



UPLOOK

OCTOBER 1992

SELAH!

PRAISE CHANGES THINGS

The Heartsong



EDITORIAL

The Heartsong



J. B. Nicholson, Jr.

When we moved into a new house—new to us, at least—the place needed some fixing up. A friend offered to help. He was a retired businessman who found his joy in helping others. His name was James Pirrie, but his friends called him Jamer. The first project we had worked on together was a small office for our printing work in St. Catharines. It was in the basement of an older building—full of pipes, electrical boxes, and odd angles. It was more than a challenge for someone who needs an instruction manual for a hammer.

Another businessman had seen my plight and sent Jamer to help, with instructions to buy whatever was needed and put it on his tab. I breathed both a prayer of thanks and a sigh of relief.

"I'll send someone to help," said my generous friend, "who will not only help finish the project. He'll do your heart good, too." On both counts, he was right.

Mr. Pirrie, as I called him, had been an elder in our assembly when I was growing up. He had rugged good looks. A ready smile, and a twinkle in his eye. The voice of a songbird. And, said some, a sharp tongue. I had felt it on occasion, but I knew that beneath his sometimes gruff exterior there was a tender heart.

We had been working on the house for a few days when, as we began our project one morning, Jamer turned to me and asked in his usual diplomatic way, "What's the matter with you, Nicholson?"

"Where would you like to start?" I queried.

"I've been here for two days now, and I haven't heard you sing yet!"

"You're right. I'm sorry."

So the two of us began singing our way through the job. It lightened the load—and our spirits. It's tough to get upset with a man if you're sharing a tune with him. And the days went by so gently, we hardly noticed their passing.

As we picked up the tools to put them away for the last time, Jamer Pirrie looked me in the eye and said, "Keep singing, Jabe. Remember we'll be doing this forever."

He's in heaven now. I miss him. But I still can hear him say on occasion: "What's the matter with

you, Nicholson." I smile to myself.

And then I start to sing.

In the mirror-image passages of Ephesians 5:18-20 and Colossians 3:16-17, Paul speaks of the two great influences in the life of the believer. First, the Spirit is to fill us (*Be being filled* with the Spirit). When asked why, every time he prayed, he asked to be filled with the Spirit, D. L. Moody simply responded, "I leak!" We know what he meant.

The Colossian passage reminds us: "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." While the first need seems to be active—you be filled, and the second passive—you let the Word dwell, they are two facets of the same jewel. You can't have one without the other. The Spirit inspired the Word in the first place, and now illumines us to understand it and energizes us to do it. The Spirit of God reveals the Word of God; the Word of God reveals the Son of God; the Son of God reveals the Father. To follow this path is the substance of eternal life.

And what is the evidence that this Spirit-filling, Scripture-dwelling life is mine? Bible knowledge? Regular attendance at the meetings of the church? Effective soul-winning? More than likely, but that is not what Paul says. On both accounts, he mentions first of all—*singing!* To the Ephesians, he describes their singing as a form of intimate communication, almost a secret heavenly code to pass from one spirit to another in the midst of enemy territory: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."

To the Colossians, the Apostle writes of the vigorous influence hymnology can have on our character and conduct: "teaching and admonishing one another . . ." Which is why we must be careful of the theology we sing!

And what is the result? The Spirit orchestrates a heavenly melody in the heart (not necessarily with the voice!) and the Word works godly grace into the heart too. Nothing could make the life sweeter than to be in tune with God's heaven and in touch with heaven's God. And you will be amazed at the effect it will have on you, your home, your friends, and your assembly.

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PRAY FOR TIM!

Tim Allyn, an evangelist working in the Massey/Spanish area of northern Ontario, has been recently diagnosed with an advanced stage of cancer. Without the Lord's intervention, prognosis is grim. In spite of this, the Lord has not only sustained Tim and his wife Marlene, but given them opportunities for witness. The Allyns have four young children.

LADIES' MISSIONARY CONFERENCE

The South Carolina Ladies' Missionary Conference is to be held October 3, at Community Bible Fellowship, Florence, SC. Speakers: Peggy Green and Nancy Trogdon, both of Zaire. For further information:

Laura Capotosti
Route 2, Box 371-1
Timmonsville, SC 29161
(803) 346-5232

EASTERN IOWA

The Annual Conference at Harrison Gospel Chapel, Davenport, IA, is planned for October 2-4. Speakers expected are Jim Nichols (IA) and John Bjorlie (MI). Nursery and children's meeting will be provided. Also young people's meeting will be held Saturday night. Contact:

Patrick Bennett
3247 W. 66th St.
Davenport, IA 52806
(319) 388-9698

FALL FOLIAGE & FELLOWSHIP

The Annual Bible Conference at Westbrook, ME, will be held, D. V., October 10-11. Speakers expected: Doug Kazen (WA)

and Donald Norbie (CO). For information:

Daniel Chick
95 Maple St.
Westbrook, ME
04092
(207) 854-4968

VISIT PRINCE GEORGE

Rowan Jennings and John MacDonald, both of BC, are scheduled to minister at the annual Thanksgiving Conference at the Kelly Road Gospel Chapel, Prince George, BC. Meetings planned for October 11-12. For information:

P. W. (Bill) Shatford
(604) 563-4876

P. S. Remember to pray for the Shatfords who labor for the Lord in the BC interior. As they



write: "The work here is not spectacular (in the eyes of men), but we rejoice in the blessed reality that 'our labor is not in vain in the Lord.'"

O. K.!

The Guthrie and Edmond, OK, assemblies are planning an all-day conference on October 17, D. V., to be held at the

Guthrie assembly's building, 424 E. Oklahoma, in Guthrie. For further information, call:
Herbert C. O'Bannon
(405) 282-4862

THE OKANAGAN

The Vernon Gospel Chapel, 4106 Pleasant Valley Rd., Vernon, BC, is planning, D. V., a prophetic conference for October 24-25. Doug Kazen is the speaker.

AIR WAVES

The Annual Radio Conference is planned for October 24, 1992. Sessions at 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM. Held at Martingrove Collegiate, Toronto, ON. For details, contact Arnot McIntee at (416) 687-7459 or (416) 641-4406 (FBH office).

VANCOUVER ISLAND

The Oak Bay Gospel Assembly, 1900 Oak Bay Ave., Victoria, BC, has scheduled a conference for October 30-November 1. Speakers expected: Boyd Nicholson (ON) and Doug Kazen (WA). Conference theme: Assembly Distinctives. Contact R. J. Allen at (604) 384-5080.

WHAT'S FOR BREAKFAST

The Annual Missionary Breakfast is to be held at the Prince Hotel, Toronto, ON, November 14, 1992 at 8:15 AM.

For tickets: Sheila Henderson
(416) 891-3174

For information: Patrick Long
(416) 433-0808

NIAGARA REGION

The Niagara Region Missionary Conference is to be held at the Ridgeville Bible Chapel,

FRONT LINES

Ridgeville, ON, November 20-21, 1992. Sessions on Friday at 7:30 PM and Saturday at 3:00 & 6:30 PM. For information, contact Dave Ripley at (416) 892-6417.

A MIGHTY MAN IS FALLEN

We have just received word of the Homegoing of our beloved brother, Svend Christensen on September 14. Known affectionately as the "Great Dane," he labored in Prince



Edward Island, Georgia, and Florida (among other places) in real pioneer evangelism. Commended from Toronto, ON, in 1948,

Svend loved to proclaim the gospel. Pray for his wife and fellow-laborer, Rhoda, now incapacitated with Alzheimer's.

CALLED HOME

Joe Atkins, Durham, North Carolina, died on June 6, at age of 71. As an elder, treasurer, correspondent at Grove Park Chapel, he definitely worked "full-time" for the Lord. Joe carried many responsibilities and the assembly has suffered a great loss.

Grove Park Chapel's new correspondent is:

Eddie Sarvis
3816 Rivermount Dr.
Durham, NC 27712
(919) 383-5362

WITH THE LORD

James Serpliss, Hartford, CT, went Home on May 21, at the age of 70, two months after being diagnosed with stomach cancer. Jim faithfully served as an elder of Prospect Bible Chapel for nearly 30 years. Always having a heart for young

people, he worked with them and encouraged their growth. He is survived by his wife Phemie, and four sons.

TELLING THE TRUTH IN TELUGU

A group of California believers are exercised about publishing brother Bill Macdonald's *Believer's Bible Commentary* in Telugu, one of India's major languages. There are over 600 New Testament assemblies in the Telugu speaking state of Andhra Pradesh, along with several hundreds of similar evangelical groups that are hungry for the Word of God and could greatly benefit from the sound teaching of the commentary.

Jeevan Jyothi Press, an assembly affiliated publisher, is enthusiastic about printing the commentary. The elders at Community Bible Chapel, Hayward, CA, have set up an account for the BBC-Telugu Project.

Community Bible Chapel
c/o John Koduru
3085 Greenview Drive
Castro Valley, CA 94546

SWAHILI NEW TESTAMENT

Ed and Gertrud Harlow (ON) are finalizing preparations for printing the revised Swahili New Testament. There is a great need for this in central Africa. Also Ed's book on the Gospel of John is just completed and he has recently begun writing *Christ in the New Testament*.

STEWARD'S FOUNDATION MEMBERS' MEETING

The annual meeting of the assembly members of Steward's Foundation was held in Charlotte, NC, on Saturday, September 26. More than 150 attended. After a period of comments and

discussion, two board members were reelected—Barry Mahloy (MI), and William Neufeld (SC). Six new board members were added—Edwin Anderson (FL), Arthur Auld (OH), W. L. Batts (NC), Robert Chambers (TN), Mark Jaccoberger (NE), and Andrew Renfrew (MI). After the meeting, four board members resigned—William Ericson (WA), Dwight Mattix (WA), William Mayes (MI), and Ken Murray (IL). Remaining on the board are C. Richard Andrews (NC), Sid Bhatt (OH), E. J. Carter (TX), Kevin Cooper (CA), David Good (PA), and Richard Shaw (FL).

In a telephone conversation with the board President, Barry Mahloy, he confirmed the board's commitment to serving all assemblies of believers who evidence their obedience to New Testament church principles. The foundation provides low-cost loans to such assemblies for building construction and maintains a health program for commended workers among these assemblies.

The members of the board realize the solemn responsibility they bear as stewards of these funds and desire the prayers of the Lord's people in the days ahead.

HURRICANE HELP

As mentioned in the last issue, a special fund has been set up for those devastated by the recent hurricane in Florida and the Bahamas. Much damage was inflicted on Spanish Wells and the Current in the Bahamas, as well as the more publicized destruction in Florida.

Disaster Fund
c/o CMML, Inc.
P. O. Box 13
Spring Lake, NJ 07762



WHAT'S GOING ON?

News from Around the Globe

BULGARIA: THEM AND US

Protestants are worried about mounting opposition showing up in the Orthodox Church and in the press, including talk about a secret agreement that would bar them from the media. Newspaper articles have blamed suicides on the "sects."

As well, the old synod of the Orthodox Church has been replaced by a new group, which blamed the ousted leaders for not following Orthodox teaching. The new leaders envision a strong Orthodox Church that leaves no room for other denominations, to create a strong, strict national church in Bulgaria.

