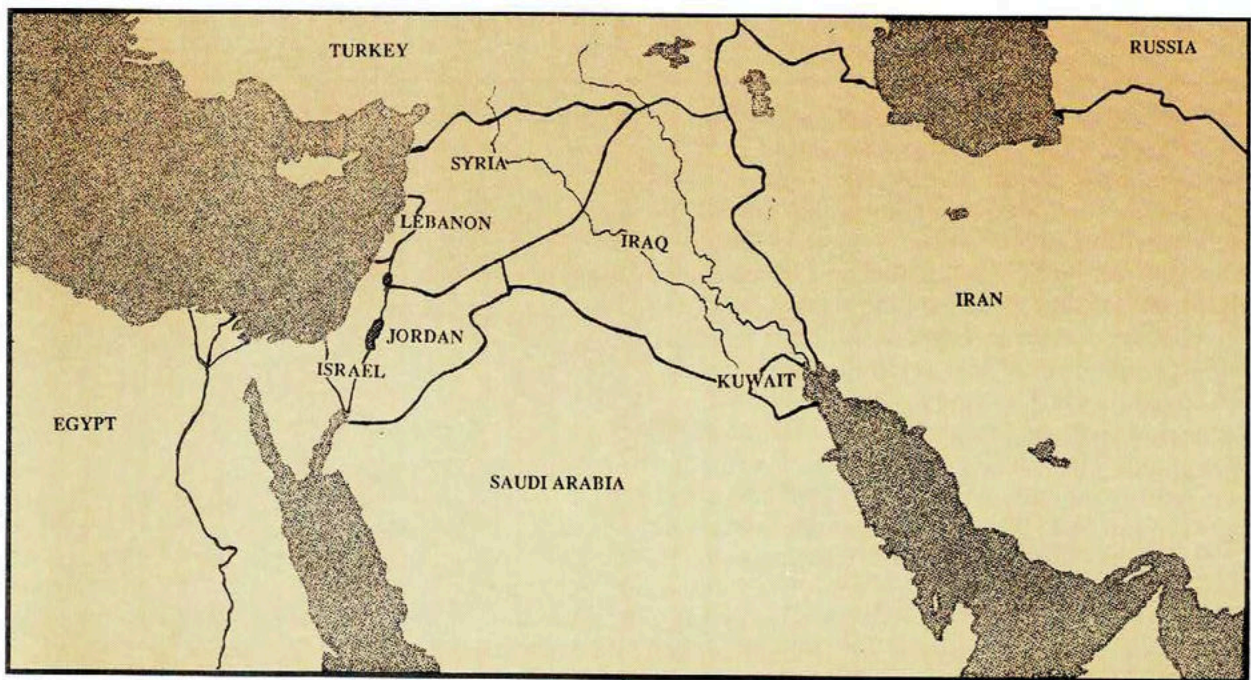
The Saudi's unbending policies were felt by two Canadian nurses who went there to work. The one nurse was informed that even a personal Bible would not be allowed, so she had hers rebound with another book's cover to escape confiscation. The second nurse made the mistake of innocently bowing her head to give thanks in the hospital cafeteria and within twenty-four hours she was being packed up and sent back to Canada.

Until now the two greatest opportunities for reaching Saudis has been through radio beamed into the peninsula and through students and business people going abroad where the Gospel is freely heard. Consider,

then, the unprecedented opportunity seen in Saudi Arabia by the huge influx of foreign troops. There appears to be a small, but genuine Christian element among the servicemen. Since August of 1990, grave warnings were issued to troops about evangelizing Saudis, and for



THE OTHER WAR



a time it was rumored that Bibles would not be allowed in. If there was such a ban on Bibles, it has been lifted. Chaplaincy departments are shipping large quantities of Bibles, New Testaments, Bible study materials, tracts, devotional guides and

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*“Operation Desert Storm
may yet cause the wrath of
man to praise the Lord.”*

❖

song books for personal use by servicemen. The Gideons International and Christian Business Men's chapters have energetically supplied Bibles. Private funding channeled through various agencies is enabling Dickinson Press of Grand Rapids, MI to publish the Operation Desert Storm Camouflage Edition of the Bible. The Bibles have a no-glare, desert-camouflage cover, and are distributed to soldiers free of charge by the military chaplains in Saudi Arabia. At least four hundred thousand of these Bibles and New Testaments have been produced by Dickinson's alone since last August.²

"It seems like everyone is so receptive to the

Lord right now with this crisis going on," reports a spokesperson for the International Bible Society. "Hearts are open and ears are alert and testimonies are strong."

The heightened spiritual interest among the soldiers is spurred on by at least two factors: (1) the austere rules imposed by the Saudis; "lewdness and drunkenness are forbidden"; (2) the real possibility of facing an early death. The movement of the Spirit of God among the troops is evident. One Christian soldier from Michigan wrote home saying that there had been 57 conversions in his division. Another evangelical chaplain reported 153 had professed to be saved. On one occasion twenty people identified with Christ in baptism. How many of these are "foxhole conversions," eternity will tell. The Gulf War will bring disruption which could facilitate the spread of the Gospel. Operation Desert Storm may yet cause the wrath of man to praise the Lord. The wind blows where it wills, so we should pray that the sovereign Spirit will cause the Gospel to blow back the dark veil across the hearts of the Saudi citizenry in this hour.

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¹ *That the World May Know, Volume 1: The Restless Middle East*. Edited by Dr. Fredk. A. Tatford, p. 307.

² *The Grand Rapids Press*, January 26, 1991.

Thankfulness

Thankfulness is that sweet climate in the soul that looks for ways to share the overflowing of the heart.

In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.
(1 Thess. 5:18)

They say the hardest time for an atheist occurs when he feels grateful and has no one to thank.

The well-known Bible commentator, Matthew Henry, was once robbed of his money by bandits. In his diary that night he wrote the following:

"Let me be thankful first, that I was never robbed before; second, because, although they took my purse, they did not take my life; third, although they took my all, it was not much; and fourthly, because I was the one robbed, and not the robber."

There is an inscription on a stone seat in the Scottish highlands. It says simply: "Rest and be thankful." Could it be that all the getting in this age, rather than enriching us, has robbed us of this great gift — the ability to be thankful? "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord" (Ps. 92:1).

Pride slays thanksgiving, but a humble mind is the soil out of which thanks naturally grows. A proud man is seldom a grateful man, for he never thinks he gets as much as he deserves.

— H. W. Beecher

Thou hast given so much to me,
Give one thing more — a grateful heart:
Not thankful when it pleaseth me,
As if Thy blessings had spare days,
But such a heart whose pulse may be
Thy praise.

— George Herbert

"Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift."

(2 Cor. 9:15)

Gratitude is a scarce commodity in today's world. People are more concerned with presenting fresh demands than with acknowledging thankfully the favors they have received.

God is the giver of every good and perfect gift whether it be in the realm of physical provision or spiritual care. It was this realization which prompted the Psalmist to exclaim, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not *all His benefits.*" Has God given us good health, a sound mind, the comfort of family life and love? Than let us thank Him. Has He poured spiritual blessings upon us — redeemed us from sin, raised us and seated us with Christ in the heavens, kept us in the hour of temptation? Then let us thank Him.

For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

(2 Cor. 4:15)

Gratitude is a duty which ought to be paid, but which none have a right to expect.

— Anon

The discerning heart will find every situation in life an occasion for thanksgiving. Life's shadows as well as its sunshine, its sorrows as well as its joys, are from the Father's hands. It is a sign of Christian maturity to be able to recognize and be thankful for every evidence of God's love and concern seen in occasions of chastening.

God only is the Maker
Of all things near and far;
He paints the wayside flower,
He lights the evening star;
The winds and waves obey Him,
By Him the birds are fed;
Much more, to us His children,
He gives our daily bread.

We thank Thee, then, O Father,
For all things bright and good,
The seedtime and the harvest,
Our life, our health, our food:
No gifts have we to offer
For all Thy love imparts
But that which Thou desirest —
Our humble, *thankful* hearts.



Eric's Secret



It had been snowing for some time in London, Ontario. Nature's white blanket had been pulled across the landscape once more and Eric Cameron thought it would be a good day to stay inside. It had not been long since doctors had diagnosed him as a victim of ALS — amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. Most folk called it simply Lou Gehrig's disease after the famous baseball player who died from it. In 1984, Eric had been given two years to live. Already he needed two canes to assist him as the motor nerve cells in his spinal cord began to succumb to the disease. He knew the prognosis. Five in every one hundred thousand have it. The cause is unknown. There is no cure. The disease is fatal.

But Eric knew something else. At the age of twelve, on a Sunday night in his home town in Scotland, he lay in bed thinking about his eternal destiny. Then, calling to his father, he spelled out, letter by letter, "I w-a-n-t t-o b-e s-a-v-e-d." For almost forty years he had walked with the Lord since that night. When he could no longer walk, he would sit with the Lord, then lie down with Him. Whatever the doctors said his future would hold, he knew who was holding him.

Suddenly Eric's attention was arrested by the sight of a neighbor woman whose car had become firmly lodged in a snow bank. Pulling himself up with the liberal use of his canes, he bundled himself against the cold and headed outdoors to help. If he propped himself against the bumper and used his upper body strength . . . There! The car broke free of the drift. There were more drifts, however, out to the road. Eric offered to plow the driveway as well.

Unknown to the two involved in this little winter drama, another neighbor was watching from his window. Stuart Underhill was deeply impressed by this simple act of Christian kindness, especially by someone with an obvious handicap.

There the story might have ended but for two factors. Stuart's brother Marvin, a believer in the Straffordville assembly, had prayed for years for his brother's conversion. And Helen, Eric's wife, shortly thereafter visited the Underhills with some baked goods. When Stuart mentioned to her the impression it had made on him, Helen offered to bring Mr. Jim Boswell, a local evangelist, for a visit. The Underhills agreed.

