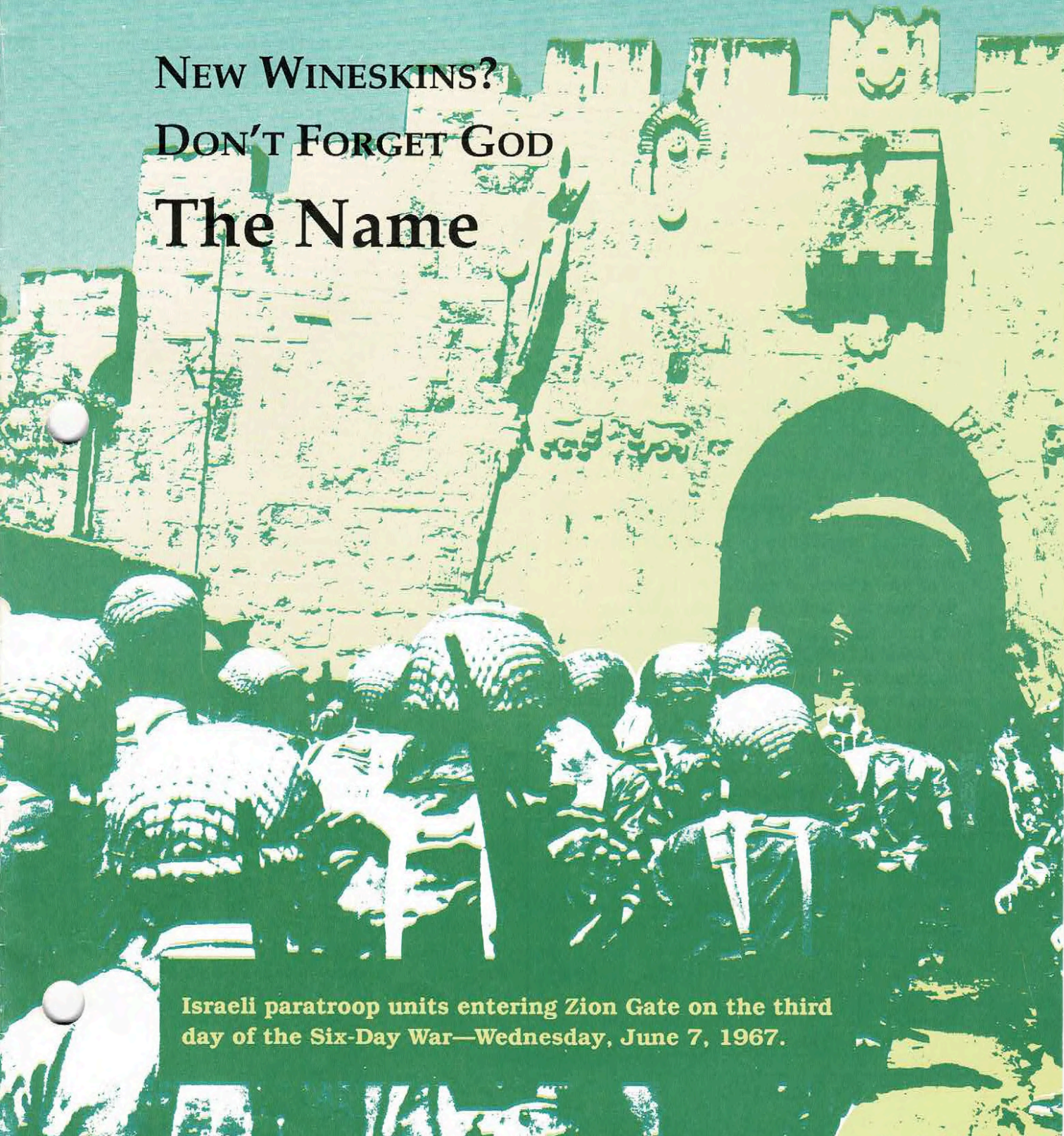
UPLOOK

MARCH 1992

New Wineskins?

Don't Forget God

The Name



Israeli paratroop units entering Zion Gate on the third day of the Six-Day War—Wednesday, June 7, 1967.



EDITORIAL

The Name

J. B. Nicholson, Jr.

As you enter the Old City of Jerusalem by way of the Zion Gate, you may notice an inscription, written in the days of Suleiman, stating that the gate was constructed in 1541 AD. The wall here is pocked with gunfire. During the fiery rebirth of Israel in 1948, the Jewish Palmach breached the gate for a short time and secured a passage into the besieged Jewish Quarter before being forced to withdraw. It was not until 1967 that the Israeli Defense Forces broke into the Old City again, through the Lion's Gate and this Zion Gate to secure the Temple Mount.