NO RELIEF IN SIGHT

Trevor Page, newly appointed head of the World Food Program in Somalia, told reporters he had not seen such human suffering since the Biafra (Nigeria) famine in the late 1960s and the Bangladesh crisis of 1971. The program made its first airlift of 17 tons of high protein biscuits for more than 8,000 children. Peter Davies, president of a coalition of 135 private organizations says that one-fourth of Somali children under age 5 are believed to have died already. War and drought have already killed hundreds of thousands. Some 1.5 million of the country's 8.4 million people are at immediate risk of starving to death.

Meanwhile, gunmen and looters blocked food convoys, which are supposed to be protected by 500 United Nations armed guards. By some estimates, almost half of the 88,000 tons of food already sent to Somalia this year has been stolen.

The U. S. plans to supply 145,000 tons of sorghum, cooking oil, and other food over the next two months. In Sudan, the UN charged that hundreds of thousands of people face starvation in southern Sudan because the government and rebels will not grant safe passage to relief agencies. The last food airlift to Juba was on July 18 by the Lutheran World Federation. The UN said it would fly food to Juba in spite of the risks.

ENSHRINED

On the 47th anniversary of Japan's surrender to the United States, 15 of 20 Cabinet ministers worshiped at the Yasukuni shrine, a Shinto institution once regarded as the soul of Japanese militarism. The government ministers did so in spite of a high court ruling that such visits violate constitutional separation of religion and state. Prime Minister Miyazawa did not go along, but said he intended to visit the shrine to Japan's war dead later on.

TROUBLE IN INDIA

"India's struggle to restructure its economy is faltering, threatening to drag South Asia's largest country deeper into poverty and deprivation." A year after new economic policies were announced by the government, red tape still hampers new investment and none of India's bankrupt state-controlled industries has been shut. With the economy growing barely above the population growth rate, many economists see a need for a rapid accelera-

tion of the reforms.

—*New York Times*

OLD IDEAS

Some of Asia's senior citizens worry that their children "have more time for the poodle than their parents," in the words of a Singaporean. Beyond that worry are long-range concerns about the implications of the graying of Asia: the explosion of medical costs and the shortage of workers in newly industrialized countries. Two trends attributed to rising affluence converge to support the thesis: lower birth rates and longer lifespans. At the same time, family traditions of caring for the elderly have declined.

LIFE IN THE OTHER GEORGIA

The mass kidnapping in mid-August of 12 government offi-



cials (who were subsequently released) showed that things are not going well for Eduard Shevardnadze's republic of Georgia. Mikhail Gorbachev's former foreign minister, 64, has been trying to hold the country together since the expulsion of President Gamsakhurda.

The government crushed a rebellion in the breakaway Black Sea region of Abkhazia. Howev-

WHAT'S GOING ON?

er, pro-independence leaders vowed to use guerrilla methods to resist the government. In addition to political trauma, Georgia suffers from violent crime so bad that even taxi drivers and kiosk owners won't venture out without a gun. Shevardnadze says, "There's no economy to speak of." When he let it be known that Georgia had only a 10-day supply of wheat, the U.S. sent 100,000 tons of grain, enough for 20 to 25 days.

HARDLY THE TIME TO CELEBRATE?

Reaction to the news of an impending end (October) to Mozambique's brutal 17-year-old civil war was tempered by a look at the damages: one-fourth of the country's 15 million people are refugees; most major roads and railroads have been destroyed; living standards are as low as anywhere in the world. In addition, the weeks prior to the ceasefire could be extremely violent, as both sides try to win territory they can keep once the war is settled.

UNORTHODOX

In the 1960s, Peter Gillquist was a regional director with Campus Crusade for Christ. Troubled by Christianity's lack of impact on society as a whole, he and several colleagues left the organization in order to found New Testament churches. Trying to establish some uniformity in what they were doing, they began to study church history. Eventually they came to the conclusion that the Orthodox Church was where they belonged. So in 1987 almost 2,000 people "converted" en masse, forming 17 new parishes.

Now Gillquist is the chairman of the department of mission

and evangelism in the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of North America.

MALLED

Shopping is the favorite pastime of millions of Americans. For the 70% of all adults who visit a mall at least once a week, shopping fulfills a variety of needs, e.g., socializing, counteracting depression, etc. Occasionally, they even go there to buy something. However, when over 34,000 shoppers across America were asked why they had come to the mall, only one out of four said their main purpose was to purchase a specific item.

UNDER ONE ROOF

Ever since 1790, the number of people in the average U.S. household has been shrinking. That year the average was 5.8 people per household. By 1900 it had declined to 4.8, but by 1940 it was down to 3.7. Now the typical household contains only 2.6 individuals.

PREACHING WITH AUTHORITY

"The church is today suffering from weak preaching. We hear plenty of polished speakers but few fearless prophets.

"Sermons that simply echo contemporary philosophy do nothing to help a needy world. How can the lost turn to Christ if preachers are confused about who He is? Why would anyone feel convicted about sin when the church is no different from the world?

"Our message must be sure and our authority must be based on something other than the latest theological fad. Relevance is essential, but the timeless good news of Jesus Christ is always relevant.

"Preachers today are overly concerned about pleasing their audiences. . .

"Behind the pulpit is not the only place we find people who lack conviction. The pews are full of those who are unwilling to be disturbed. . . Preachers like the prophets of old are needed to call today's lackluster believers to repentance."

WHAT MAKES FOR STRONG FAMILIES?

One study of 3,000 strong families from various parts of the world identified six primary characteristics that contributed to their high level of satisfaction in both husband-wife and parent-child relationships.

Commitment, time together, communication, appreciation, problem-solving and spirituality. These characteristics are the foundation for the other positive qualities in families. Families that are strong spiritually translate this commitment into love for each other, time spent together, and effectiveness in communicating.

TUNED IN TUNED OUT

It might seem encouraging to know that the percentage of preschoolers (aged 2 to 5) who watch television between 10 AM and 6 PM has declined approximately 18%. The decrease, however, is attributed partly to less cooperation from survey respondents and partly to more time spent viewing videos. But the biggest factor turns out to be that more children are in day care. Over half of the children in the age bracket spend at least one day a week in an out-of-home care facility. A majority of these centers have television sets that the children watch.

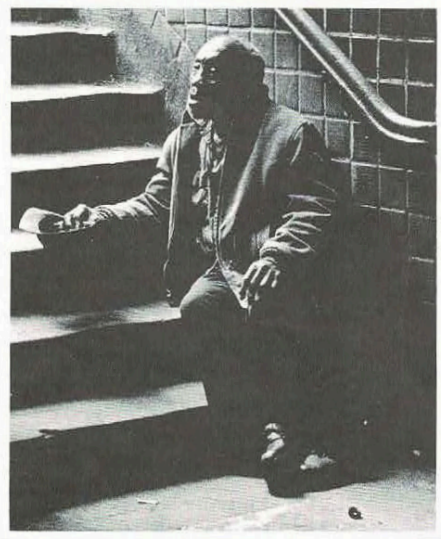
WHAT'S GOING ON?

BOY 'DIVORCES' PARENTS

An 11-year-old boy has the right, according to a ruling handed down by a Florida judge, to sue his parents in order to end their relationship. The boy wants to move in permanently with a foster family, and the court has, for the first time ever, recognized a child's right to "divorce" his or her parents. One children's rights group praised the judges decision as "the first step of sweeping into the ashcan of history the old paternalistic legal mumbo-jumbo." The boy is reportedly looking forward to his trial and the chance to get his own way.

WEAK HOME NO HOME

"I see a very strong relationship between the weakening of the family through a variety of forces and an increase in homelessness. It has to do with people losing the kind of ties that used



to keep them from falling into homelessness when everything else failed. There was always a family there to catch them."

SWORDS & PLOWSHARES

Several months ago, Belarus

(the former Soviet Republic of Byelorussia) gave a group of Baptists in the city of Kobryn permission to dismantle an abandoned missile silo and army barracks in order to use the salvaged bricks, cement blocks, and steel to erect a church building — the congregation's first since it was founded in 1925. It turned out to be an ironic answer to prayer.

During the demolition process, volunteer workers came across a World War II artillery shell sealed inside a brick wall. It contained a Russian-language letter written 42 years ago by several Christians who worked on the military construction crew.

The letter stated that the materials used to build the missile silo came from churches in the area that had been razed by decree of Joseph Stalin. The writers appealed to whoever might be dismantling the missile facility to use the materials to build churches.

Polish Canadian missionary George Bajenski commented that it was an example of beating swords into plowshares, but in this case the sword had come from plowshare in the first place!

WHERE IS DAD?

Researchers who analyzed 11,000 separate crimes committed in three different urban areas concluded there was no clear link between crime and poverty or between crime and race. There was, however, a strong correlation with "father-absent households."

More than one out of three children do not live with their biological father. What is the

probability that a child born today will spend the first 18 years of life in the same household as his or her biological father? A white child has a 50-50 chance, but for a black child the odds are 1 in 12.

YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?

A firm in Tokyo called Japan Efficiency Headquarters offers a unique service to stressed out workers who find themselves too busy to visit their lonely parents. For a fee of about \$1,130 per day the company will send actors (who have been trained in psychology) to visit them—a sort of temporary family.

MURDER OK?

A publication of the research arm of Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion clinic operator, recently reported on a survey of teenagers around the nation. Focus group discussions with 13 to 19 year-olds in various cities revealed that most teenagers associate abortion with "murder," "killing a baby," or "death." They also tended to agree that abortion is a "cop-out" on the part of a girl who doesn't want her family and friends to know that she has gotten pregnant.

In spite of these prolife leanings, most of the teens were unwilling to say that abortion should be legally prohibited. Even those who held religious convictions against abortion said that individuals should be allowed to choose for themselves. The researchers said, "What was remarkable about the adolescents' moralizing was their willingness to recognize and accept distinctions between private morality and public policy."

U

Singing Lessons

Jim McKendrick

From the very first day of creation when the morning stars sang together (Job 38:7) until the redeemed are gathered around the throne singing that new song that extols the glorious Redeemer (Rev. 5:9), singing has played a major part in the Word of God.

In Scripture it is associated most often with the joy and wonder of salvation. The first recorded song in the Bible is that which was sung on the far banks of the Red Sea when a redeemed Israel rejoiced in their salvation from Egypt. We find the largest book of the Bible is the Psalms, which was Israel's Hymnbook. The praises Israel sang are still being enjoyed by believers as we bring praise to our God.

In the great chapter on order in the local church (1 Cor. 14), we find several references to music. When we sing or pray in the local church, we are to be understood in our presentation, says the apostle. So as we gather together, even our singing should be done with purpose and clarity.

This would lead me to believe that we should have at least a basic understanding of music and the way it is written so that we can follow the instructions of Paul. While it would be far outside the ability of this article to teach music theory, I would like to encourage some to seek help in this area so as to be a help in the assembly in which you meet. Most of us still sing *acappella* (that is, without musical accompaniment) in some, if not all, our assembly meetings. So the tunes are learned by listening to others. But now all our commonly used hymnbooks do have an edition with both words and music. With the music available to us, we can learn the tunes correctly and can sing the music properly. Now what is left for us to do is to learn to read the music.

That is not as difficult as it sounds. You don't have to have a professional voice to learn to read music. The foundation of music is *rhythm*. All the notes have time value, and the learning of these values can go a long way to singing the music correctly. Next is the *melody*. The melody is based on a scale. As the notes go up and down, so does the

melody. With a little practice, anyone with an "ear" for music can learn the basic tonal qualities of the scale and thus be able to "read" the music.