GRACE AT WORK

After several visits by Mr. Boswell, the Underhills put their trust in the Saviour. Not long after, the Lord called Mrs. Underhill Home. Her husband is now in fellowship in a London, Ontario assembly.

Eric had manifested his love for the Lord in the bright days of his youth. He had moved to Canada with his parents after World War II. Settling in Hamilton, Ontario, he had joined his father in the orthodontic business, making orthopedic braces and other aids for handicapped people,



"In 1986, Eric's doctors estimated that he had less than six months to live."



particularly children. Eventually he expanded the business to London because of the children's hospital there. His parents joined him in the early 1980's where, he said, "I'll look after you for the last part of your lives, as you looked after me for the first part of mine." But it was not to be.

In those sunshine years Eric is remembered for his robust health, his radiant countenance, his rich baritone voice and his willingness to help. Then came the doctor's report.

The medical journals describe the course of the disease. They leave no doubt as to its conclusion. The victims gradually lose strength and muscle control in their extremities. Soon they are unable to walk, then to stand. The weakness moves toward their upper body until their arms hang limply by their sides. In the final stages, the lungs no longer function and the victim dies from suffocation. Is God's grace enough for that?

In 1986, Eric's doctors estimated that he had less than six months to live. But God had more than six months' work for him to do. Eric left for the land where redeemed souls walk and run and never tire on July 19, 1990.

Did the darkness of the advancing disease envelope Eric Cameron's soul? Without exception the doctors and nurses who treated him passed comment on his courage, peace and happy attitude. The anger that they saw so frequently in

other patients was completely absent in Eric. He was not slow to tell you his secret.

On one of his frequent hospital stays, a psychiatrist suffering from Parkinson's became a close friend of Eric's who shared the Gospel with him. The contact extended beyond the hospital through phone calls, letters and tapes. Recent letters indicate that the man has trusted the Saviour.

Another ALS sufferer was reached when Eric learned that the man, an M.D., was in need of a motorized wheelchair. Eric gave him the one he was no longer able to use himself. The doctor and his wife were frightened and in great distress. They came to visit the Camerons several times afterward. Eventually Eric sent him a tape with a Gospel message, saying he felt constrained to do it, though it might cause an end to their friendship. After listening to it, however, the man said he longed to "have what Eric had." When his wife called to tell them of his passing, she said, "Tom was completely at peace and ready to go."

A flood of tributes to Eric's life and testimony have come to the family from fellow patients, medical personnel, neighbors and friends. His wife Helen adds: "He was granted the courage and ability to speak to so many that his life would never have touched if he had not been ill."

There are many philosophies and religions that purport to tell you how to live. Only the Gospel can show you how to die. The simple stone that marks Eric Cameron's grave has engraved on it his secret: "To you who believe He is precious."



Mr. and Mrs. Eric Cameron

Things That Glorify God

George Goodman

There is a distinction to be drawn between pleasing God and glorifying Him. "We ought to walk and please God" (1 Thess. 4:1), and we should "Do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31), for thereto have we been chosen in Christ that we should be "to the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:6).

Pleasing God is giving Him satisfaction, so that it draws out special manifestations of His love and approval (John 14:21-23), even as the obedience of Christ "unto the death of the cross" drew out the love of the Father (John 10:17).

Glorifying God has reference rather to the effect of our conduct on others. It is so living and acting that His excellencies are seen and His grace manifested, and others are led to praise Him. For example, if we let our light shine before men they see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:16). Thus our works glorify Him. It was so with the liberality of the Corinthians, it was "abundant by many thanksgivings unto God" (2 Cor. 9:12).

We should be ambitious of both these things, to obtain witness (as did Enoch) that we please God, and also to show forth the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

It is said even of inanimate objects that they do this latter, for "the heavens declare the glory of God, the firmament showeth His handiwork." Since all our good works are "wrought in Him," and "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," all manifestations of the new life glorify Him as being His own work in us. This honor we may have, not in some things only, but in everything. We may do all to His glory and find in even the smallest duty an occasion of pleasing and glorifying God.

At a young people's conference, the question was raised, "Is God easy to please?" After some discussion, two thoughts were approved: (1) God

as a gracious Father is easily pleased in the sense that every desire and effort made to do so is met with His love — "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart" (1 Kings 8:18); (2) It is not always easy to the flesh to do God's will. It is those who "have suffered in the flesh" who cease from that which displeases God (1 Peter 4:1).

There are many things that especially please and glorify God. We need not distinguish between these in naming them, for all that glorifies God in our lives must please Him — though the same is not true of the wicked, for God makes even "the wrath of man to praise Him" (Ps. 76:10). We may perhaps group them under seven heads.

1. Praise and Thanksgiving

"Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me" (Ps. 50:23). When the Samaritan leper turned back and fell on his face at the Lord's feet giving Him thanks, Jesus described it as "giving glory to God." Contrast this with the words of the wicked and slothful servant who insulted his lord thus: "I knew thee that thou art a hard master!" We sometimes forget as children of God that to complain, murmur, and wear a discontented look is in effect to do indignity to our Lord, as the slothful servant did. Onlookers might be excused if they said, "Surely these people have a hard master."

The glorious language of the Psalms teaches us how to magnify God in praise. "I will extol Thee my God, O King. I will bless Thy Name for ever and ever" (Ps. 145:1). A praising people, singing and making melody to the Lord with the heart is a wonderful testimony to the glory of God.

2. Faith and Confession

"Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom. 4:20). This is described in detail thus: "who against hope believed in hope," that is, he

"We may do all to His glory and find in even the smallest duty an occasion of pleasing and glorifying God."

KEYS FOR LIVING

hoped in a hopeless case, because God had promised, "so shall thy seed be." He considered the difficulties and yet "staggered not." To look our difficulties boldly in the face and go on in faith glorifies God.

*Faith laughs at impossibilities,
And says it shall be done.*

So we are told he was "fully persuaded" that the promises would be performed, and this both pleased and glorified God.

To step out in faith, especially when a bold confession accompanies it, as when David faced Goliath with an open confession of his faith in God and a bold confidence in triumph, is well pleasing to God and glorifying to His Name (1 Sam. 17:45-47).

3. Good Works and Fruit-Bearing

These are spoken of in the Word as bringing glory to God. The verses are well-known. We have already quoted that men see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven. *Shining* here evidently has reference to good works. Our works should shine, that is, give evidence of the grace and power of God that is with us.

Fruit-bearing is expressly named as glorifying God. "Herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:8). From the words that follow, "So shall ye be My disciples," we gather that the fruit is not "winning souls" merely, as so often suggested, but character — "the fruit of the Spirit" — whereby the likeness of the Master is seen in the disciple.

4. Unity and Love

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps. 133:1). This is pleasing to God, for there He commanded the blessing (v. 3). Our Lord's prayer recognizes the same truth: "That they may be one in Us that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (John 17:21). A manifestation of unity in a world of strife will convince men that Christ has come and that He is with and in His people. The Lord emphasizes the same thing in the oft-quoted words, "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). Lack of unity and mutual love in an assembly is dishonoring to God, disastrous to the assembly, and gives occasion to the enemy to blaspheme.

5. Giving and Sacrifice

"To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. 13:16). The Holy Spirit often strikes this note. We recall the beautiful words: "God loveth a cheerful giver." The widow giving her two mites drew out the Lord's approval and commendation. Such sacrifices as hers, though unobserved by the crowd, still please Him who sat that day over against the treasury.

He "who pleased not Himself," whose earthly walk is summed up in the words, "who went about doing good," set us the example. He washed the disciples' feet and at last gave Himself for us. Love never counts the cost; it is enough that the object is attained, the other blessed.

6. Suffering Wrongfully

"If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (1 Peter 2:20). The example of Christ is set before these words, with the reason: "that ye should follow His steps" (v. 21). So Paul adds: "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf" (4:16).

The manifestation of grace is a new thing in the world. Real genuine love shown to those who are unlovable, who are fierce and cruel enemies; who hate, despise, and persecute; this is unknown in a revengeful world. But what a powerful testimony it is, how pleasing to God, because it is Christ-like.

7. Obedience of Faith

"Doing the will of God from the heart" (Eph. 6:6) is perhaps the best definition of the obedience that pleases God. It has been pointed out that that is not obedience that is done by constraint. To do the will of God outwardly, while the heart resents having to do it is not obedience. It is rebellion under the cloak of submission.

Such feigned obedience gives no pleasure to God's heart, and brings no glory to Him. It is that obedience that the Lord Jesus yielded to His Father that pleases God. "I delight to do Thy will. Thy law is within My heart" (Ps. 40:8).

It is this obedience that is promised in the New Covenant when the law is put into the mind (and so rightly understood) and written on the heart (and so gladly and willingly done). This obedience pleases God and without it nothing does.

U

Gospel Folio Press

The work of Gospel Folio Press, publishers of *Uplook* magazine, has its roots in the godly heritage and evangelical fervor of the Pell family. Mr. Pell Sr. was a wallpaper hanger and the first publications produced by the teenagers, Bill and Peter, were hand-lettered on the paper scraps. The wallpaper design added interest to the cover. Bill hand-lettered gospel tracts and, on his day off, distributed them in nearby communities. This caught the attention of a local businessman who helped Bill acquire a small handpress which was set up in his mother's parlor. Soon other believers were requesting quantities of the tracts and encouraged Bill to form a company to produce these. His desire was to spread the Gospel, but *Gospel Press* sounded a bit pretentious, so the "*Folio*" was added to humble it. *Folio* means "one fold" and has a similar effect as one would achieve by calling a community a "one-horse town."