Only the Zion Gate and the Dung Gate, further east along the southern wall, allow direct entrance into the Jewish Quarter. We step, for a moment, out of the brilliant sunshine into the deep shadow under the crenellated walls of Old Salem. If we have not been blinded by the sudden change of lighting, or distracted by trying to avoid a vehicle twisting its way through the narrow passage we are sharing with it, we might notice a cylindrical object fastened to the wall. It is a large *mezuzah*, similar to ones found on the doorposts of faithful Jewish households.

The word *mezuzah* is simply the Hebrew for "doorpost" and is the name given to the container for a parchment scroll inscribed with Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21. It also includes the name of God, Shaddai. If we stand and watch for a minute, we might see orthodox Jews, dressed in black, side locks blowing in the breeze, hurrying by. Often they will brush their fingertips across their lips and then across the *mezuzah* at the gate. It is to them, perhaps, a sign of respect or affection, or a "sacred" good luck charm. But one cannot help but wonder if this is a classic expression of "lip service" to the Lord while their hearts are far from Him.

Jews faithful to their religion will not use the name of God. His covenant name, Yahweh, or YHWH, must never be spoken; it is too holy, they say. In fact, even government brochures, if they must speak of the Deity, spell it G_d.

Instead, He is often referred to simply as *la shem*, the Name. This usage is quite biblical. Often "the name of God" is used to speak of God Himself. To "call upon the name of the Lord" was to express dependence on Him; to "forget His name" was to turn away from a relationship with Him; to "take the name of the Lord in vain" was to, at the same time, acknowledge Him (by using His name) and deny Him (by abusing it).



The name of the Lord that the Jews will use (as on the mazuzot) is the mighty-tender name of El Shaddai, the God of power (El) and provision (Shaddai, from shad, the breast). It is the name that links most closely the fatherly authority and motherly affection of God. The name begins with the Hebrew letter *Schin*—pronounced sheen (see enlargement to the left).

The present inhabitants of Jerusalem are glad to explain that, from the air (or heaven, if you will), the mountain-valley topography around their capital city forms this letter. The left branch and base follow the path of the Hinnom Valley around the west and south flanks of Mount Zion; the central branch can be superimposed upon the Tyropean Valley which separates Mount Zion from Moriah; and the right branch of the Schin takes the route of the Kidron Valley between Moriah on the west and Olivet on the east. Thus they quote Psalm 125:2, "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for ever."

In the New Testament, the name of the Lord Jesus is invested with everything included in the "name of God" in the Old Testament. Sinners are saved through believing on His name (John 1:12; 2:23). All who are, should be baptized in that name and begin to gather with the Lord's people, meeting in that name. We are to "pray" and "ask" in that name (John 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23-24). This would bring the animosity of the world, the Lord said, and we would be hated for His name's sake.

And so it came to pass. Peter and John were forbidden to "speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus" (Acts 4:18). Again they said, "Did we not straightly command you that ye should not teach in this name?" Beaten and expelled, they departed, "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." Do we?

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New Wineskins?

Donald L. Norbie

"No one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved" (Luke 5:37-38 NKJV).

What prompted these remarks by our Lord was the criticism He was receiving from the scribes and the Pharisees (v. 30) because His disciples were not fasting and functioning as their disciples and those of John were. He stated that one does not mix old and new cloth when mending a garment. And then comes His famous statement about wineskins. A wineskin became old and brittle as wine was stored in it. New wine must be put in a fresh skin, one that would be elastic and allow for the fermentation and working of the wine. An old skin would burst under such energetic activity.

In making an application today, some would say that the wine is the essential (the Gospel of Christ) and the wineskins are the non-essentials (the forms and methods of the church). This, of course, allows one to be very pragmatic in his approach. Every generation is free to use its own fresh "wineskin." The forms and methods of the early church are old wineskins, they say.

The Lord is certainly not suggesting that the wineskin is non-essential. He is stressing the importance of it. Without the right wineskin, the wine is lost. The point is not to emphasize that form is unimportant but to show its role in the work of God.

The old covenant with its sacrificial system, its forms, ceremonies, and dietary regulations was passing away. "In that He says, A new covenant, He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away" (Heb. 8:13). The Mosaic system, now encrusted with Jewish traditions, had served its function. Now there was the new covenant, with the liberty and energy of the Holy Spirit.

"In like manner it is fatal to attempt to preserve the vigorous, new form of divine worship, which Jesus brought, in the old, obsolete forms of religion of the disciples of John and of the Pharisees. Jesus' new way of life also demands new forms of worshipping God. There must be no mixing of the old with the new" (*Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, by Norval Geldenhuys, p. 196).