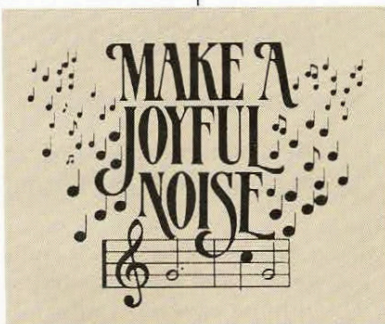
But the keynote is *practice*. Just when do we practice? There are a number of places that this was done, as I remember from my past. For instance, the hymnbook should be a part of the family devotions. And I recall with pleasure singing in the car as we took trips together as a family. I can remember when we got together for "sings" in someone's house, singing the old ones and learning some new ones. I remember my father telling me about an older songleader in the assembly who took the younger men with some musical ability under his wing and taught them how to lead the singing. I remember an assembly meeting together for a covered dish supper on a Saturday evening and afterward learning some new songs as well as singing the old fa-

vorites. They even tried to re-learn some of them that, for some reason, had been learned wrongly by the assembly. My question is: why do I have to remember all these as memories from my past? Let's start a revival of singing—in the family, in the home and in the assembly!

Perhaps the preface of the 1881 edition of the *Little Flock Hymnbook* has some insight for us: "Three things are needed for a hymnbook: a basis of truth and sound doctrine; something, at least, of the spirit of poetry, and thirdly, the most difficult to find of all, that experimental acquaintance with truth in the affections which enables a person to make his hymn the vehicle . . . which sets the soul in communion with Christ, and rises even to the Father . . . In a word, the Father's love, and Christ developed in the soul's affections, rising in praise back again to its source. God alone can give this so as to meet the wants of an assembly."

Could it be that what we need today is a renewed sense of awe and majesty of the presence of God in our midst? As He fills our hearts with the greatness of His name, we will be caused to sing our praises to Him who is worthy of the best we have to give.

U



Praise

It is not to the honor of our gracious Master that we should sit under juniper trees, hang our harps upon willows, and walk about the world in the shadow of death and despair. "I won't be unhappy," said a fine old saint; "it is all I have to give to God and I will praise Him by a happy face and a radiant life."

—A. B. Simpson

*Praise the Saviour, ye who know Him!
Who can tell how much we owe Him?
Gladly let us render to Him
All we are and have.* —Thomas Kelly



"One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts." (Psalm 145:4)

"Be Thou exalted, Lord, in Thine own strength; so will we sing and praise Thy power." (Psalm 21:13)

It is always a token of revival, it is said, when there is a revival of psalmody. When Luther's preaching began to tell upon men, you could hear ploughmen at the plough singing Luther's hymns. Whitefield and Wesley had never done the great work they did if it had not been for Charles Wesley's poetry, and for the singing of such men as Toplady, Scott, Newton, and many others of the same class. When your heart is full of Christ, you want to sing.

—C. H. Spurgeon

*Oh, the joy, the wondrous singing,
When we see Thee as Thou art!
Thy blest name, Lord Jesus, bringing
Sweetest music to God's heart.*

*Notes of gladness, songs unceasing,
Hymns of everlasting praise,
Psalms of glory, joy increasing,
Through God's endless day of days.*

—C. A. W.

On being told that the action of his heart seemed to get weaker and weaker every day, Augustus M. Toplady replied with the sweetest smile upon his countenance, "Why, that is a good sign that my death is fast approaching; and blessed be God I can add that my heart beats every day stronger and stronger for glory." On being asked a few days before his death if his consolations continued to abound, he replied, "It is impossible to describe how good God is to me."

To a friend on another occasion, he said, with hands clasped and eyes looking up, tears of joy meanwhile running down his face: "O my dear sir . . . the consolations of God to such an unworthy one as I are so abundant, that He leaves me nothing to pray for but a continuance of them. I enjoy a heaven already in my soul. My prayers are all converted into praise."

*Many a rapturous minstrel
Among the sons of light
Will say of his sweetest music,
I learned it in the night;
And many a rolling anthem,
Which fills the Father's throne,
Sobbed at its first rehearsal
In the shroud of a darkened room.*

Shakespeare called praise "the exchequer of the poor." The Lord has made it possible for even the most destitute to give something back to Him.

"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them." (Acts 16:25)

Praise Changes Things

Mrs. E. Cowman



***“We never get
faith by looking
at ourselves . . . or
our difficulties”***

A booklet bearing the title *Prayer Changes Things* was written by Dr. S. D. Gordon. It has made a deep impression on multitudes of Christians. In many homes these words may be found as a motto. We are all aware that prayer, believing prayer, does change things. We know also that many times the enemy has not been moved one inch from his stronghold, although we have persisted in prayer for days, months, often years.

Such was my own experience when passing through a time of great pressure. Prayer *did not* change things. Then I came into the possession of a wonderful secret: after we have prayed and believed, *praise* changes things. We discovered that two wings were necessary to mount the soul Godward: prayer *and* praise. Prayer asks. Praise obtains the answer.

I fancy that some who read these lines may say, “I, too, have prayed and prayed, but I do not feel like praising God. Praise when my heart is bleeding and torn? Praise when the pressure is greatest? Praise when walking through the valley of the shadow? No! Tell me rather to weep. How can I praise God at such a time?”

In Psalm 107:22, we find these words: “Sacrifice . . . the sacrifice of thanksgiving.” What is a sacrifice? It is an offering to God. A “sacrifice of thanksgiving” is to praise God when you do not feel like it—when you are depressed and despondent, when your life is covered over with thick clouds and midnight darkness. This is acceptable to God, a “sweet smelling savor” to our Lord and King. While we are admonished to “pray without ceasing,” are we not also commanded to “rejoice evermore?”

When shall I praise God? When I feel happy, and when everything is moving along smoothly? When there is no trial crossing my pathway? It would be no sacrifice to praise God at such a time as this.

The book of Jonah contains a very precious truth, which throws a great deal of light upon this

subject. No one could have been in a place where the outlook was darker: Jonah was at the bottom of the sea with the weeds wrapped about his head. What a desperate situation! Humanly speaking, every ray of hope was gone, and he said, “My soul fainted within me.” But listen! In his trouble he also said, “I will look again toward thy holy temple.” He did the best thing when he took his eyes off the discouraging surroundings, put them in the rightful place, and began to pray. He then went a step further, and determined to praise,

saying, “I will sacrifice with the voice of thanksgiving.” What a place for a praise meeting! And what a song! “Salvation (deliverance) is of the Lord!” As he sang and praised, the great whale began to rise toward the surface of the water, and move toward the shore, and Jonah soon found himself upon the dry land.

Praise has a wonderful lifting power! We need not be anxious about the outcome of things if only we begin to praise. When Jonah’s soul fainted within him, he deliberately looked right away from his impossible surroundings and uttered these wonderful words: “They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.” Let us note this lesson: when Jonah was hemmed in on every side, everything that he could see which suggested disaster he called a “lying vanity.” If he had not taken his eye off these “lying vanities” he would have forsaken the mercy that God offered him. We never get faith by looking at ourselves, our surroundings, or our difficulties.

We read in 1 Samuel of Saul being tormented by an evil spirit. David was sent for, and the record says, “When David played upon his harp the evil spirit left Saul and he was well.” Isn’t this a splendid way of getting rid of the enemy when he attacks us with mental depression?

*“The weakest saint may Satan rout
Who meets him with a praiseful shout!”*

Martin Luther once wrote: “When I cannot

PRAISE CHANGES THINGS

pray, I always sing."

In 2 Chronicles, there is a thrilling narrative concerning a battle won through praise. Jehoshaphat was told that a great multitude was coming against him from beyond the sea. He fully realized the difficulty of the situation, and went to the Lord with his trouble. His was a humble prayer: "We have no might against this great company . . . neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee." Not upon the greatness of the difficulty, but upon Him. It was a crucial test, but the Lord did not leave Jehoshaphat in doubt as to His will. He made it known through one of the young men, who spoke these words of the Lord: "The battle is not yours but God's . . . ye shall not need to fight . . . fear not, nor be dismayed."

Fear is a deadly enemy. Let us remember, when we are tempted to tremble, that "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7).

And then, Jehoshaphat appointed singers who should go forth before the army singing, "Praise the Lord; for His mercy endureth forever." This they did without one visible sign of the promised salvation of the Lord. Right in the very face of battle against an army mighty in number, they sang "Praise the Lord!" The inspired record says: "When they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir . . . and they were smitten." Two of the allied opposing armies began to fight the third, and when they had demolished them they turned upon each other until the valley was filled with dead bodies and "none escaped." They had more than victory after this, for we read: "Jehoshaphat and his people . . . were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much." So you see they were much richer at the end of the trial than at the beginning. They had added good which they had never dreamed of possessing and "the way of the wicked was turned upside down."

There are two songs in Jehoshaphat's great battle: the song of praise before; the song of deliverance afterwards. We, also, should have two songs:



***"Is it a midnight
time in your life?
Are you in a
dungeon? Begin,
right now, to
praise God!"***

a song in the valley of Berachah (blessing), praising God for the fulfillment of all that He has promised; but it is more precious to have the song of praise before—praising Him without sight or feeling. Shall we not have both?

The marvelous experience which Paul and Silas had while in prison is another example of the result of praise at midnight. They were bound in an inner prison, their feet fast in the stocks. There was no earthly way of escape for them, and it looked as if they would lose their lives the next day. But there is always a Divine way out of a difficulty! No matter how great the difficulty may seem, we have the sure promise made by the unfailing Promiser: "But God . . .

will, with the temptation (testing) also make a way of escape" (1 Cor. 10:13). The God of the impossible can make ways where there are no ways. Do we hear Paul and Silas complaining of the hardness of the way? Are they grumbling, weeping, wondering why the Lord has allowed them to get into this peculiar predicament? We do praise God that no sound of murmuring came through those prison walls. In that uncomfortable position, their backs bleeding from the wounds inflicted by the thongs, they praised God, offering unto Him the "sacrifice of thanksgiving."

As they sang, the miracle was wrought! The foundation began to tremble, the building rocked and swayed, the doors burst open and they were free! "Everyone's bands were loosed."

Beloved, is it a midnight time in your life? Are you in a dungeon? Your feet held fast in the stocks? Have you given up in hopeless despair, thinking that escape is impossible? Begin, right now, to praise God! "Whoso offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving, glorifieth Me, and prepareth a way that I may show him the salvation of God" (Ps. 50:23, margin, RV). God's Word is true! When you begin to praise, He will send the earthquake and set you free!

Habakkuk knew something of this wonderful secret of victory. He, too, sang a song of praise in his darkest hour. Catch the echo. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the

PRAISE CHANGES THINGS

fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab. 3:17-18).

We read in the book of Joshua how the walls of Jericho fell flat after they were compassed about seven days. God had declared that He had given them the city. Faith reckoned this to be true, so they began their march around the walls using as their only weapon that which indicated triumph—a ram's horn! Unbelief might have prayed this kind of a prayer: "O Lord, make the walls totter just a little, or loosen a few stones so that we may have a sign that Thou art going to answer our prayer, and then we will praise Thee." Prudence might have said: "It is not safe to shout until the victory is actually won, lest the Lord be dishonored, and we be greatly humiliated." But they acted on the authority of God's Word, and shouted the shout of faith before there was a sign of encouragement. The Lord accomplished the rest. It is after we make a full commitment that "He will bring it to pass."