The Pells' initial contact with assemblies was with the Grant meetings. Then Bill heard of a conference of "Open" brethren at Bay City, Michigan in 1922. He was thrilled by the ministry and fellowship; there he made contact with W. Ferguson, Leonard Sheldrake and others who began to frequent the Pell home. The latter was then publishing an evangelistic monthly called *Words of Peace*. Soon after, Bill began printing it on his \$25.00 press. Gospel Folio continues to distribute more than 150,000 per year. At the time of the agreement, Mr. Sheldrake wrote to Bill: ". . . If you feel you could handle the printing of *Words of Peace* and the will of God were so, we could yoke together in this service for His Name. The time is short. Soon our Lord will come. How much I have lost by lack of devotion to Him. Oh, that He might work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure." If the time was short and the need was great then, what of now?

Not long after, Gospel Folio began printing Sunday School papers. As Volume 4 of *Words of Love* was dated 1928, the paper was probably begun in 1925. *Childhood Days* was started in 1931 with Mervyn Paul as editor. At the Sunday School Teachers' Conference (Toronto) held in May of 1931 the *Lesson Manual* was born; J. R. Littleproud was editor until his death in 1941.

In 1938 the *Scholar's Manual* was added to the line. In 1939 Bill became exercised about a daily devotional calendar. In spite of discouraging remarks from some who said it wasn't feasible in North America, the calendar (initially named the *Remembrancer* but changed to *Choice Gleanings*) was launched in 1940. It was decided to print eight hundred the first year. Bill figured he had that many friends. "At least I can give that many away," he said. More than two million have been distributed since and the calendar is now produced in Britain, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand as well as the U.S.

In 1959, the name of *Words of Love* was changed to *Words of Life*. The abridged edition was changed to *Words of Truth* and in 1960, the Bible Class edition was named *Words of Faith*.

Of course, there have been books, booklets and tracts (millions of them) over the years. One of the little known areas at the press has been the effort in missions. This has been two-pronged. First, a number of missionaries or prospective missionaries have been trained on typesetting and printing processes at GFP. It is possible with the introduction of state-of-the-art computers we may again play a part in training for missionary work. Second, literature for the foreign field has been produced here — a grammar in Lwena, a bilingual hymn book and a bilingual *Gospel of Mark* in Songo and Portuguese, a Bible course of the *Wordless Book* in Arabic, multiplied thousands of *The Reason Why* in Korean, *God's Way of Salvation* in Spanish and other items in Italian.

One cannot end such a review of the work at Gospel Folio Press without mentioning, at least briefly, the workers. The Pell sisters, since school days, have tirelessly labored in the work. They have been aided by true servants who will hear the "well done" of the Chief Servant in a coming day. And so the work continues as we "occupy" until He comes. May the Lord help us to carry forward the vision and serve our generation for God as the Pell family has served theirs.



1960

1970

1990

Hanging by a Thread

Horace A. Coleman

"In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands" (2 Cor. 11:32-33).

How often great issues in the out-working of the divine plan have seemingly "hung by a thread." Sometimes quite literally so. As, for example, the spies in Jericho (Josh. 2:15), or David, the king-designate (1 Sam. 19:12). Later still the prophet with the message of impending judgment (Jer. 38:13).

In the incident recorded by Paul in the above verses, he recalls how he was lowered from the city walls at Damascus, in a basket, that he might escape the hands of those who sought his hurt and the termination of his witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was the very embodiment of the purpose of God in the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles, and indeed "to the whole world." He had been specially chosen for the task — he was equipped by all the gracious working of the divine Spirit that he might be "a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My Name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

On the human level the destruction of Paul would have meant the destruction of years of wonderful fruitful service in the preaching of the Gospel. Thousands who heard the Word from the lips of Paul, and the many who believed, would never have done so. These wonderful letters to the churches for their guidance and instruction which have been so carefully preserved by the power of God that they might remain throughout the Church's history here as a source of illumination and help, would never have been written. Is it possible to conceive our New Testament without the epistles of Paul? Yet his slaughter at the hands of his enemies would have meant just that.

How important then that he should escape! How important that he should be placed beyond the ability of these men to carry out the evil designs of *their* master and so frustrate the greater

purposes of God! No wonder Paul records this experience as being an important one — it was! And yet perhaps its importance to Paul lay mostly in the fact that it was carried through successfully in close fellowship with *others*. And only inasmuch as *others* were involved was it possible at all. He could not have escaped alone. Fellowship in the work of the Gospel was a very real thing with Paul and these disciples that night!

There was the *basket*. Who brought it? By its domesticated sound perhaps it was a sister that provided the basket! Whether or not it was does not matter overmuch. The basket was necessary and there was a disciple willing to provide one.

There was a *rope*. One of those disciples brought his rope. We can be assured it was a well-tried one, admirably suited to the purpose in hand. That disciple knew it was strong enough to hold the basket and Paul, and so to bring this venture to its successful conclusion.

There were *willing hands* to tie the rope and basket and to steady the load through the window and down over the wall to the ground.

We can be assured that behind the hands there were hearts and minds likewise willing and united in the carrying out of this task. There would be no argument as to method . . . no one would oppose his fellow with a "different view," no one would seek preference over his fellow; that night their hearts would beat as *one* in the urgency of the task and in their common loyalty to the Lord Jesus and His servant, whose escape they were conniving.

All that they did was done in a deep sense of responsibility to their Master and His cause as represented by Paul. They knew that Paul was helpless without them — and Paul knew it too — but together they pulled it off! Paul was set down safely to the ground and as he set off in the darkness it must have been with a song in his heart — that song that afterwards rang out in jubilant note in a Gentile prison (Acts 16:25) — and its echo must have remained with those disciples as they carefully went back to their homes. They would take leave of each other with a warm grip of the



hand, each with the other. No "class distinction," no comparing of "gift"; they were *one* in this task and they had seen it through.

Paul we know, and his reward is assured as he himself knew and testified (2 Tim. 4:8). What do we know of those disciples? Nothing but this simple story of their faithfulness in fellowship with Paul. We can be very sure that the Master has a full record of their exploit that night and that full reward will be given in a coming day (2 Cor. 5:10).

Our Duty Today

The Master's commission stands yet; even after nineteen centuries and more it is still uncompleted. What has happened? Have there failed men to step into "the basket," to go out into the night with the best of all services, to proclaim Christ among the heathen races of the earth? Or is it that there have not been sufficient loyal, loving hearts to "man the walls" and see God's servants through, linked with them in their enterprise in the Gospel? Or is it that baskets and ropes (still needed in the form of a variety of equipment) have been wanting, and so God's servants have lacked the means of getting away and out in the cause of Christ? Whatever it is that has been lacking, the stark fact stands out plain for all to see: more than one half of the world's population still lies in the midnight of ignorance of God and His plan of redemption. For the generations that have gone we are not accounted responsible, neither for those that will be born tomorrow. But let us take this to heart that for the generation of men alive in the world today we are solemnly responsible before God. We have the message. We also have the commission to deliver it.

Where are the men?

Where are the baskets and ropes?

Where are those that willingly stay "on the wall," but whose whole interests are with those that "go" and who give all that they are and have that their mission may be successful?

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Faith Is . . .

Doug Kazen

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen . . . Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God . . ." (Hebrews 11:1, 3).

Notice the operative words of true faith: substance, evidence, and understanding. No mysticism here; nothing ethereal; nothing dark and esoteric. Faith is reality. It is the ability to see, touch, and comprehend the things that are. But it goes beyond mere physical apprehension and sees God in them. The person with faith and the person without faith will know exactly the same tangible things, but the one with faith comprehends and trusts God in them.

The world has an expression: "Blind faith." This is neither a biblical nor a spiritual concept. True faith is not blind; it is just the opposite. It is the clearest of vision. Human nature without faith sees marvelous things, but in self-centered, narrow-mindedness comprehends them only in personal, or physical terms. True faith sees the same things, but in the seeing has the vision broadened to perceive therein both God and His purposes. The viewer then transcends the things themselves. His knowledge goes beyond the immediate and his expanded vision becomes a growing appreciation of the active God of all things. That is divine faith.

Consider the great examples of faith set before us in this chapter. Abel exhibits faith in the excellence of his sacrifice; Enoch in the testimony of his walk; Noah, in the obedience of his faith; Abram, in the extent of his trust. Were these men fools? Of course not! Were they out of touch with reality, dreamers, muddled as to things around them? Just the opposite. Theirs was the keenest of vision; the clearest of understanding. Such is true of those who have true faith today. Faith and reality are not enemies — they are united. Faith based on reality is true faith.

As Christians, we should not lead our children to think that what we believe is vague, mystical, and incomprehensible. Our young should not seek assurance through a blind groping. Their faith and ours, having been focused through regenerate eyes, must have substance, being based

(Continued on next page)

Faith Is . . .

continued

on evidence, and include the exercise of our understanding.

In France, there is a famous structure called The Bridge at Avignon. It has, however, a fatal flaw because it reaches only halfway across the great River Rhone. In blind faith one could start across. You would see the solid paving stones beneath your feet, and below that, the flowing waters of the river. You would conclude you must, therefore, be on a bridge. If that is all you see, you would soon be in the river — for the bridge will not carry you across. So is man's groundless faith in himself. It will carry him some distance, but will not bring him to his destination. True faith

sees the immovable Word of God, untouched by the river of time and circumstance, which will bring us safely to the other side. True faith, with confidence in God, goes beyond immediate circumstance to see the whole, avoids the pitfalls of doubt and embraces the divine Architect in His word and work.