Christ is not encouraging each generation to devise a new "wineskin" for its functioning. The contrast is between the old and new covenants. The work of the Holy Spirit is not to flow without constraint but is to know the form of the new covenant guiding and controlling the functioning of Christians and their churches.

This "wineskin" is formed by the teaching and practice of the apostles. The priesthood of all believers was emphatically stated (1 Peter 2:5) and then instructions were given concerning the functioning of that priesthood in the church (1 Cor. 14). Here is the wineskin in which the Holy Spirit is now to function. Paul does not regard these instructions as optional or ephemeral but as "the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37). The Church thus needs to look to the apostles and their teaching for guidance as to how to function.

Hilkiah said, "I have found the book of the law" (2 Chron. 34:15). It was this which fueled the revival led by Josiah under the old covenant. And every turning to God in Church history has been the result of rediscovering the ancient but new "wineskin" of the first century. The Word has been rediscovered and proclaimed with power. Martin Luther rediscovered the Gospel of grace through the study of Galatians and Romans. He proclaimed this with power and all of Europe was shaken by the Reformation. The legalism and bondage of the church of Rome were burst by the new wine of the Gospel.

Over 150 years ago, men in Britain were gripped by the need to return to the simplicity of faith and the structure of the New Testament church. The impact of that return to the "new wineskin" of the first century has been blessed in missionary work around the world.

No, there is no need for a "new wineskin." There *is* a need to restudy the Scripture and rediscover that "new wineskin" of apostolic days and follow its pattern. Then the Holy Spirit will be free to move in our midst in power and blessing.

Front Lines

DALLAS AREA BIBLE CONFERENCE APRIL 10-12

God willing, Rob Linsted and Les Rainey will share in the ministry of the Word April 10-12 at the Wheatland Bible Chapel, 1303 West Wheatland Road, Duncanville, TX 75116. For information contact:

Bob Muldoon
2316 Anders
Mesquite, TX 75150
Phone (214) 270-5646

DID YOU GET YOUR MISSIONARY PRAYER HANDBOOK?

For those of you who are still without your 1992 *Missionary Prayer Handbook*, there is hope. You can still obtain them in the U.S.A. at $2.00 per copy or 3 copies for $5.00. In Canada at $2.50 per copy or 3 copies for $6.00.

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Spring Lake, NJ 07762

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Scarborough, ON M1S 4L8

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27 Charles Street East
Toronto, Ontario M4Y 1R9

The names and addresses of 730 missionaries serving the Lord around the globe, commended by North American assemblies and working in fellowship with assemblies and co-workers on the mission field, are listed in the Handbook. Many other important facts are included to stimulate more specific prayer and financial support by those at home.

PENNSYLVANIA EASTER CONFERENCE APRIL 17-19

Our brothers R. E. Harlow, Gordon Reager, Wade LeBlanc, and Alex Stephenson intend, in the will of the Lord, to minister the Word at the Annual Easter Conference, April 17-19 at Marple Christian Assembly, Route 252 at Cedar Grove Rd., Marple Twp., Media PA 19063. For information, contact:

James J. Martindale
Tel-Hai Cottage #20
P.O. Box 190
Honey Brook, PA 19344
Phone (215) 273-3985

VANCOUVER EASTER CONFERENCE APRIL 17-19

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

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

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

PROPHETIC HIGHLIGHTS

In the will of the Lord the Christians meeting at Mountain Ridge Bible Chapel will host a prophetic conference May 2. The meetings will be from 10:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. The speaker is Robert Linsted of Wichita, Kansas. He intends to deal with *"Prophetic Highlights in View of Current Events."* Brother Rob will also be at Mountain Ridge on the Lord's Day following. Those interested, contact:

MRBC
763 Mountain Avenue,
Berkeley Heights, NJ 07922

VIA 1992

The *Via* Committee has sent out their 1992 edition. This 24-page Gospel magazine is sent out in quantities free of charge to any who will prayerfully distribute them to the lost. Nicely packaged, Via presents the changeless, ageless story of Christ's redemptive work for sinful man. When ordering, include your phone number and street address. Contact:

Via Magazine
Box 551
Portage la Prairie, MB
R1N 3B9
Phone (204) 857-8435
Fax (204) 857-7728

GOOD MATERIAL FROM MYRTLEFIELD TRUST

Tapes and transcripts of messages by David Gooding of Belfast, Northern Ireland are available through Myrtlefield Trust, a non-profit group exercised about getting out the Word. This trusted author and speaker has a volume of titles available, so ask for their catalog, which also contains information about costs.

Myrtlefield Trust
8 Forest Hill,
Conlig, County Down,
Northern Ireland BT23 3FH

HOPE IN THE SOUTHERN APPALACHIANS

Camp Hope is situated in the foothills of north Georgia. More than a dozen local assemblies in North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Florida are involved with this 100-acre wooded property.