How many walls of difficulty would fall flat if we simply marched around them with shouts of praise! As we compass "walls" with praise, the Lord has promised to "compass us about with songs of deliverance."

*"Thou waitest for deliverance
O soul, thou waitest long!
Believe that now deliverance
Doth wait for thee in song!"*

*"Sigh not until deliverance
Thy fettered soul doth free
With songs of glad deliuerance
God now doth compass thee."*

A missionary in dark China was living a defeated life. Everything about him seemed to be touched with sadness. Although he prayed many months for victory over depression and discouragement, no answer came. His life remained quite the same. He determined to leave his post and go to an interior station where he could be quiet and



***"How many walls
of difficulty would
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of praise."***

spend long hours in prayer till victory was assured. Upon reaching the place, he was entertained in the home of a fellow missionary. On the wall of his bedroom hung this motto: "Try Thanksgiving."

The two words gripped his heart, and he thought within himself, "Have I been praying all these months, and not been praising?" He stopped and began to praise God and was greatly uplifted. Instead of hiding away to agonize in prayer, he returned immediately to his waiting converts to tell them that praise changes things. Wonderful blessing attended his simple testimony and the bands that had bound others were loosed through praise.

I wish to add my own humble testimony to that of my fellow-missionary. It was a dark, dark night in my life when the words "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion" (Ps. 65:1) were impressed upon my mind. I had been waiting in prayer for months. The months were now stretching on into years—piled up, as it were, before God.

Could not I now wait in praise before I saw the answer? God was waiting for me to take this final step in faith, and when I began to praise Him for the answer, began to "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him," He began to answer in a manner that was "exceeding abundantly above all" that I could ask or think. The possession of the secret of victory has transformed my life and filled it with unutterable gladness.

The story is told of Sir Michael Costa, that he was holding a rehearsal one night with his vast array of musicians and hundreds of voices. The mighty chorus rang out with thunder of organ, sounding of horns, and clashing of cymbals. Far back in the orchestra one who played the piccolo said to himself: "In all this din, it doesn't matter what I do." Suddenly, all was still! The great conductor had stopped, flung up his hands. Someone had failed to take his part! The sweet note of the piccolo had been missed.

Is your "praise note" missing from the heavenly choir? Are you waiting, waiting, yearning, for God to answer your prayer? He is waiting to answer. Try thanksgiving!

U

Selah!

A. O. Molesworth

The word "selah" is frequently found in the Psalms, and stands for a musical sign, meaning "rest" or "pause." Now the life of the Church and the believer resembles a psalm composed and set to music by the One who was "anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows." Such a view suggests some helpful truths for us:

1) A "Selah," or pause is found in the life of every believer. It may come in sickness and enforced retirement from the family, the business, and our daily calling. Don't be surprised, then, when you meet with a "Selah," a call to rest in your daily life.

2) A "Selah" is placed in the music, and in our lips, by the Composer. He knows where and when it is needed for the perfection of the psalm of life and for its effect on the listener. When it comes, however trying it may be, remember to say, "He placed it there."

3) A pause is part of the music. We may think that only sound is music, when a "rest" is often as effective as the full chord. Therefore when any "pause" comes in your life, and your activity for the time ceases, remind yourself that this is also part of the music and be comforted by it.

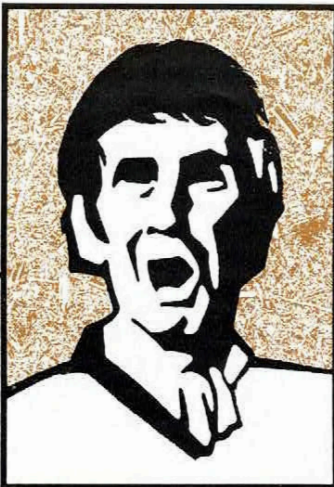
4) A "Selah," or pause does not hinder the work of the singers who don't have to pause. If

our part is to rest, it will bring into prominence the work of the other singers, and the beauty of the psalm. So when we are laid aside, we hear other voices taking up the harmony of the church, home and daily life, and in our resting, we are glad.

5) A "Selah" should lead the resting one to "count time." When the singer is silent for a while, he is still in harmony with the others, and also part of the whole, so while he waits he enjoys the harmony. Remember, silent times are thoughtful, counting times! "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Ps. 90:12).

6) A pause shows the "resting" singer eagerly waiting to go on. Isn't this the truth, seen in many a sick room, or place of retirement, and in many a silenced worker's life? He says, "The psalm needs my voice," and soon his silence becomes song.

7) A "Selah" obliges the singer to keep his eye on the music and on the leader, so that he may begin in time—neither too soon nor too late. Remember this, beloved child of God, when you are commanded of Him to be still! He who leads the song will give the sign for a fresh beginning to the watchful one. The "selah" with its silent meditation, and the "service" with its harmonious sound, alike make music, when He is the Leader!



Taking a Breather

*It might be as well in the hymns, if we could
Take a breath where the writers intended we should,
Not hunting and racing the sense to death,
By aiming at singing a verse in one breath.*

—F. R. Havergal, from *To the choir of Llangryffyth*
(quoted in COUNSEL Magazine)

The Happy Christian

Hugh R. Monro

There is a prevalent idea today that though the righteous may be assured of reward in the coming world, they are generally speaking, unhappy here. The unrighteous, however, are largely free from trouble, it is suggested, whatever shadows may surround their future.

If you want to lift this problem out of the mists of uncertainty and see what God says about it, read Psalm 1. There you have full-length portraits of the righteous and the unrighteous. What is quite evident is the existence of a law of spiritual gravitation. The unrighteous man first "walks in the counsel of the ungodly"—he keeps bad company. Then he "stands in the way of sinners"—sin has become a habit, a fixed position. Finally, he "sits in the seat of the scornful"—his habit of thought and mode of life have led to cynicism. He has lost sight of all spiritual landmarks. He thinks of other men as being as devoid of principle as himself. To him, godliness is a jest. This is the portrait of the ungodly.

Now look at the portrait of the man of God. He is "happy," or "blessed." This person by conscious choice rejects these evil counsels. His life is compared to a fruitful tree planted by rivers of water. He is continually refreshed by that stream which flows from the Throne of God. His blessedness endures: "his leaf, also, shall not wither." Instead of deterioration and decline, there is growth and blessing. And most remarkable of all, his life is attended by increasing benediction: "whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

The psalm is replete with contrasts. For the righteous, there is "delight" and happy meditation in God's law "day and night." His appreciations are lifted above the trivial and vulgar to share the very thought and purpose of God, while the ungodly are reckoned as "chaff which the wind driveth away." The inspired summary reads: "for the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

Is this not a radiant picture of the path of the one sheltered by the blood of Christ, and a heart-breaking record of the despair which belongs to the unbeliever? If it is all true, how can it be that men and women all about us are making such suicidal choices? How can they be so blind to the realities of life? You recall the plaintive words of our Lord to His disciples when many who had professed His name were turning back: "Will ye also go away?" The immediate response of Peter was, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." This is the instinctive response of the awakened heart; to turn from Him is to turn from all that makes life worthwhile. To lose Him would be to lose all.

There are many, nevertheless, who look skeptically on and question whether the Christian life holds any such wealth of blessing as this psalm suggests. They question the existence of evidence that the righteous possess great inner resources which to others are unknown. They regard it as particularly absurd to claim for the believer that "whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

This bold challenge of unbelief cannot be met by statistics. Nevertheless, it is true that each trusting child of God finds a satisfying answer in his own heart. It is important to realize that these deep inward satisfactions are not wholly intangible; they are not the mere quickening of emotion.

The trusting disciple enjoys the wonderful advantage of a God-directed life and a divinely charted future. He has the key with which to interpret his daily experiences and to measure their significance. He does not cherish the dream of mere temporal success, for that would be of doubtful value, but is assured of guidance, peace, and blessing with the supply of every need (not greed). To one happy in the sense of God's companionship and care, there is reality in every line of this precious psalm. "If God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

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"This bold challenge of unbelief cannot be met by statistics."

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On July 15, 1992 there passed into the presence of the Lord a great woman whose life and death would not have been noticed by the world nor its press. Yet her's was such a life of devotion for God that it should be an inspiration to us all.

Marie Thomson was born of Scottish parents sixty-four years ago in Detroit, MI, where she was also born again and came into fellowship with believers. A perusal of her diaries and letters, only read by her sister and one other after her death, reveals a life of quiet devotion rarely equalled. It has a message for us all.

In her teens she dedicated her life entirely to the Lord and from then felt a burden for the lost, especially in neglected fields. She plunged into what was nearest at hand, but her special passion was for children and, though she never married, she became a friend and mother to thousands of these, leading many to the Saviour.

She trained as a nurse, using her profession as an opening for talking to people about Christ and also to earn enough to take time off for lengthy periods of very real missionary service. She was not publicized in missionary magazines, nor did she receive funds from any of the regular and recognized sources. She was the modern personification of 2 Corinthians 6:9-11: "As unknown, [to man] and yet well known [to God] . . . as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

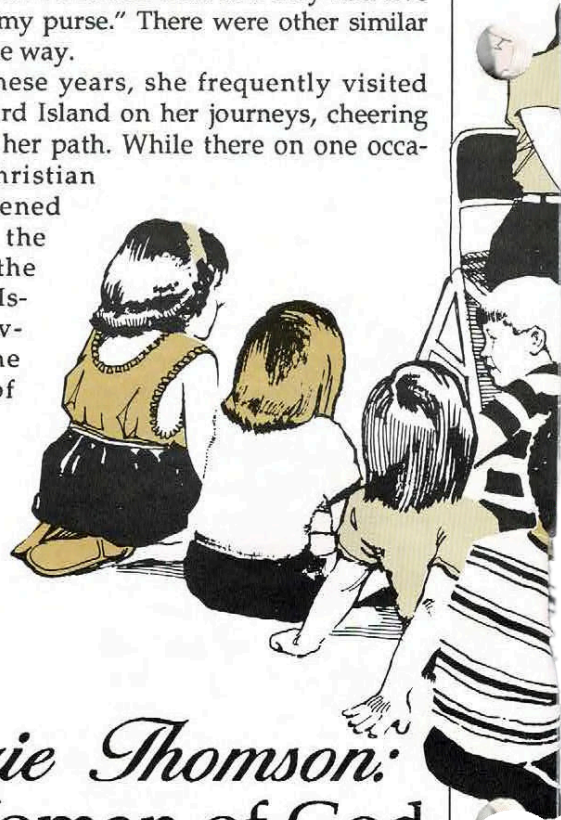
Her first forays into work away from home were in 1948-49, and 1952 when, carrying a simple letter of introduction to the believers there, she went for much of the summer to Quebec, mostly for children's meetings and visitation. She was there again in 1956-57, in the same kind of work but adding girls clubs for older ones in the Sherbrooke and Stanstead areas. Later, she helped for several years in youth conferences at Frontier Lodge. Her interest in Quebec had been stirred through groups of sisters in a number of assemblies who mailed thousands of pieces of gospel literature to that province, and through replies, she heard of what was being attempted for God there.