“Faith is believing what we do not see; the reward of faith is seeing what we believe.”
— Augustine

Substance & Evidence

David Gooding

The Epistle to the Hebrews, perhaps beyond all others, is designed to strengthen the faith, confidence, and assurance of God's people. This is everywhere apparent: the great quality that is extolled in chapter 11 is not zeal or godliness or love, but *faith*; the Israelites, we are told, failed to enter into Canaan because of *unbelief* (3:19); the condition of our having become partakers of Christ is this same *confidence* of faith, and that not only at the beginning but all the way through (3:14); and the ministry of our High Priest is aimed at securing that we do not cast away our *confidence* (10:35), or our confession, (4:14 R.V.), for if a man abandons his confession of faith in Christ, what is he?

Hypostasis and *elenchos* are both used as descriptions of faith in Hebrews 11:1. Faith is the *hypostasis* of things hoped for. The word basically means “an underlying support, foundation.” Then in one direction, it develops the meaning “substance, substantial nature, essence, actual being, reality.” So, for instance, Christ is the very image of God's substance (1:3, R.V.). In another direction, it develops the meaning “steadiness,

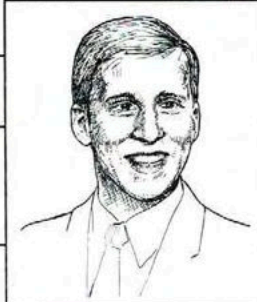
firmness, conviction, assurance,” and from that it is an easy step to the meaning “a giving substance to, a guaranteeing,” and so “title deeds,” which are instruments of guarantee and security. The choice of meaning in Hebrews 11:1 is not easy (witness the differences in the versions), but it lies between giving *hypostasis* a passive meaning, i.e., “faith is the inwrought confidence and assurance that one day we shall possess the things we hope for,” and an active meaning, i.e., “faith gives substance to our hopes, turning them into solid realities.” If here the active meaning seems preferable, in 3:14 the passive meaning alone is possible. The expositor, rather than the grammarian, must decide.

A similar situation pertains to the word *elenchos*, which basically means “proof, proving, something which brings conviction.” It is perhaps possible to give it a passive meaning, “faith is the inner conviction about things not seen,” but the active meaning is grammatically easier, “faith is that which supplies the conviction and makes us certain of things not seen.”

— Excerpted from *Precious Seed* Nov./Dec. 1962

John Knox McEwen

John Bjorlie



One need only glance at the book of Acts to find the miraculous at every preaching point. Scoffers were forced to confess, "This is the finger of God." Unlikely conversions, riots and assassination plots awaited the apostles at each new port. In the centuries since, how often we have noticed that when the gospel first entered a district, it came through unusual messengers and that unusual things happened. The work of John Knox McEwen (1853–1944) in pioneering the Maritimes fits this pattern.

McEwen had been raised in the God-fearing home of Presbyterian "Covenanters" in Northern Ireland. In 1874, John was twenty-one years old and "well satisfied with his religious attainments but still a stranger to God." With the work of American evangelist, D. L. Moody, that year saw a special visitation of God in the city of Belfast. James Campbell and James W. Smith had also seen the power of God in many places, including Dromore, the home of the McEwen family. As gospel meetings began, so did the opposition. "An uproar was heard all over the village; stones and mud flew in all directions." Still many believed, confessing Christ by publicly burning a heap of evil books. "So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed" (Acts 19:20).

The presence of God was not theoretical in those gospel meetings. It was felt. John attended, and there he had a terrible awakening. "I began to examine the foundation on which I was resting my soul for eternity and found it nothing but sinking, shifting sand. The Word of God took every prop from me and I was left without a shred to hide me from a sin-hating God. Standing on the brink of an eternal hell, with nothing but the thread of life to keep me out of it, not knowing what to do or where to turn, I was pointed to the verse which has given many a poor sinner rest to their weary soul — John 3:16." This transaction occurred in a farmer's cottage. The newborn soul rose and marched around the kitchen singing:

*Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast;
There by His love o'ershaded,
Sweetly my soul shall rest.*

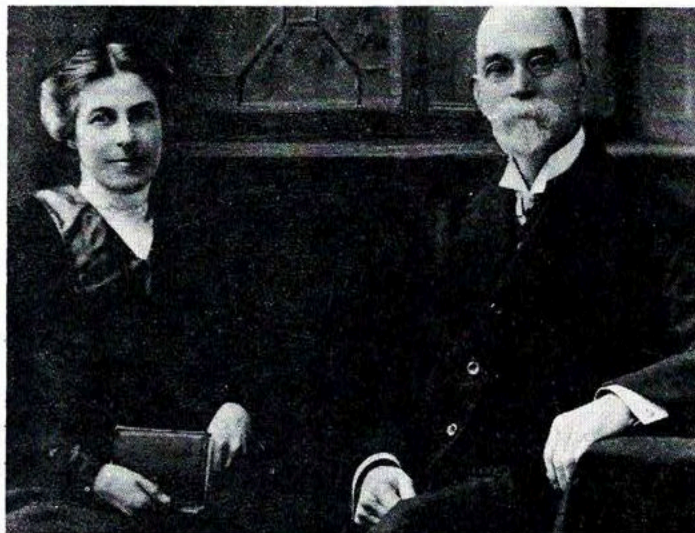
The next night, James W. Smith was speaking to a large crowd in a barn when John entered. The preacher stopped and spoke to the young man: "John, are you saved yet?"

Startled, he replied, "Yes, Mr. Smith, thank God I am saved."

"Come up here and tell us about it," the preacher responded.

And so a newborn John Knox McEwen ascended the platform and, between tremors, told how God had saved him.

Soon it was evident that God had gifted Mr. McEwen with the ability to preach the Word. Within a few years, John was devoting the bulk of his time to the ministry of the Word, speaking to anxious listeners nightly. One assembly had formed amid fierce opposition. Orangemen and Romanists for a time laid aside their differences in



order to fight the new "heresy." After the baptism of thirteen converts, two men stormed the meeting one Saturday night and demanded Mr. McEwen to "put on his coat for the last time and come out!" Brother McEwen was a slight, small man but with a strong personality and a sharp wit. That night he did not comply with the invitation from the mob outside, but instead was spirited away by two friends.

With the encouragement of brothers Campbell and Smith, he went out "not on faith lines, but on

HEROES

the faithfulness of God." Indeed John often had practical illustrations of what that verse means: "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" Despite the spiritual revival, strangely few of the young assemblies in the country were concerned about helping gospel preachers. But these privations were only considered tokens of God's approval. Passages such as 2 Corinthians 6:4-10 became more familiar than foreign. The Apostle Paul did not specifically mention having rotten eggs strike his forehead and run down his face and into his beard, or being threatened with tar and feathers. But we are convinced he would have been alongside our brother McEwen had they been contemporaries. That McEwen's ministry was marked by violent persecution stems from two things: his message and his method. Contrary to popular manuals of evangelism, McEwen felt it quite appropriate to "buttonhole" people and to let people hear the offense of the Cross. And offended they were. It is striking how many accounts there are in his biography of people becoming uncontrollably irate by brother McEwen's manner and then shortly thereafter being converted.

On May 31, 1879 he left for America "not strong in body, and with little money in my pocket." His older brother, William Renwick McEwen, had preceded him to America by a few years, and met him in New York. A telling incident occurred there. They went to visit a man who happened to live above a saloon. The two were split up. William passed near the saloon door and heard loud talk inside. Thinking it was a drunken brawl, but going near the door, William saw the big saloon keeper in the middle of the floor in a menacing posture with a pitcher over his brother's head. John was telling him, "Man, if you die in your sins, you will be in hell." Later William tried to moderate his brother's methods. John listened to the lecture; and then replied, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

In 1883 he arrived by train in Amherst, Nova Scotia. It was an austere winter day. John tells us, "I had my breakfast in my pocket. At that hour few people were about and I had a great desire to pray. I spied an old stable near the station. The entrance to my first sanctum in Nova Scotia was very low and, getting down on all fours on the snow, which was frozen hard as a rock, I cried to God to make my coming to Nova Scotia a blessing to many." In later years his name would become a

household word in "New Scotland" and the believers would be called McEwenites. Hundreds were saved and assemblies planted, the first being in Port Howe in 1885. The testimony spread to Pugwash Junction, New Glasgow, Sydney Mines and elsewhere. In Mount Pleasant, a former boxer by the name of Jim Mattinson with a clenched fist had vowed to his friends that "If he ever tells me I'm going to hell, I'll fell him like an ox." When Jim was converted a week and a half later, the entire community said, "We have seen strange things today."

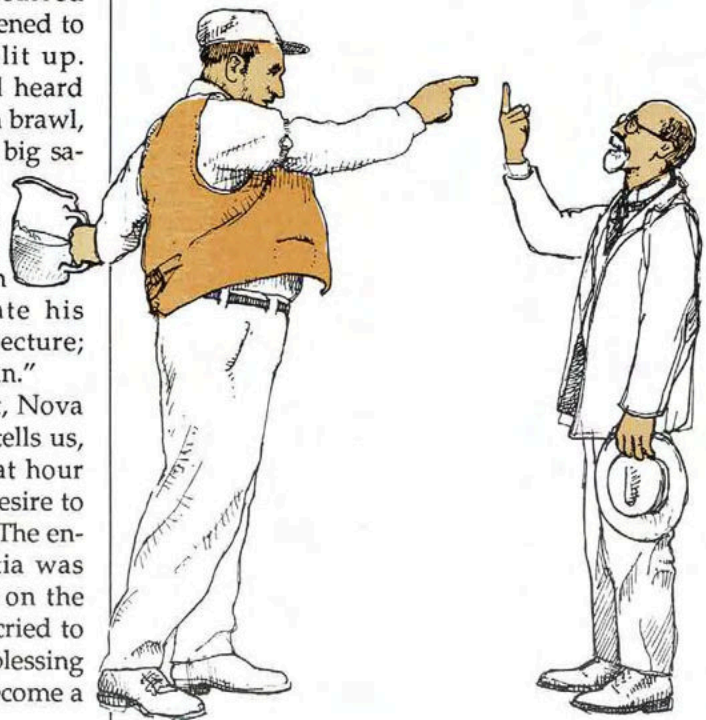
Noticeably, John Knox McEwen was no lone ranger. This work was pursued in concert with many able co-laborers. This includes the one he found in 1889 when he married Miss Alice Fowler, a woman of God and true helpmeet. She passed into the presence of Christ in 1950.