In her earlier periods in Quebec, she heard of great needs in Newfoundland and, with her usual practical approach, decided to see if she could help. She asked her hospital for a leave of absence. They said they couldn't do that, but when she came back she would be re-employed. When she did come back, however, there was no opening

for her—an early lesson on the folly of trusting in man. She found the need great, the laborers few, and the welcome in Newfoundland very warm. She lived in quarters above the assembly meeting room and plunged into girls' clubs, Sunday School, women's work, and visitation.

She stayed for two months, but did the same work for longer periods in 1956-57. Between 1955 and 1968, she visited Newfoundland thirteen times in all, sometimes for the whole summer and on several trips for a whole year. It was a hard life and far from "gracious living" for a young woman, but she loved it, loved the people, and was loved warmly in return. They were simple people and helped her with food and in every way they could. The diet was heavy in fish of which they brought her gifts, along with all sorts of local dishes which others might have found a little strange. In winter, it was often very cold with 40-50 MPH winds blowing off the sea. In her *secret* diary, she says at one point, "A little girl who got saved a few days ago shyly put \$2 in my hand for which I thanked God as I only had five cents left in my purse." There were other similar gifts along the way.

During these years, she frequently visited Prince Edward Island on her journeys, cheering everyone in her path. While there on one occasion, a Christian nurse happened to mention the needs of the Magdalene Islands, governed by the province of Quebec. About 100 miles west of Newfoundland and a little north of PEI, there was virtu-



Marie Thomson: A Woman of God

by David B. Long

A WOMAN OF GOD

ally no evangelical work there. She knew nothing about the islands, but right away longed to tell the children about Christ. So she prayed that the Lord would supply some link as she did not know how to start. Then she heard that a sisters' tract band in Montreal had sent literature, and had received eight requests for more from the Magdalenes. This was a start, but that was not quite enough of a linkage, though she was eager to go as soon as she had a lead.

The guidance came in an unusual way. Glancing through a copy of a now defunct home newspaper, the *Family Herald*, her eye caught a request for a pen-pal by a 21-year-old boy in Grindstone, The Magdalenes. She wrote to him, saying she was much too old to be his pen pal but she needed information about the islands. His mother replied, saying that her son was only 17 and the request had been sent in as a prank by a group of girls in his class to embarrass him, as he was *very* shy. The mother, however, gave her information and suggested she should visit them. That was enough for Marie and she jumped at the opportunity. On that first trip, she spied out the land while she labored in her usual fields. Then in 1957, and 1960-62, she spent

lengthy periods there, between visits to Newfoundland. She had children's meetings, distributed literature, visited homes, and witnessed to all

who would listen. She also visited the eight women who had written to the Montreal Sisters' Tract Band, though they were on another island. To her God's hand was in every bit of it.

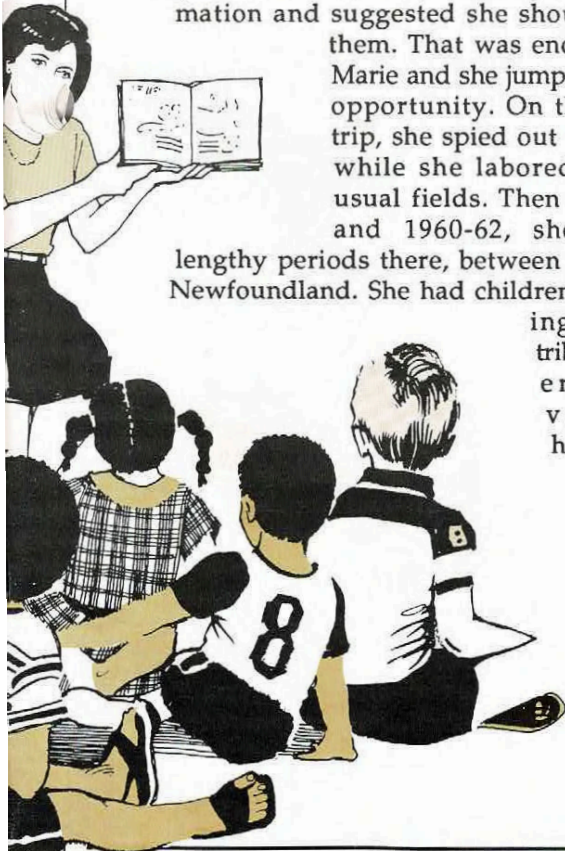
In 1961, she heard through friends in Orillia, ON, of a Huron Indian Reserve where there was no evangelistic outreach. Her immediate thought was, as she wrote in her diary, "for those children with no hope of ever hearing the gospel." There were problems and obstructions, mostly from local religious leaders, but Marie worked her way through all that and went to teach the children the Scriptures while she lived quietly among them.

By the end of the 1970s, she settled at home (by now in California) to care for her aging mother. In 1975, most of the murderous "Charles Manson Gang" were moved to a penitentiary near her home. One of these men was saved through a prison worker, and when Marie heard of this, she started to visit him on a regular basis to be a help to him. Having proved by his completely changed life the reality of his conversion, he has a certain amount of liberty and later, though still in prison, married a fine Christian girl. Marie became a spiritual mother in the Lord to them.

All these were only branches of this unusual life. From early days she kept a "Missionary Scrap Book" with photos and facts about the workers. Linked to this was a complete "Missionary File-card System" which she regularly updated; she wrote to workers all over the world. After visiting relatives in Scotland in 1965, she went over and visited many missionaries in Portugal, France, and Belgium. All her life a stream of cheerful and encouraging letters poured out to hundreds of people for whom she prayed. Many shall "rise and call her blessed" in that day.

Ours is a day of selfish unconcern in many lives. There is also an increasing acceptance of some sort of "regular and adequate support" as automatically part of "commendation to full-time service" and, of course, a resultant spate of publicity. One stands humbled and ashamed before the life of this woman who wanted nothing and asked for nothing but to serve the Lord humbly and quietly trust Him for all her needs.

A sentence in her diary many years earlier gives a tiny window into her heart. She visited an old man on her street who was dying alone. Her comment: "When I went in he cried; when I heard two days later that he had died, I cried because I wasn't sure where he was for eternity."



David B. Long, veteran missionary to Angola, invested many years in ministry in North America. He now makes his home in Northern Ireland.

Fanny Crosby

John A. Bjorlie

*M*rs. Frances Jane Crosby Van Alstyne (1820-1915) produced those outstanding spiritual songs: "Safe in the Arms of Jesus," "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Saviour," "Rescue the Perishing," "Some Day the Silver Cord Will Break," "Blessed Assurance," "Thou, My Everlasting Portion," and "Saviour, More Than Life to Me."

Frances Jane was born on March 24, in Southeast, Patnam County, New York, in the family's one story cottage. Her mother was a plucky woman "of the New England type." Her father, John Crosby, died before she was twelve months old. Fanny tells her own story:

"When about six weeks old I was taken sick and my eyes grew very weak and those who had charge of me poulticed my eyes. Their lack of knowledge and skill destroyed my sight forever. As I grew older, they told me I would never see the faces of my friends, the flowers of the field, the blue of the skies, or the golden beauty of the stars.

"When my dear mother knew that I was to be shut out from all the beauties of the natural world, she told me, in my girlhood, that two of the world's greatest poets were blind, and that sometimes Providence deprived persons of some physical faculty in order that the spiritual insight might more fully awake. I remember well the day she read to me, with deep expression, Milton's sonnet on his blindness:

*Doth God exact day labor, light denied,
I fondly ask? But patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best*

*Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best; His state
Is kingly; thousands at His bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait.*

"Soon I learned what other children possessed, but I made up my mind to store away a little jewel in my heart, which I called Content. This has been the comfort of my whole life. When I was eight years of age, I wrote:

*"O what a happy soul am I!
Although I cannot see,
I am resolved that in this world
Contented I will be.*

*"How many blessings I enjoy,
That other people don't.
To weep and sigh because I'm blind,
I cannot, and I won't."*



In those formative years the Bible was her textbook. "It was my grandmother who brought the Bible to me, and me to the Bible." From her amazement of the Bible she never recovered. At ninety, she enthused, "My love for the Holy Bible and its sacred truth is stronger and more precious to me at ninety than at nineteen!"

From age fifteen, she was educated at an institution for the blind in New York City, where she studied for twelve years, then taught for another eleven years, until her marriage in 1858. Though she grew up with a decided religious bent, it was not until the age of thirty, during an evangelistic meeting, that she personally entered in at "the Door" and obeyed the gospel.

When thirty-eight, she married Alexander Van Alstyne, a blind teacher at the Institute. Fanny's biographers seldom mention anything about

HEROES

"Van." He never achieved the celebrity status that his wife enjoyed, but neither did he discourage her from her work (all told, Fanny's poetic works mount up to about 8,000 pieces). Van wrote the music for a number of Fanny's songs. They lived happily together for forty-four years until "Van went to his Father's house in the year 1902."

Fanny shined in personal work, in strengthening individuals. She saw that we all have our days of sorrow, but that we also have our seasons of joy. She chose to habitually look on the bright side. Her typical greeting rang out, "Bless your dear soul, I am so happy to see you."

She would take an eager preacher by the arm, and mother him with her own homey homilies. "I have been thinking about you. You are a young minister of God. You never have to apologize for

your message. Be careful and guard against fads, cranks and schisms; for these have done more real harm to the growth of the Kingdom of God among men than anything else I have known. Once a man came into a meeting at which I was present and after having listened to a stirring address on foreign missions stood up and said with a nasal whine: 'Talk about foreign missions! Why, there is plenty of work to do at home. Go down on the streets of our city and see our boys and young men. Go to church and see forty bonnets to one bald pate. It's time, brothers and sisters, that we went to work at home; and if you don't look out, brothers and sisters, there will not be men enough in heaven to sing bass.'"

She said she never felt safe in the company of someone with a pious, whining voice. She consid-

The Secret of That Tender Heart

Fanny Crosby marveled at the way her songs were blessed of God.

"My hymn which first won world-wide attention was, 'Pass Me Not, O Gentle Saviour.' Mr. W. H. Doane, who became a very dear friend of mine, suggested the subject to me. It was written in the year 1868. Dear Mr. Sankey said, 'No hymn in our collection was more popular than this one at the meetings in London in 1874. It was sung at almost every service, in Her Majesty's Theatre, Pall Mall.' This hymn has been translated into many foreign languages, and remains a favorite wherever the English tongue is spoken. Mr. Doane did very much to bring my songs to the front. One day he came to me and said, 'Fanny, I have a tune I would like to have you write words for.' He played it over and I exclaimed, 'That says, Safe in the Arms of Jesus.' I went to my room, and in about thirty minutes I returned with the hymn that has since been a comfort and a solace to many heavy, sorrowing hearts."

She plainly had the gift of mercies. One incident in her travels illustrates how she dished out cupfuls of comfort. She was aboard a ferry as it entered the slip with a bang. "Be careful, Captain," said the aged Fanny Crosby, "you have precious freight aboard." The hackman listened to his passenger with close attention, and when informed that she was Fanny Crosby, who had written "Safe in the Arms of Jesus," he took off his hat and wept. He called a policeman and said, "This is Miss Fanny Crosby, who wrote 'Safe in the Arms of Jesus.' I want you to get her safely to the train."

"I sure will," said the policeman. Then quite sadly he added, "We sang that hymn at my little girl's funeral last week."

Aunt Fanny took the policeman's arm and said, "I call all the policemen and railroad men 'my boys.' They take such good care of me wherever I go." The officer assisted her with greatest care and as she took her seat in the train, she said to him, "God bless your dear heart. You shall have my prayers. Tell your dear wife that your little daughter is safe in the arms of Jesus." The big, strong policeman turned away, wiping the tears from his eyes.

Her words were not taken as detached or dispassionate. She herself had experienced this same solace she recommended. Early in her married life, Fanny's keenest disappointment came. She confided with S. Travena Jackson, "Now I am going to tell you of something that only my closest friends know. I became a mother and knew a mother's love. God gave us a tender babe but the angels came down and took our infant up to God and to His throne."

HEROES

ered herself a careful student of human nature. "I have seldom made a mistake in the selection of my friends during these ninety years. Once in a while I have been fooled by frauds, but not often."

The blind poetess was the perennial novelty who knew every president from Andrew Jackson to Teddy Roosevelt. But she chiefly prized the spiritual fellowship of stalwarts like D. L. Moody, Ira Sankey, George B. Stebbins, William H. Doane, P. P. Bliss, James McGranahan, and Robert Lowry. These were her comrades in arms. Moody was a special encouragement. It was in his massive gospel campaigns that Ira Sankey's clear voice gave wings to Crosby's hymns in England and America. She described Moody as "the biggest piece of humanity this nation has yet produced!"

All around, her spiritual eyes saw hearts that were broken, and souls that were going through their own personal Gethsemane. We are told that the Israelites' journey through the desert brought them to a place where they found the water so bitter that they could not drink it. Therefore the encampment was named Marah. For those who had come to the bitter waters of life, she wrote this poem:

*Not always on the mountain
The sweetest flowers we find,
But sometimes in the valley,
With cypress branches twined
We see their buds unclosing,
Their blossoms bending low,
A hallowed fragrance breathing
Where Marah's waters flow.*

*O valley of submission,
Where once the Son of God,
Our precious, loving Saviour,
In lonely silence trod.
And when our hearts are breaking,
To Him we there may go,
Assured that He is nearest,
Where Marah's waters flow.*

*O valley of submission,
Where, leaning on His breast,
We tell Him all our sorrow,
And feel the calm of rest.
Tho' oft He gently leads us,
Where verdant pastures grow
His Mercy shines the brightest
Where Marah's waters flow.*

A Little While



*A little while to sow in tears and weakness
The precious seed along the vernal plain,
Till into life the tender blade expanding
Fresh promise gives of summer's ripening grain.
A little while of patient, earnest labor,
For His dear sake, our best and truest Friend;
A little while to wait for His Appearing,
And then the joy that nevermore shall end.*

*A little while to bear the cross for Jesus
And meet the foe that once He overcame;
To stand unmoved, the Sword of Truth uplifting,
And through its power to conquer in His name.
A little while around His throne to gather
For one sweet hour within the house of prayer;
A little while when, heart with heart communing,
We know by faith that He Himself is there.*

*A little while to weep for those who cherish
As one by one they near the river's brink,
A little while to catch their sweet assurance
That we in heaven shall find each broken link.
A little while! and then the glorious dawning
Of that fair morn beyond the swelling tide,
When we shall wake, and in our Saviour's likeness,
Perfect and pure, we shall be satisfied.*

—Fanny J. Crosby

Singing or Sighing

What a thrilling song that Moses and the children of Israel sang on the eastern banks of the Red Sea. They "sang unto the Lord" and it was all *about* the Lord.

The first word of the chapter indicates the circumstances that gave occasion for the song. "Then"—after being sheltered from the terrible judgment depicted in Exodus 12; after their marvellous salvation from Egypt and the power of Pharaoh; when they realized "that great work which the Lord did"—"Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord." Four things are prominent:

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF GOD

Their song was not about themselves but about Jehovah; not about the blessing but about the Blessor; not about what they had secured but about how Jehovah had secured it. They might have been excused if they had been occupied with their escape from the judgment and their new status—a nation, no longer labor-camp slaves. But it was not so. Jehovah was preeminent in their praise. What He was and the glory that would be His produced joy in their hearts and called forth this magnificent pæan of praise from their lips.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD

They must have been divinely taught, for they seem to have learned why Jehovah had done all this. It was not simply that they might escape the judgment and be brought into "a land flowing with milk and honey." It was that He might have a people for Himself among whom He could dwell. Thus we find that they sang of His habitation, His dwelling place, His sanctuary. Their joy was the reflex of His joy. They entered into His thoughts. They were sharers of His delight.

THE POWER OF GOD

Had they not seen the mightiest demonstration of it that the world had witnessed up to that time? They were confident that what that power had done it would do. It would carry them through. Just as the complete defeat of the Egyptians was an accomplished fact, so the victory over the Canaanites was certain. Jehovah would bring them in. That power would also be exercised later in universal dominion, for they sang: "The Lord shall reign forever and ever" (v. 18). Reason might ask: "But how could God carry through those six hundred thousand men, not to speak of women and children, plus "a mixed multitude"? This brings us to what seems like a blot on a charming chapter, and yet it brings out in bright relief God's providing.

THE PROVISION OF GOD

After all that they had seen, after all that they had sung, in the face of their first test they fell. Note! They commenced to murmur when they ceased to sing. We dare not fling stones at them; we have been there ourselves. Perhaps some person reading these lines is there just now. The preventive for murmuring is singing, and the cure for murmuring is singing. *We have nothing to murmur about*, and every time we do, we play into Satan's hands and grieve the heart of our gracious God. We have sufficient to keep us singing forever!

The failure of the children of Israel gave occasion, however, for learning the greatness and the adequacy of God's provision. Praise His Name! That provision never failed them during all their wilderness wanderings. May we heed the exhortations of Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 till we see Him face to face: Singing! Singing! SINGING!



The Harps of God

J. G. Bellett

An amazing characteristic of the Book of Revelation is its combination of joys and terrors. The book is full of this. This combination is strange to our minds. Yet thus it is. Seals are broken and judgments take their course. Trumpets are blown, vials are emptied of their terrible contents, and horrors are only thereby aggravated. Yet joys and songs with shouts of congratulation abound, and the sound of harpers with their harps are heard throughout, from the beginning to the end. All along the line of these visitations of judgment, we are called to listen to the voices of joy and praise.

From the doxology of chapter 1 to the repeated exultations of chapter 19, we hear these voices throughout the book. Here also, we see God furnishing the heavens above, and the earth beneath, as they are yet to be, in millennial and eternal times.

Of old, heaven was the dwelling place of angels. Jacob's vision of the ladder (Gen. 28:12; John 1:51), and other scenes, let us know this. But after the Lord Jesus had risen and ascended, heaven became the abode of a *glorified Man* (Acts 3:13), as well as of angels. Stephen saw heaven in this condition (Acts 7:55). And when we reach Revelation, we learn that this same heaven has become the habitation of translated saints. The living creatures and the enthroned elders are there, and all through the book they are seen to continue there. Then in chapter 14, we find other companies of redeemed saints joining them there, and playing their harps around the living creatures and the elders, as well as around the throne. This surely shows us heaven in new and wondrous conditions, with hosts of angels, who "excel in strength," in company with redeemed sinners from earth, the witnesses of God's present saving grace. Then, after this, we learn that earth is to be furnished with guests as well as heaven.

The opening of chapter 14, shows us the begin-

ning of this new work of God. There we see the first-fruits of that people who are to furnish the cleansed earth in the time of the Kingdom. These are learners of the song that is sung in heaven. They know the joy of listening, if others know the higher joy of singing. And not only do they listen, they learn that song. They know what is harped on "the harps of God" on high. And with such a people as this, the earth begins to be furnished for its millennial condition (Isa. 66:1; Ps. 99:5).

There will be a link between these millennial heavens and the millennial earth. The Lamb Himself forms it. And as there will be a place on earth for the eye to feast itself in sight of the heavenly glory, so we learn here there will be a place for the ear to hear and delight itself, in the heavenly music of that day.

The nations of the saved on earth are to walk in the light of the Holy Jerusalem. They stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion, listening to the harps of the harpers around the heavenly throne. These form a new company in heaven, being (as I judge) the saints martyred before the fifth seal—to whom white robes had been given (chap. 6:9-11). They are now raised, glorified, and translated to heaven (Rev. 14:2), and their harps, like the living creatures and elders, have been given them to help them sing the "new song."

In chapter 4, a sea of glass, then unoccupied, is seen before the heavenly throne. Now it is seen filled (chap. 15:1-4) with a company who have been put to death under the Beast. The sea of glass, as is seen here by John, is "mingled with fire," for those who stand on it are not only conquerors, but martyrs—conquerors who had resisted his claims unto blood, refusing to bear his mark in the great crisis of the world's history. Now here they are seen and heard, singing the Song of Moses—the song of a great victory over Egypt—and also "of the Lamb"—of a greater tri-



THE HARPS OF GOD

umph at Calvary. Now they stand with the "harps of God"—made for their joy. As the Lord God had made with His own hand "coats of skin" to cover Adam and Eve in the day of their fall, so now He has also provided those redeemed sinners with "the harps of God," those instruments of joy to gladden His own courts of glory. It is in anticipation of such joys, yet to be the lot of the heavenly saints, that even now some sing:

*"Lord, I believe, Thou hast prepared,
Unworthy though I be,
For me a blood-bought, free reward,
A harp of God for me!*

*'Tis strung and tuned for endless years
And formed by power Divine
To sound in God the Father's ears
No other Name but Thine."*

Praise . . . For Thorns?

J. Muir Kelly



It is not that we are instructed to give thanks for evil in itself, but we may offer praise for the overruling of it for good. Many things that we regard as misfortunes are blessings. Trials and crosses are often among the greatest blessings in disguise (sometimes well disguised!), for it is only through such refining processes that the character is perfected. When we consider that the disagreeable is indispensable to the enrichment of our characters, we see that we should offer thanks for this phase of experience, as well as those circumstances that we find to our liking. What a change would occur in our lives if this was true.

George Matheson, the well-known blind preacher of Scotland, wrote: "My God, I have never thanked Thee for my 'thorn'! I have thanked Thee a thousand times for my roses, but never once for my 'thorn'; I have been looking forward to a world where I shall get compensation for my cross, but I have never thought of my cross as itself a present glory. Teach me the glory of my cross; teach me the value of my 'thorn.' Show me that I have climbed to Thee by the path of pain. Show me that my tears have made my rainbow."

There is a story of a German baron who stretched wires from tower to tower of his castle, to make a great aeolian harp. Then he waited and listened to hear the music from it. For some months, the air was still, and no sound was heard. At length came the stern winter winds. *Then* the wires gave forth majestic music which could be heard across the countryside. In the same way, there are lives that never, in the calm of quiet days, yield the music that is in them. It is only when the storms of adversity blow upon them that they cry unto the Lord, and, proving His divine help, give forth notes of sweet praise. "God giveth songs in the night" (Job 35:10).

Our best and highest songs are inspired by our gratitude and love to the Lord for His goodness in the dark times. The Israelites remembered the hours of anguish they endured when, at the shores of the Red Sea, they heard behind them the clatter of the horses' hoofs and the rumble of the chariot wheels. They felt as the Psalmist did: "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications" (Ps. 116:1). What can you praise Him for today?