The life and times of McEwen can be expressed by his introduction to a medical doctor who was shortly thereafter saved. He gripped his hand and asked, "Whither bound, doctor? Heaven or hell?" It is a question that should haunt men still. **U**

Further Reading:

Irish Evangelists Now with the Lord. Published by John Ritchie. pp. 225-229.

John Knox McEwen and Pioneer Work in the Maritimes, by John T. Dickson, Good News Publishers.



The Saviour Comes

D. Anderson-Berry, M.D.

The whole world was rolling down the ages in darkness to its doom. Did the hosts that populate the regions of unshined light peer over the battlements of heaven and mark with sadness its downward course? Did these glorious beings shudder as from that dark world arose groans and curses, sobs and cries, ribald laughter, horrible blasphemy, shouts and yells of licensed massacre from multitudinous battlefields? Any help? Any hope? None! none! for who can stay a world that has cut itself loose from its God and has bidden an eternal defiance to its Creator?

And yet, it seems as they ponder over that insoluble enigma, the Eternal King rises from His throne and, laying aside the mantled splendor of deity, steps from star to star until He reaches the door of our dark world. As befits His dignity, there shines a light, unearthly in its brilliance, from the band of heaven's glorious torch-bearers; there sounds a blare of trumpets from the heralds of the court of glory, the music of the spheres made audible for once! But for some sleepy shepherds, startled from their midnight watch on the slopes of Bethlehem's pastures, the light that had ne'er shone on hill and dale before had shined forth unobserved, the cadences that ne'er had floated over the homes and haunts of men before had sounded in vain as far as this world was concerned. And when that door which separates this world of sense and sin from that world of spirit and glory had swung back for once in all its history *inwards*, the Lord of Glory entered as a little Child swaddled in the poor linen of a toiler's home and cradled in a manger! And this was how the Lord of the Universe came to the dark world He had loved and lost awhile, which He yet loved with a love stronger than death, and, loving, sought amid the night of time until He found it.

The scene changes! It is no longer midnight.

'Tis high noon. It is no longer the open courtyard of the Inn of Bethlehem; it is the road that, winding down the slopes of Olivet, climbs to the great gate of the city, the Holy City — Jerusalem. It is no longer a solitary silence broken by the clanging of cattle and the faint, low cry of one in pain. It is the meeting of two crowds — the one bearing in its front a young Man in the prime of life riding on a colt and strewing the road with garments and greenery; the other pouring forth from the

city's portal, lining the way, and mingling their voices in the great cry of "Hosanna! O Save!" Listen how the two crowds unite in using the words penned many centuries before by the Psalmist (Ps. 118:26): "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord." Time on tiptoe all down the ages had been shouting, "He is coming!" "He is coming!" has been the testimony of prophet, priest, and king. "He is on the way!" murmurs each gush of steaming blood that flows from every sacrifice. Trumpets caught up the whisper and pealed the glad tidings forth until the listening air, learning the lesson, repeated it in each wave of sound that broke on the encircling, everlasting hills.

And now the whole city is moved, for old men and children,

young men and maidens, are streaming forth from court and alley, from terraced slope and darksome bazaar, and meeting the multitudes from the surrounding villages and hamlets, join their voices in a mighty shout, "Hosanna in the highest!"

We have seen Him come to the door of the world; now we see Him come to the gate of the capital. Again, if men's ears had been trained to catch the strains of heavenly music, they would have heard the Glory Song, the sweet antiphon of the skies: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in."

U

"The Eternal King rises from His throne... laying aside the mantled splendor of deity."

Across the Street

Merton Wolcott

For thirty years I'd looked at a vast empty quarter on maps of the area to the northwest of Nyankunde, Zaire wondering if it was really uninhabited. The steamy rain forest remains as wild and dark as it ever has, unbroken by the tracks that pass for roads in Zaire, in an area the size of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. What if there were people there — Pygmies perhaps, Walesi tribesmen, or others? Obviously there weren't many people there, if any. But if they were there, who was going out of their way to tell them that God loved them so much that He sent His Son to pay the penalty for their sins?

During the dry season of 1987, Les Green and I, in company with a Zairian evangelist and Walesi and Pygmy helpers, crossed the area from west to east in an initial survey, covering some 160 miles in ten days. During six of those days we encountered only wild beasts, ate little and slept on the ground in leaf shelters or in the open. Once some of us unwittingly passed a deadly eight-foot black

of the law was least likely to find them. We took the opportunity to present the Gospel to these hardened men, and were told that we were the first "pastors" to have visited them. We were later able to send Bibles to some of them.

In 1988, Les and I decided to strike out north-northeast from Les's station of Akokora to visit some small settlements that we had learned of on our '87 trek. We drove eight miles (it took us nearly an hour) to Chief Apuobo's home (pronounced Ah-poo-h-o-bo); then began our hike in company with him, covering the first eleven miles in a little over three hours. Arriving at Andili (An-dee-lee) we found a very nervous people fearing military repercussions, a few of the men having been involved in the beating of the brother of a military commander in a fight over ivory. Early the next morning we headed north along a little-used path. It had rained in the night and we were soon thoroughly soaked. The forest floor seldom dries, even in the dry season, and plants and bushes retain water for eight hours or more after a rain. We jumped and waded streams and crossed others on fallen trees (in eighty miles we crossed ninety-one streams and rivers). In the early afternoon we met a group of Pygmies and Walesi carrying a pair of five-foot tusks from a recently poached elephant. Although forbidden, the hunting of elephants continues unabated. Barring a miracle, elephants will be nonexistent in the wild in Zaire within twenty years. An hour and a half before dark we reached a small river where we made camp, having come some twenty miles. That night a troop of chimpanzees, obviously disturbed by our presence, screamed and shouted their displeasure much of the night, while a crocodile occasionally grunted in the river to let us know he was there.

Up before dawn, we broke camp quickly after a cup of tea and continued our way north, stumbling over roots, scrambling under and over fallen trees, constantly ducking and dodging vines, giant forest plants and branches. Occasionally the eye would catch a glimpse of a beautiful orchid pushing its way through rotting vegetation. How often God puts beauty in places where human eyes never appreciate it — but He can!



Preparing to leave Andili, last village before six days of walking through forest of gold camps on the way to Itenday. Les Green is on the left.

mamba lying at eye level in a bush barely inches from our faces. A sharp-eyed Pygmy companion spotted it and put it to flight with a swing of his elephant spear. The next day Les and I scrambled high into a tree, as an elephant, disturbed by our Pygmy companions' interest in her baby, came crashing and trumpeting in fear and rage through the underbrush. Near the end of our trek we came into gold panners' camps, finding renegades from justice lucratively working the gravel beds and streams in this remote forest where the long arm

ACROSS THE STREET

Hot, sweaty, and filthy, we entered the squalid little village of Dui (Doo-ee). After a dip in the nearby river, we called the villagers together and spoke to them of the love of God in Christ. Dui and Angata (An-gah-tah), a village an hour's walk away, have never had a gospel witness; there are no schools, no medicines, no stores, no churches. As far as we could determine, we were the first to have come with the Gospel, and that in an area of Zaire where the Gospel first came eighty years ago. Dui has been too remote and too small to attract interest.

Off the next morning at dawn, we traversed higher land where many Congo River tributaries have their source. Creek bottoms were muddy and our feet were soon soaked again. Feet were blistered and sore as we began to cross occasional large grassy clearings. Signs of buffalo, an unpredictable and dangerous animal, increased. We carried no weapons. We limped, weary and sore, into Abundju (ah-boon-joo) well after dark, having walked twenty-eight hard miles since dawn. Even the short, hard bed woven of sticks offered to us by people so poor they could hardly afford rags for clothing seemed almost comfortable. It was, however, difficult to ignore the walls of the hut alive with scurrying roaches after dark. We appreciate the African believers' often-repeated morning prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord for keeping the roaches out of mouth, nose and ears!

The next day was spent nursing sore feet and muscles, and talking with villagers. They had no recollection of anyone coming with the message of the Gospel, and Les and I were the first Caucasians that many of them had ever seen. Just before dark we had a meeting with the mixed group of Walesi and Pygmies gathered around the men's palaver shelter, trying to present the message of salvation to simple people in as simple a way as possible. Four men professed salvation, but we wonder how much they understood during our short stay. How we need to "condescend to men of low estate."

Again we were appalled at the absence of stores, schools, and medical facilities. One man came with a badly infected hand. He needed antibiotics, but all I could do was pour on Merthiolate.

We learned at Abundju that a track passable by four-wheel-drive vehicles came within a half-day's walk to the north. In March of 1990, Les and I and Mark Plaza were again able to visit

Abundju. By driving north, then looping around to the east and south, a distance of 145 miles (ten hours driving time), we were able to reach it by foot with another half-day journey. For four days we lived with the people of Abundju, this time sleeping on the floor of the village jail, disturbed only by mice occasionally trying to get in the sleeping bags with us! Morning and evening Shafiko (Shah-fee-ko), an evangelist from Akokora, explained the Gospel to the hundred or



Rest stop. Guide on the left, Walesi and Pygmy helpers with Mert. The clearing was bulldozed by elephants, who come here to socialize.

so villagers, Pygmies and visitors from other places in their tribal tongue. We distributed Bibles in both Swahili and Bangala to the few who can read, and left other booklets and tracts to be read. We trust the Spirit of God for fruit that remains and pray that the Lord would raise up godly national believers to live with the people of Abundju and demonstrate to them the reality of life in Christ.