Songs in the Night

David D. Burrell

"Hast not Thou made an hedge about him . . . ? Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?" (Job 1:10; 3:23)

Job asks how life can be considered worth living under such conditions. Here he sits on the refuse heap outside his door, somewhere

in Arabia. A short while ago he had everything—children, wealth a-plenty, health and happiness, honor among men. Then one day came evil tidings. A servant ran in crying that raiders had run off with his flocks of asses and sheep. Another came, with news of a second raid and the loss of his cattle. A third, to say that his vast herds of camels were gone the same way. And then one came to break the worst news of all: the roof had fallen in and crushed his children and their families while they feasted. Still Job did not rebel against God.

Another blow fell: Job was stricken with a most painful, loathsome disease. His wife bade him give up his faith in a God who could so afflict a good man. "Curse God," she cried; "curse God, and die." Yet he would not. He was ready to receive good or ill, as God chose.

At last, across the desert, came three old friends to console him. They wept when they saw the man so changed; and sat down by him. Day after day they sat, while Job suffered in silence. But at length the pressure of their silence and their unspoken criticism broke down his guard. He began to speak. Why did God afflict a man who loved Him? What was life worth to one hedged in as he was?

There are many among us who feel as Job did. Some had wealth and all that wealth could buy, and suddenly it is gone, and they can not see how

life can be enduring without it. Some are old and feeble; their friends are gone, and they are left alone, with idle hands. A man past his prime sees his employer's company fail, and finds himself, with all his skill and experience, on the street, too old for employment. A talented girl finds herself bound down to the care of an invalid mother, and her talent must go undeveloped while she washes the dishes and makes the beds.

Oh, there are many of us living within the hedge and many wonder why it must be. They ask, like Job, how life can be worthwhile within this thorny barrier.

There is a right and good philosophy of life for the man hedged in. But first, he had better search his own heart and see whether he himself has not set up this hedge by his own wilfulness, his own sins. If he has, the first thing for him to do is to have it out with God, making honest confession, and laying hold on Christ for forgiveness. With that settled, what comes next?

TRUST GOD'S PLAN

First, accept this simple proposition: that since God has put the hedge around him, here in the hedge is his proper place. Paul learned this lesson. "I have learned," he writes, "in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Put him in jail at Philippi, with his feet in the stocks, and he praises God; put him in jail in Rome, and he is full of joy; put him in jail at Caesarea for two long years, and he has never a word of complaint to utter, knowing that God wants him there. If you can recognize the illness that lays you by the heels, the financial loss that strips you of what looked like opportunity, the bereavement that leaves you alone—if you can recognize these as by God's permission, then certainly you can see that you belong here, within this hedge.

THOU
ART WORTHY
O LORD, TO
RECEIVE GLORY,
HONOR &
PRAISE.

SONGS IN THE NIGHT

DO THE NEXT THING

Then comes a second simple proposition: if this is your proper place, then here you will find your proper work. God does not shut us in, away from what He would have us do. If the place is small, then it wants intensive cultivation, as the farm expert says. Put Paul in the Philippian jail and he starts to work on the soul of the jailor; in Rome, and he preaches Christ to the soldier to whom he is chained; to the curious courtier, the palace slave in Caesarea, and his ministry goes on as if there were no walls to confine him. If it is clear that Providence put you within the hedge, then you had best look about you to see what God wants you to do there; for undoubtedly He has your task waiting. And it may well be that by this new task, however limited it may seem, however trivial it may appear, you will do more for God and make more of yourself than could have been done at the task you had planned for yourself. "The things which happened unto me," wrote Paul from his Roman prison, "have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places." The prisoner had a congregation for his preaching which he could never have had as a free man.

LOOK BEYOND

But there is one more proposition for the man in the hedge: though this is his proper place, and here his proper work, yet this is not his permanent abode. Some day the hedge will go down. It did for Job, and it does for everyone who serves God with a glad heart in a small place. God never leaves His own permanently within the hedge.

There is a difference worth noting here, between being content and being satisfied. The satisfied man wants nothing better, has no ambition, enjoys no hope. For him the inside of the hedge is good enough. But the contented man cheerfully makes the best of limitations, yet hopes and expects that some day they will end. Indeed, they sometimes end in this life. Even if they do not, life becomes so rich and full that the walls of the hedge seem to recede farther and farther, as the years pass. But when this earthly life ends, go down they will!

Paul knew that and looked for it with joyful expectation: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth

there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord shall give me at that day." "Our light affliction which is but for the moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Therefore, no more whining! no more bitter complaints! No more doubts of God! How little we know of the mysteries of God's providence and His grace! How blind we are; how faulty is our moral judgment! How dare we sit in judgment on our loving God because He has, for a time, hedged us in. Let us rather look here within the hedge, accepting its limitations and finding within this boundary the immediate task for us. We are not shut away from the richness and fullness of life, but shut in to it, and by God's grace in Christ our Lord we shall do a far better work here than we could have done by battering down the hedge and getting our own way.

THE SECRET!

The secret? It is something more than mere passive submission. It is a trustful acceptance of the hedge and an eager acceptance of its challenge. And it is yet more. It is doing this as a servant of Christ Jesus, knowing that the hedge shuts us in with Christ Himself.

When Gipsy Smith first came to New York, one of his immediate errands was to look up a kinswoman, Belle Smith. He found her in a dingy back-bedroom in a tenement on the Bowery, in the most disreputable neighborhood in the city. For long years she had lain there, an invalid. But little by little the neighbors came to know her. One by one they came to her bedside in their troubles, and she counselled with them and prayed for them. Gipsy Smith sat beside her and said, "Belle, have you peace?" Her face brightened and she smiled: "Peace? I have the Author of peace!" There is the final secret of life within the hedge. Madame Guyon knew it well; and when imprisoned in the Bastille for her faith, she sang:

*"A little bird am I,
Shut in from fields of air;
And all the day I sit and sing
To Him who placed me there:
Well pleased a prisoner to be
Because, my God, it pleaseth Thee."*

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David's Shepherd & Mine

Dan Crawford

The roots of Psalm 23 reach back deep into the rocky soil of Psalm 22. The sheep can only reach the green pastures of Psalm 23 because the Shepherd of Psalm 22 held on His way among the wasteland. The thorns are over there, and the green pastures are here, and "my" is the adoring result of it all. Surely in such loving sequence we find an adequate reason why the ineffable name of Jehovah can be linked with the name of the lost sheep of humanity, lost David, or lost anybody! Jehovah is *my* Shepherd. Here we learn that the grace of God is so exceeding abundant at the Cross that we find a pledge of the peace of the sinner in the woes of the Saviour.

Watch the contrast. Like David, the Christ, too, opens His psalm of Calvary with a "My." Twice does the forsaken cry ring out to the skies. How different David's "my" to that of the lonely Christ! A heaven and a hell of difference, surely! The deep of Christ's forsakenness calls across to the deep of David's calm and joy.

But watch this divine sequence a little longer. David's "I shall not want" finds its reason in the fact that Jehovah is with him. And so, too, in the opposite experience of Christ's loneliness do we see the utter poverty of the Cross. Without God was the sinner, and without God was the Saviour. The Shepherd being poured out like water is the source of the satisfaction in the sheep. Watch, too, those still waters of tranquility, and listen in contrast to the words of Christ's roaring. All God's waves and billows are rolling over Him there, in the strong crying and tears of the Son of God.

Both David and David's Lord have a cup, and both the cups are seen running over—the red wine of wrath and the rich wine of joy. Without the shedding of blood there is no . . . there is no *anything* without the shedding of blood. Even in the marshes of Africa the tribesmen say, "No blood, no blossom!"

Contrast further David's head anointed with



oil and the head of the Christ of God wounded with thorns. That soft oil, and those sharp thorns are so widely removed from each other that they spell salvation to the sheep. There is one phrase in this psalm, almost Pauline, which reveals how fully the writer has seized upon the fact that Christ is his Saviour substitute. When David says, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death," surely here we have a subtle hint that if the substitute Christ has so utterly died *for* the sheep, then in some glorious sense the sheep will not die at all. "Shall not see death" is the note of joy for the sheep. But for that wounded Shepherd of the psalm of sorrow, there was no such qualification. The "must be" of the Cross was ever before Him.

See the contrast also in the two groups of enemies surrounding David and David's greater Son. There, in the presence of his enemies, God loads our table with good things. God Himself prepares that table, prepares both the time and the place for it, when the enemies are in full view. But look at Christ, hungry both in body and soul! His is the bread of affliction. And if David's joy was the confounding of his enemies, how deep the woe of Christ in being taunted by His foes. There they are, shooting out the lip and shaking the head in derision. David gets the banquet, and David's Lord gets the wormwood and the gall. Surely the lesson for us is written large. Do we take our brimming cup to Calvary and, before drinking even one drop of joy, bless the cup of woe that the Shepherd drank alone for us?

David's last contrast is with the Man of Sorrows, an outcast from the Father's house, and he, David, boasting of that house as his dwelling for evermore. The homeless Christ, out in the cold, knocking at the door of heaven: "My God! My God! Why . . . ?" The reason you will find in the mind of God and in your own sinful heart—in His matchless plan and in your desperate need.

U



LOOK AT BOOKS

Culture & Customs

Jim McKendrick

In the preface of *Structural Principles of the Bible* by F. E. Marsh is a quote from Myles Coverdale, one of the early translators of the Bible. He stated, "It shall greatly helpe ye to understand Scripture, if thou mark not only what is spoken or wrythen, but of whom and to whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstances, considering what goeth before and what followeth." Basically he was saying that we need to understand the Scripture in its historical and grammatical context. That's good advice.

We think about the Bible in the framework of our Western culture and that can lead us astray in our thinking if we're not careful. For instance, in Matthew 1:18 it distinctly states that Mary was espoused to Joseph. Yet Mary is called Joseph's wife in verse 20 by the angel of the Lord. Now was Mary his wife or fiancée? To answer that question, we need to understand the historical culture of Middle Eastern marriage customs which were significantly different from our Western practice. A wrong understanding of the historical setting can lead to wrong interpretation of Scripture.

A number of months ago, I wrote an article on Bible encyclopedias. They are an excellent source of information regarding history and culture. However, there are a number of books around that deal specifically with this topic. I'm sure one or more of these will help you in your basic understanding of the Bible.

The first I suggest is a classic work called *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands* by Fred Wight. It has been around since 1953. It was originally his Master's Degree thesis and then expanded from that to the present book form. In short articles, it covers almost every aspect of living in the Middle East. It also has a good bibliography for those who want to do more extensive research.

Another helpful volume is *Harper's Encyclopedia of Bible Life*. This work was thoroughly revised in

1978. While there is some duplication of material with the previous book mentioned, there is an extensive section on the professional, and industrial life of Bible times that is not in the Wight book.

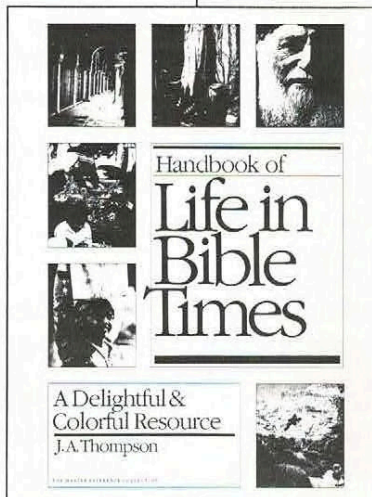
The third book is one I have just discovered. It is the *IVP Handbook of Life in Bible Times*. The editor is Mr. J. A. Thompson. The thing that distinguishes this work is the color photography. On almost every page is a picture or map and the majority of them are in color. A beautiful book as well as an informative one.