I'm grateful for God-given strength to get to our "other side of the street." "Crossing the street" for us means careful planning and preparation, and a lot of prayer. Much credit goes to our wives, Jane, Peg, and Faye who spent much time planning and preparing, and who held us up before the Lord constantly for His protection and ability in the Gospel.

How far must you go to take the good news to needy souls? Your journey may not be as long, but it too will require planning, preparation and prayer. You may not need to learn another language or battle a jungle. Just the same, it will be costly. They wait in the darkness to hear the message of His grace. The love of Christ constrains us.

Abundju and Dui are our "other side of the street." What's yours?

U



A Concordance

Jim McKendrick

The concordance was one of the most under-used reference tools I owned. I was given my first concordance, a *Young's*, as a wedding gift by one of the elders in my assembly. For years I used it to simply find verses and in a *Young's* concordance that is not an easy task. Then one day I wanted to do a study of the word *fellowship*. Suddenly the concordance became a new and valuable tool, one I have used constantly since.

Let's look at what we can find out about *fellowship* from the concordance. First, we can look up all the verses that contain the word. Here the concordance becomes a "topical" help. But in *Strong's* or *Young's*, the help goes even further. You will discover that there are two Hebrew and four Greek words translated *fellowship*. This is where the digging starts. In *Strong's* concordance, there is a Greek and Hebrew dictionary which will give you a definition of the Greek or Hebrew words. This will increase your understanding of the English word, as you understand its meaning in the original language. A word of warning is in order. Because a word can mean many things, it doesn't follow that it *does* mean all of those things in a particular context. Only a part of the definition will apply to your verse.

But now you need to go further. In the Greek and Hebrew dictionaries, other English words are given that are used to translate that particular word. For instance, you will discover at least eight different English words other than *fellowship* by which the Greek words have been translated. By looking up those English words, you will find the broad meaning that can be conveyed by the word *fellowship*. This will give you a solid, Biblical understanding of the family of words you are studying. You have done this without having to know the original languages and without any other books but a *Strong's* or *Young's* concordance.

Now a word on why I prefer *Strong's* over

Young's. Both will do many of the same things for you. However, *Strong's* is easier to use if you just want to find a text, because of the way it is laid out. Secondly, *Strong's* has a better dictionary and shows the compound Greek words as well as root words which can be of help in understanding the meaning. The key word of comparison of six English translations, which is only in *Strong's*, can be of value in showing how the experts translated various words. An additional help is an indication of distinctions between the text of the Authorized and the Revised versions of the Bible. On top of this, the *Strong's* numbering system, which is the key between the main text of the concordance and the dictionary, has been used as the key in various lexicons and study helps. So by having the *Strong's* concordance, you will find the doorway open to many other helps that have been closed to a strictly English reader.

In summation, here are six areas you can explore with your *Strong's* concordance:

1. The Greek or Hebrew word which lies behind a particular English word;

2. Greek and Hebrew synonyms

(different words which render the same English word);

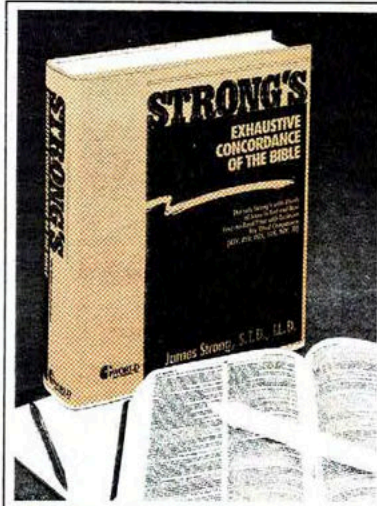
3. English synonyms (different English words from the same Greek or Hebrew word). These are the words after the dash in the definition;

4. The root and derivations of a particular Greek or Hebrew word;

5. An exhaustive list of all references using that English word; and

6. A comparison of other translations of the text or word being studied.

I do believe that the very first tool that should be purchased by the new believer is the *Strong's* concordance, not because it will all be understood and used right away, but because, as the believer grows in his spiritual life, he will never outgrow his need for this valuable tool.

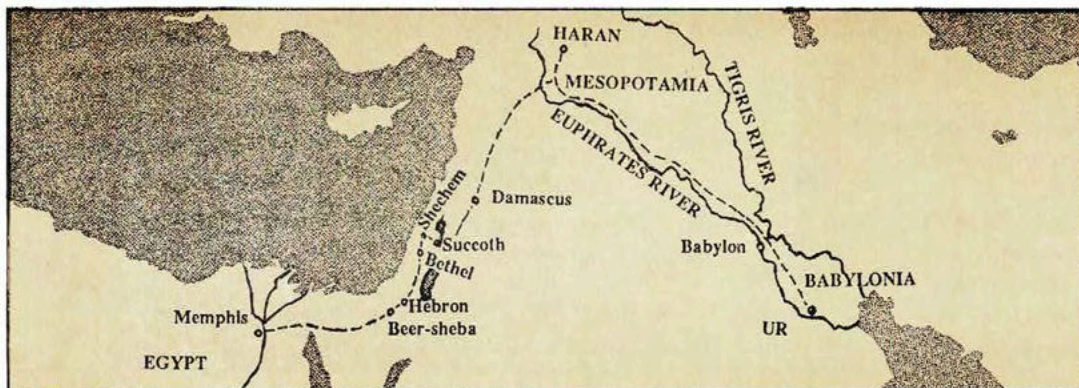


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February Reading Schedule

SECTION 3: GENESIS 27:41–50:26 Jacob and Joseph

February 1	Genesis 27:41–28:9	Jacob leaves home in a hurry
February 2	Genesis 28:10–22	Jacob meets God at Bethel
February 3	Genesis 29:1–35	Jacob at Haran marries Leah and Rachel
February 4	Genesis 30:1–24	The increase of Jacob's family
February 5	Genesis 30:25–43	The increase of Jacob's flocks
February 6	Genesis 31:1–13	The call to return to Canaan
February 7	Genesis 31:14–55	Jacob leaves Haran in a hurry
February 8	Genesis 32:1–32	Wrestling with God; a changed name and walk
February 9	Genesis 33:1–20	Jacob is reconciled to Esau
February 10	Genesis 34:1–31	The slaughter of the Shechemites
February 11	Genesis 35:1–15	Jacob goes back to Bethel
February 12	Genesis 35:16–29	The deaths of Rachel and Isaac
February 13	Genesis 36:1–43	The generations of Esau (the Edomites)
February 14	Genesis 37:1–11	Joseph the dreamer is envied
February 15	Genesis 37:12–36	Sold by his brothers into slavery
February 16	Genesis 38:1–30	Tamar and the shame of Judah
February 17	Genesis 39:1–23	Joseph falsely accused and imprisoned
February 18	Genesis 40:1–23	Joseph the dreamer is forgotten
February 19	Genesis 41:1–44	Joseph the dreamer is exalted
February 20	Genesis 41:45–57	He receives a Gentile bride
February 21	Genesis 42:1–43:34	The rejected deliverer preserves his brethren
February 22	Genesis 44:1–34	The trap is set — and sprung!
February 23	Genesis 45:1–24	Joseph reveals himself to his brothers
February 24	Genesis 45:25–46:30	Seventy souls move down to Egypt
February 25	Genesis 46:31–47:31	Happy days for the patriarchs in Goshen
February 26	Genesis 48:1–22	Crossed hands: Joseph's double blessing
February 27	Genesis 49:1–33	The prophetic blessing on Israel's tribes
February 28	Genesis 50:1–26	Jacob's burial; the last days and death of Joseph



The Five Books of Moses

The books penned by Moses were often called by the Jews "the five-fifths of the Law" or simply "the fifths." They recognized that Genesis through Deuteronomy formed a unit, divided into five progressive sections, each having as its title the first word or phrase in the book. On these books rests the whole of our Bible. They give us a magnificent history, unique in literature, of the first 2,500 years of God's dealings with man. More than this, they reveal a progressive spiritual revelation described by one author as "the order of the experience of the people of God in all ages." They are the Bible in miniature. But they are also the believer's history magnified to illustrate positively and negatively the life that pleased God. Negatively they were preserved for our *correction*: "These things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition" (1 Cor. 10:11).

They are also written positively for our *comfort*: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

Genesis is the book of God's *explanation* for creation, man's pathetic condition on account of sin, the reasons for the judgments of the curse, the flood and the confounding of the languages, and His call of Abraham. It teaches us the basis of God's authority in creation, providence and history.

Exodus is the book of God's *redemption*. There is deliverance by the blood shed and applied in Egypt, and deliverance by the arm of the Lord out of Egypt.

Leviticus is the book of *communion* with God; it is His primer on worship. The pattern and prohibitions are declared.

Numbers is the book of *direction*,

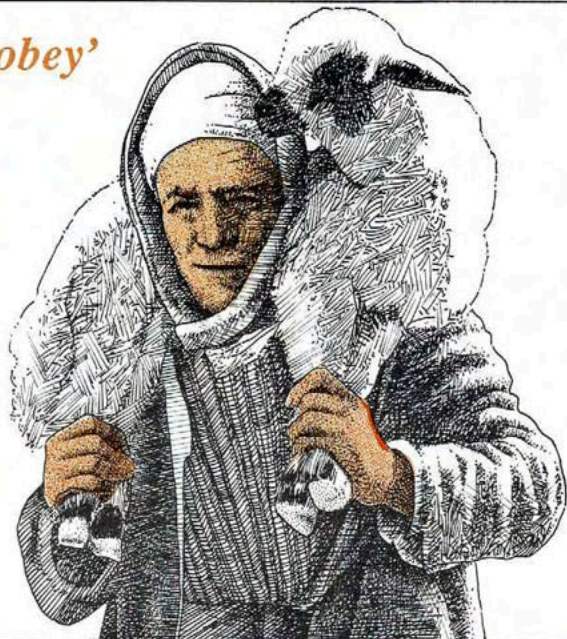
where the twofold secret — "trust and obey" — is the key to progress in the desert journey.

Deuteronomy is the book of *instruction*, laying down the process by which convictions of the truth can be passed on to the next generation.

To help us remember these themes, we might say: in Genesis, man is *formed* and then *deformed* by sin; in Exodus, he is *reformed* by being changed from a labor camp slave to a pilgrim heading home; in Leviticus, he is *transformed* from an earthbound laborer to a heavenward worshiper, setting his mind on things above; in Numbers, he is to be *conformed* to the will of God, walking in obedience to His command; in Deuteronomy, man is *informed* through the revelation of the Word so that he might not only live it himself, but also teach it to his children.

As the chart illustrates, the five movements are these: man is driven out, brought back, welcomed up, led along and brought through. From God's side, He unfolds His authority, grace, holiness, discipline, and faithfulness. The section is full of Christ in types, prophecies and appearances. Thus it was that the great Expositor expounded Himself from "Moses" as well as the rest of the Old Testament on the Emmaus Road. May our hearts burn with devotion, too, as we make the same journey, led by the Spirit of God. **U**

*"Trust and obey'
is the key to
progress in
the desert
journey."*



Its Place in the Pentateuch

As noted last month, the first five books of the Bible, authored by Moses, are the historical, theological and ethical foundation of the whole written revelation of God. It is a good thing to view the Pentateuch as a unit, and see in these books a progressive revelation of God and His matchless ways with men. We may illustrate them in the following chart:

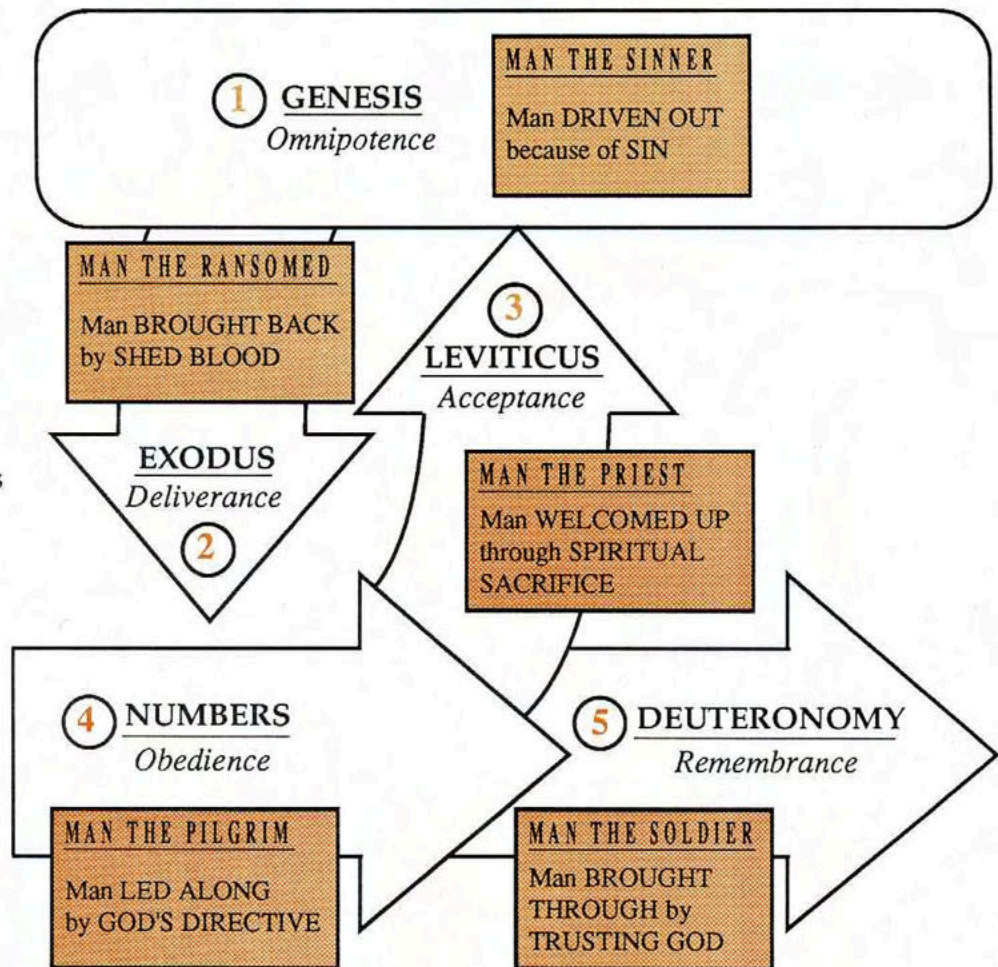
① God's claim to our **LOYALTY** as the **CREATOR** (Gen. 2:16-17)

② God's claim to our **DEVOTION** as the **REDEEMER** (Ex. 13:2-3)

③ God's claim to our **WORSHIP** as the **TRUE GOD** (Lev. 1:1-3)

④ God's claim to our **TRUST** as the **LEADER** (Num. 9:18-23)

⑤ God's claim to our **BELIEF** as the **TEACHER** (Deut. 4:1-2)



PROGRESSIVE TRUTH

- ① DIVINE ELECTION: The eternal counsels of God.
- ② DIVINE REDEMPTION: The historical intervention of God.
- ③ DIVINE COMMUNION: The conditions of fellowship with God.
- ④ DIVINE DIRECTION: The guiding hand of God.
- ⑤ DIVINE INSTRUCTION: The self-revelation of God.

Counting Fish

The last chapter of the Gospel of John is, at the same time, an epilogue to John and an introduction to the book of Acts. It provides a kind of flashback to the early days of Christ's ministry when He first called His disciples to leave their nets to follow Him and catch men instead (Matt. 4:19). It draws a striking contrast with the picture of the "kingdom in the dragnet" (Matt. 13:47) and anticipates the threefold occupation of all true disciples of the Master: *fishing* the cold, deep, dark waters of the world for lost men; *feeding* the sheep and lambs of the flock of God; and *following* the Lord, not being distracted by what "this man" or that shall do.

The story is full of drama, and the setting is almost as dramatic as the plot. Twenty-five miles north of the Sea of Galilee looms mighty Mount Hermon. Almost imperceptibly the sun melts the snow from its hoary brow and sends first a trickle, then a torrent to its base. The rivers Dan, Banyas and Hasbani join in the Hula Valley to form the famed Jordan. It meanders past the lush farmland of the Upper Galilee and lingers only a moment in Lake Hula before it continues its downward course to the Sea of Galilee, not far from Bethsaida. But it is there, at little Lake Hula, among its reeds and rushes, with a plentiful supply of tasty mosquitoes, that many of the forty species of fish are spawned which make Galilee a fisherman's delight.

It has been this way for centuries. When the water level in the lake is low, (as it is now — dangerously so) the ruins of more than twenty-five villages dating from New Testament times can be found hugging the shore. The name *Galilee* comes from the word for a ring because of this ring of villages around the lake. It was also called *Chinnereth* for its harp shape and *Tiberias* after the Roman city on its western edge. The sea itself forms a part of the great Syro-African Rift. It is approximately 700 feet below sea level, 150 feet deep and 8 miles x 13 miles long. Surrounded by hills of 1200-1500 feet in height, it is subject to sudden, drastic changes in temperature and surprising storms that sweep, unsuspected, past the Cliffs of Arbel.

John 21 appropriately begins in the darkness and climaxes in the dawning of a new day. Seven men have gone fishing. There is Peter, the bom-

bastian leader; Thomas, the cautious thinker; Nathaniel, the guileless Israelite; James, soon to make the supreme sacrifice; John, the apostle of love; and two others. Whyte and MacLaren suggest they were Philip and Andrew. I might suggest they could be you and me.

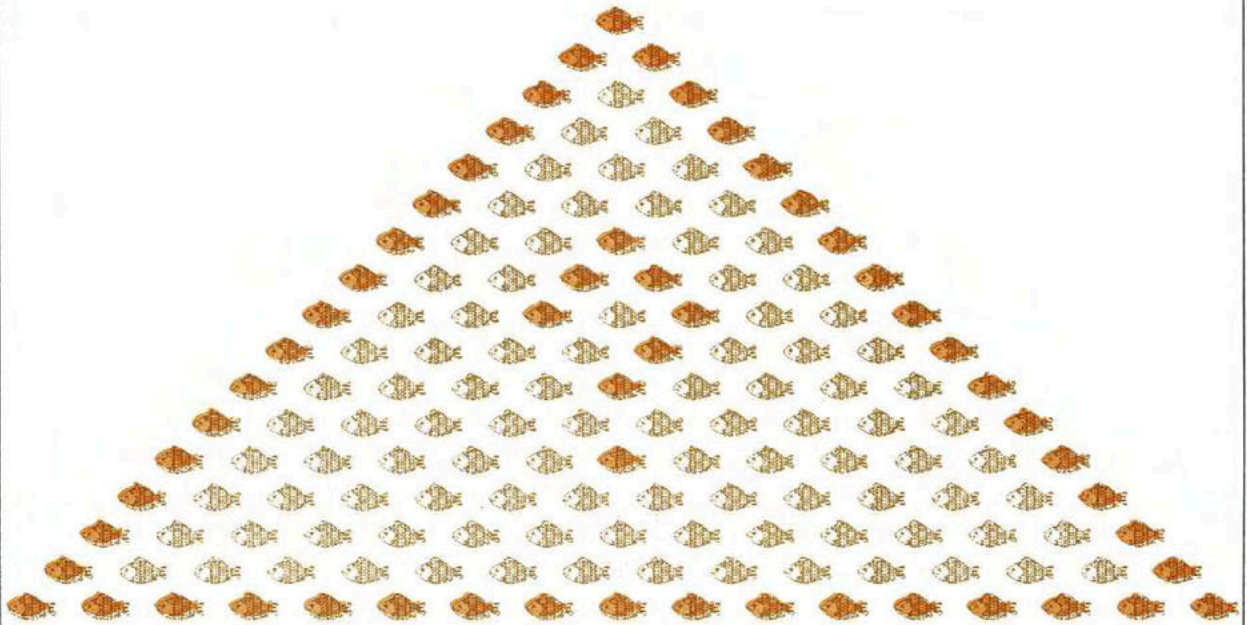
The long, fruitless night proves the equation: $7 + 0 = 0$. Seven well-trained, experienced fishermen, without the Master, produced nothing but aching muscles and disheartened spirits. Morning came and, as the sun broke over the Golan Heights, "Jesus stood on the shore." The equation, though they did not know it yet, had been dramatically adjusted. It is soon to read: $7 + 1 = 153$.