A discussion of this nature would not be complete unless the *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* by Alfred Edersheim was mentioned. The title tells the content. It is an often quoted source. To understand the cultural and historical climate in which the Gospel writers wrote—and assumed the reader would know—will open the door to many passages you may have struggled with in the past.

Last, but not least, is *The Victor Handbook of Bible Knowledge* by Mr. Gilbert Beers. Unlike the others,

this book is written especially for the Sunday School teacher. The book lists 300 of the most often told stories of the Bible. Then, devoting two pages to each story, Dr. Beers provides background information that will add color and dimension to each story. If you teach Sunday School, this is a must for your library. This was an excellent tool used at our family altar when my son was growing up. Fully illustrated, mostly with color maps, charts, graphs, and pictures, you will be enriched by this tool.

Just a word in closing. I would not defend all the theological statements in these books. While there is very little in the way of doctrine in these books, these men are historians, not theologians and it is in history and culture that they shine. But read for what they are intended to be, a source for the history, culture, background of the Bible. You will be enriched and enlightened as you use these tools to study the Word of God.



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Every Day Reading Plan

Section 22: Ecclesiastes & Song of Solomon — The love of life & the life of love

| | | |
|-------------|-----------------------|---|
| November 1 | Ecclesiastes 1:1-18 | The search for meaning begins |
| November 2 | Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 | The search goes on: dead-end pleasure |
| November 3 | Ecclesiastes 2:12-26 | Still searching: does the grave end it? |
| November 4 | Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 | Everything in its time |
| November 5 | Ecclesiastes 3:12-22 | God makes the difference |
| November 6 | Ecclesiastes 4:1-16 | Help in fellowship; perils of privilege |
| November 7 | Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 | Relationship to God |
| November 8 | Ecclesiastes 5:8-20 | Relationship to gold |
| November 9 | Ecclesiastes 6:1-12 | What's the use? |
| November 10 | Ecclesiastes 7:1-15 | Some sage advice for living |
| November 11 | Ecclesiastes 7:16-29 | God's intentions; man's inventions |
| November 12 | Ecclesiastes 8:1-8 | Keeping the king's commands |
| November 13 | Ecclesiastes 8:9-17 | This life is not long enough |
| November 14 | Ecclesiastes 9:1-10 | Time and chance happens to all |
| November 15 | Ecclesiastes 9:11-18 | Who wins life's race? |
| November 16 | Ecclesiastes 10:1-10 | More advice from the king |
| November 17 | Ecclesiastes 10:11-20 | Keen observations! |
| November 18 | Ecclesiastes 11:1-10 | Listen to the king |
| November 19 | Ecclesiastes 12:1-7 | A message to young people |
| November 20 | Ecclesiastes 12:8-14 | The conclusion of the matter |
| November 21 | Song of Songs 1:1-7 | The beloved declares her love |
| November 22 | Song of Songs 1:8-17 | The lover responds and is answered |
| November 23 | Song of Songs 2:1-7 | The beloved rejoices in her companion |
| November 24 | Song of Songs 2:8-17 | The wait & the search |
| November 25 | Song of Songs 3:1-11 | Drawing nearer—found at last |
| November 26 | Song of Songs 4:1-16 | The lover praises his bride & her call |
| November 27 | Song of Songs 5:1-16 | The dream & the reality: <i>my</i> beloved! |
| November 28 | Song of Songs 6:1-13 | In the garden together |
| November 29 | Song of Songs 7:1-13 | The lover describes his beloved |
| November 30 | Song of Songs 8:1-14 | The security of true love |

Ecclesiastes & the Song of Songs

The old saying goes, "The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence."

Within each of us there is something that wants that saying to be true, even though we have lived long enough to know it isn't. We sometimes do things because our heart or emotions are not satisfied, and while our heads know better, we allow things in our minds or lives we know we shouldn't.

Well, what if we had the power, wealth, and position to do anything we wanted, to explore any avenue, to follow any pursuit we desired. Solomon did have the human resources and set out to push life to the limits. Then, under the direction of the Spirit of God, he wrote his findings and recorded his innermost thoughts. We know it as the book of Ecclesiastes (which means, the Preacher). He summarized his findings in a phrase that has rung out clearly through the centuries, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

What did he try? He sought the accumulation of knowledge, and wealth. He tried mirth and song. He discovered the waste of ease brought to him by the hiring of doting servants. He built great buildings and planted great gardens to memorialize himself and satisfy his sense of beauty. He tried business pursuits and hard work. And he discovered that in none of these things is there satisfaction. Why? Because we are bound by time; we are all going to die and we can't take it with us.

So what are we supposed to do, according to this the wisest man in all the earth? He tells us to remember that God is the final judge. He will assess all we do. Remember your Creator in the days of your youth. Honor God with your lives and lips and heart. For soon youth will pass away and old age and death will come. Only eternity will remain. For all that is under the sun is vanity—it will pass away and all that will remain is God the judge, and our eternal souls.

This is a powerful book with a relevant message for our hedonistic, materialistic society. How much of it rubs off on us?

The third and final book attributed to Solomon is a very different and wonderful book. It is the greatest love poem that has ever been written. The

lovers of this great epic search all the known ranges of metaphor and language to describe their love for each other. The sheer ecstasy of their love splashes across the pages of our Bibles in the most glorious waves of devotion ever written or sung.

At its lowest form, we can read profitably the glory of married love with its romantic passion and its steadfast devotion. We can see that which disturbs love and that which causes it to grow. And we can learn much from this kind of reading. Married love goes through its phases—from the heart-stirrings of youth, to the hard work of raising a family and earning a living, to the flower of devotion and loyalty of the senior years—love grows and this book can help in the process.

But if that is all we see, we do not find its true value. This dimension rests in its prophetic and spiritual value. The King finds the love of His life in a Gentile bride. And she finds all her heart's satisfaction in the King. And when there is the broken fellowship between these two lovers, neither is happy until they restore that fellowship and are resting in one another's presence again. Then one day, the winter will be over and past and the time of eternal spring will come. The King will come for His bride and they will be forever together in the land of eternal springtime where there will be no separation again.

Read this book slowly and enjoy the description of the One who moves behind the lattice of the prophetic Word. Fall in love once again with the One whose love is better than wine, the altogether lovely One.

For Further Reading:

Meditations on Ecclesiastes (or *Old Groans & New Songs*); F. C. Jennings

Chasing the Wind; Wm. MacDonald

Ecclesiastes; C. Bridges

An Outline of the Song of Songs; C. A. Coates

Meditations on the Song of Solomon; A. Miller

Notes on the Song of Solomon (now included in volume on Proverbs); H. A. Ironside

The Romance of the Ages; L. M. McPhee

The Song of Solomon; Thomas Newberry

Union and Communion; J. Hudson Taylor



Hitting the High Note

Joseph Guy

A religious life which is characterised by beneficial acts but void of personal contact with God is considered by Him as vain. If this personal contact with God is missing, then the voice of praise is silent. Only personal acquaintance with God's character can elicit true praise from the heart.

The constant recipient of goodness who fails to honor his benefactor is guilty of base ingratitude. This is a primary sin which leads to greater sins (Rom. 1:21). It was first seen in Eden when Adam was not thankful for present mercies and desired the forbidden fruit. It was the cause of Israel's downfall (Deut. 32:6-19). It is the result of forgetfulness and is the reason why we make so little progress in Divine things (2 Pet. 1:8-9).

If we have experienced God's grace, then we must spread His fame. We must learn that God's gifts are not to be obtained by stealth and enjoyed in secret (Lk. 8:47), for "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." This treasure is not to be wrapped in a napkin and buried.

After enduring the rigors of winter, hibernating creatures require the warm rays of the sun to rouse them. In the same way, the cold, unresponsive attitude of men chills our spirits and the voice of praise is silent. Then we need to be more in His presence so that the warm rays of the Sun of Righteousness might thaw our frozen spirits. Keep the pot near the fire or it will cease to boil, lest my ardor wane and my heart cease bubbling up with a good matter touching the King.

Do we praise Him? "We are having wonderful-times at our Bible readings" was the comment by a brother. Other forms of persuasion may have failed, but this simple word of praise created new interest and more than doubled the attendance.

Imitate the man who was freed from the possession of the demon (Mk. 5:20). Emulate the sprightly birds of the wood. Filled with His goodness, they sing His praises from the boughs on which they dwell. They sing them as they flit from branch to branch and as they fly high in the sky. We must sound His praises in the home and proclaim them from the housetop. If we begin at

home, it will not end there.

What do you say to the young person who asks, "How can I learn to sing the hymns? I'm not a singer. I don't know any of the songs in the book, and it's really hard getting into these old hymns."

They need not feel alone. Most of us will never thrill the crowds with our singing. But we are not singing for the crowds, so ignore them. I have had people politely inform me that I cannot carry a tune in a basket. But I have not stopped singing on account of their delicately-tuned ears. God has told me that He enjoys my singing; I am singing for Him. But here are three suggestions for improvement:

1) Page through your hymn book (if you don't own your own, get one) and put a pencil mark by any hymns you recognize. Each day when you get alone to read the Bible and pray, have your hymn book with you. When you kneel to pray, begin by singing to the Lord. Notice that most of the excellent hymns are expressed to God.

2) When the hymns are sung in the meetings of the church, pay attention, and learn. Don't mumble the hymns; read the words, open your mouth. True, the hymns of the faith require more effort to learn, but they are rich with meaning.

3) Be selective in what you listen to. If in the past you have been addicted to the wrong kind of music, it has turned you off from really beautiful music. The cocaine addict craves only cocaine, while starving his body of what it really needs to survive. If any man be in Christ, old things are passed away and all things are made new. Perhaps in your B.C. days it was Iron Maiden and Motley Crew; now A.D., it should be Fanny Crosby and Charles Wesley. Do radical surgery on your listening habits. Seek counsel from mature saints on what to listen to and where to go to hear it. "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit (literally, a pit of noise), out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust the Lord" (Ps. 40:2-3).



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The REST of Your Life

“There is no music in a rest” but there is the making of music in it. In our whole life-melody the music is broken off here and there by rests and we foolishly think we have come to the end of the theme. God sends a time of forced leisure, sickness, disappointed plans, frustrated efforts, and makes a sudden pause in the choral hymn of our lives; and we lament that our voices must be silent, and our part missing in the music which ever goes up to the ear of the Creator. How does the musician read the rest? See him beat the time with unvarying count, and catch up the next note true and steady, as if no breaking place had come between.

Not without design does God write the music of our lives. Be it ours to learn the tune, and not to be dismayed at the rests. They are not to be slurred over, not to be omitted, not to destroy the melody, not to change the keynote. If we look up, God Himself will beat the time for us. With the eye on Him, we shall strike the next note full and clear. If we sadly say to ourselves, there is no music in a rest, let us not forget there is the making of music in it. The making of music is often a slow and painful process in this life. How patiently God works to teach. How long He waits for us to learn the lesson.

—John Ruskin, *The Music of a Rest*