There were three words used for nets in New Testament times. The *amphiblestron* was a circular net, approximately 12 feet in diameter that was ringed with stone weights (see photo). As the stones pulled the edges down, a dome was produced in which the fish were trapped. It is the word used in Matthew 4:18.



The *sagene* was a seine or dragnet up to seven hundred feet long by sixteen feet deep with weights along one edge and floats along the other. Suspended between two boats, the fish were cap-

THE LAST WORD



tured in the encirclement. This was the technique utilized in Matthew 13:47-48.

The net used in John 21 was the *diktuon*, a general term used, derived from the verb, "to cast." It is the same word used for the nets that Zebedee's sons left in Matthew 4:20. Now as the morning sun would warm the surface waters of the lake, the fish would seek refuge in the cooler depths, out of reach of the nets by the shore.

Yet in that unlikely moment, in obedience to one word of command from the Lord Jesus, the net was writhing with a "multitude" of "great fishes." The disciples were surprised that the net survived intact. It is to be noted that the fish were not counted in the net but on the land — when the fishing expedition was completed. C. F. Hogg once wrote: "Statistics are not for the end of the mission, but for the end of the age." It is hard to count fish when it's dark; far better to leave that till the morning.

How many did they catch? "An hundred and fifty and three" states John carefully. Is there any significance to the number? There has been no end of speculation on the possibilities.

Jerome writes: ". . . Oppianus Cilix, a very learned poet, say(s) that there are one hundred and fifty-three different kinds of fish all of which were caught by the apostles."¹ If he was referring to fish native to the Sea of Galilee, Tyndale's Illus-

trated Bible Dictionary cites "at least twenty-four species of fish" there. If he means types of fish worldwide, my encyclopedia informs me of almost six hundred types of fish sold for food at the fish markets of Japan alone.

Cyril of Alexandria (c. 444) regards the number as being significant in its three simple elements: $100 + 50 + 3$. The 100, he says, represents the fullness of the Gentiles, used to describe the Lord's full flock (Matt. 18:12) and full fertility (Matt. 13:8). The 50 represents "the remnant of Israel" which falls short of completeness ($100 + 2$). The 3 indicates the Holy Trinity to whose glory all alike are gathered.²

Some have tried to calculate the numerical value of Peter's name in various forms so that it equals 153. Their creativity, if not their consistency, is to be commended.

On the other hand, more recent writers have strenuously objected to their being any significance to the number at all. Temple says bluntly: "It is perverse to seek a hidden meaning to the number; it is recorded because it was found to be the number when the count was made."³ Leon Morris adds: "If John meant us to see such meanings, he has given us no guidance. It is much simpler to see a fisherman's record of a fact."⁴ Marcus Dods explains: "The number is given because it was large, and because they were all surprised

THE LAST WORD

that the net stood the strain. The only significance our Lord recognizes in the fish is that they were food for hungry men."⁵

Surprisingly, however, William Barklay comes to the defense of a significance for the number. "In the fourth Gospel," he writes, "everything is meaningful, and it is therefore hardly possible that John gives the definite number one hundred and fifty-three for the number of the fishes without meaning something by it. It has indeed been suggested that the fishes were counted simply because the catch had to be shared out between the various partners and the crew of the boat, and that the number was recorded simply because it was so exceptionally large. But when we remember John's way of putting hidden meanings for those who have eyes to see, in his Gospel we must think that the number has more meaning than that."⁶

*Science Digest*⁷ makes note of the interesting properties of the number. First, 153 is equal to the sum of all the integers from 1 to 17. This makes it what the Pythagoreans called a triangular number (see illustration). It is, in fact, the sixteenth triangular number. But *Science Digest* was not the first to notice this. Augustine said that 10 was the number of the law, 7 the number for grace as manifested in the sevenfold Spirit (Isa. 11:2). Since $10 + 7 = 17$ and 153 is the sum of the figures from 1 to 17, it stands for all who, either by law or grace, have come to Christ.⁸

It is noted that if you sum the cubes of the digits, you get back 153. To put it simply, $153 = 1^3 + 5^3 + 3^3$. But there is more to this unusual number: $153 = 1! + 2! + 3! + 4! + 5!$ When a number is followed by an exclamation point, you are supposed to take the product of all the integers from 1 to the number itself. This operation is called taking the factorial of a number. Simply expressed: $153 = 1 + (1 \times 2) + (1 \times 2 \times 3) + (1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4) + (1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5)$.

Finally, Phil Kohn of Yogue'am, Israel is quoted in the British weekly, *New Scientist* as stating that 153 lies dormant in every third number. You can try it yourself by taking any multiple of three. Then sum the cubes of its digits. Take the

result and sum the cubes of its digits. If you keep doing this, you will always arrive at our number, 153.

Of course, I am not suggesting that the idiosyncrasies of this number all bear deep spiritual meaning. But it is a good thing to love God with all your mind and to stretch your mind by thinking in new directions.

Why was the number included in John 21? I offer you my simple suggestions. If the incident is more than a fish story, if in fact it tells us about fishing for men under the Lord's direction, then

surely He wants the net to be full. The disciples expressed their amazement that the net could hold so many without breaking. Is it not often the case that we underestimate the intense interest and power of the Almighty in saving sinners? So that the number, indicated to be surprisingly *large* by the writer, speaks of the generous heart of God in seeking the lost.

The number is also *exact*. Someone who tends to underestimate would say, "more than a hundred." Fishermen who exaggerate might tell us "almost two hundred." Even a careful assessment would conclude "about one hundred and fifty." Does the number not remind us of God's interest in the individual? Not one is overlooked. The largeness of the number would declare: "God so loved

the world"; the exactness would add: "The Son of God, who loved *me*."

Oh, one other thing. You can't divide 153 by 7 evenly. If the disciples were going to fish for men together, they would have to learn to get along. Life rarely comes out evenly.

¹ Comments on Ezek. 47:9-12; FGRCI, p. 184

² in loc.

³ The Gospel According to St. John, Leon Morris, Eerdman's, 1977, p. 866

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 867

⁵ The Gospel of St. John, Marcus Dods, Hodder & Stoughton, 1897, p. 869

⁶ The Gospel According to St. John, Wm. Barklay, St. Andrew Press, 1963, pp. 328-329

⁷ *Science Digest*, May 1985, pp. 78-79

⁸ Joh. Tr. CXXII

*"Is there any
significance to
the number?
There has been
no end of
speculation
on the
possibilities."*

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THE WORD OR THE WORLD



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W. P. W. McVey

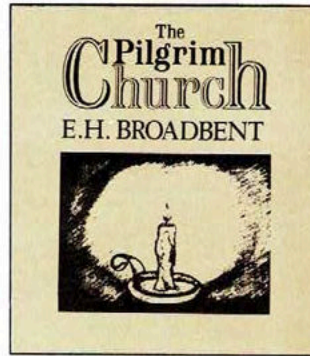
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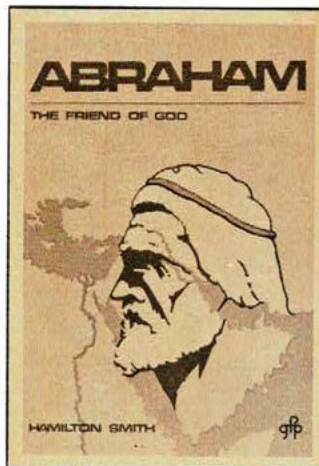


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CALL US BACK

Call Thy people back, O Lord,
As in the early days,
When love was warm, and fresh, and bright,
When first we knew Thy grace;
When first Thy light broke through our night,
And set our hearts ablaze.

Lord, call us back!

Call Thy people back, O Lord,
To that simplicity
Which marked Thy servants long ago;
Our yearning hearts would be
Full satisfied with Thee, although
The world against us be.

Lord, call us back!

From the many foolish paths
Our wayward feet have trod,
From foolish words, and willful ways,
Yes, turn us back, O God,
To taste afresh Thy love and grace,
Else Thou must use Thy rod.

Lord, turn us back!

Call us back to those sweet days
When hearts were knit as one,
When prayer was as the breath of life,
Thy will with joy was done,
Ere souls were rife with endless strife;
For Jesus' sake, Thy Son,

Lord, call us back!

Call us back from hearts cast down,
And oh, afresh inspire
Our souls to seek Thee more and more,
To turn with deep desire;
Till hearts o'erflow, and faces glow
With holy, ardent fire.

Lord, call us back!

— H. McD.