Brother Ernie Gross and his wife, Virginia, began the camp work in the early 1950's. The present property was purchased in 1978. Lee VanDyke and Ed Myers have taken the leadership of the camp since Brother Gross' homecalling in 1979.

Over 500 campers are reached each summer as well as through activities in the spring and fall. Serious Christians with a heart for Gospel outreach through camp work might consider serving at Camp Hope this summer. Contact:

Lee VanDyke
Camp Hope
7011 Pony Lake Road
Dahlonega, GA 30533
Phone (404) 536-4787

NORTHWEST WORKER'S CONFERENCE

"Assembly workers, elders, missionaries, evangelists and all interested in the Lord's work," reads the invitation to the Annual Northwest Worker's Conference. Held at Lakeside Bible Camp on beautiful Whidbey Island not far from Seattle, WA, the dates this year are May 6-9. For information and registration, contact:

Dan Covert
15120 45th Place W.
Lynnwood, WA 98037

NORTHERN & SOUTHERN IRELAND

Brother David Long, who invested many years in the Lord's work both in Angola and latterly in North America, has recently returned to his native land, Northern Ireland. He writes after 9 months there:

"I have been kept very busy, sometimes too busy. I have already had meetings in some 23 assemblies in the counties of Down, Antrim, Tyrone (on the border—a little tension there!), and Armagh as well as an extended visit to three assemblies in Co. Cork in the extreme south of the Republic . . . My two young mens' Bible studies are going well; one in our home and one in Bangor, about 30 minutes away, with about 10-12 in each. This is a special joy to me." Brother Long's address is: D. B. Long

6 Ardmore Heights
Ballygowan, Co. Down
N. Ireland BT23 5TU

NEW MEETING PLACE

Brother Harold Preston informs us that the assembly in Lexington, KY, which has met in their home since its beginning in 1982, is now meeting in a rented office building with a large room that will hold 50-60 people, four classrooms, plus a room for a nursery. This also frees up room in the Preston home for the expanding prison correspondence work.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

For many years, brother August Van Ryn sent out a monthly letter entitled *Words of Encouragement*. Now his sons, Carol and Elliot, carry on the ministry (some of his grandsons also send out a ministry paper, *Think on These Things*). Recently brother Elliot has had some health problems and could probably use some words of encouragement himself. On March 4, he had successful 2-vessel angioplasty, but he is slated for further surgery shortly. We should not forget that those who have given themselves to the encouragement and comfort of God's people sometimes could use such a ministry to their own souls.



Elliot & Joan Van Ryn

CHANGED LIVES

The Yonkers Gospel Mission, operated as a ministry of concerned assembly Christians from the New York/New Jersey area, has a new 15-minute video available to individuals or assemblies. *"Changed Lives"* affords an up-close look at the people and activities of the mission. Contact:

Yonkers Gospel Mission
Box 1491
Yonkers, NY 10702
Phone (914) 968-6577

SE WISCONSIN MINI-CONFERENCE

The SE Wisconsin assemblies plan to hold a one-day conference on April 25, 1992 at the Wauwatosa Community Chapel, 2200 N. 67 St., Wauwatosa, WI 53213. For information:

Phone (414) 567-8464

WHAT'S GOING ON?
News from Around the Globe

WHAT RIGHTS?

The U. S. State Department's latest annual human rights report criticized China, India, Peru, Cuba, Israel, Syria, and Burma for abuses. The document says China has grown more repressive since Tiananmen Square, with continuing abuses in Tibet and the repression of worship outside official religious bodies. In Burma, with an estimated 2,000 political prisoners, torture and beatings are common, with repression of Muslims and Christians increasing. Syria stands accused of "widespread and systematic torture."

WORLDWIDE RADIO

New technologies—including land and satellite-based mobile phone services, digital radio broadcast by satellites, and high-definition television by satellite—could revolutionize communications around the world. If delivered by satellite, digital audio broadcasts could make today's international shortwave broadcasting receivers and transmitters obsolete. Current international agreements call for shortwave broadcasters to shift to a different band by 2015; the U.S. wants to move that deadline up to 2007. Digital audio technology, however, could start to come on line in about two years.

WHERE ARE THE AMY CARMICHAELS?

An increasing number of young boys and girls are being sold into prostitution because customers are afraid of getting AIDS, a United Nations report has found. Children as young as nine are frequently taken across borders and then tricked or forced into prostitution. The numbers of young prostitutes are highest in Asia and Latin America, with increases reported in Africa, North America, and Europe. Many child prostitutes in India, the Philippines, and Thailand have tested positive for the AIDS virus.

CHOLERA UPDATE

South America's cholera problem has not been as bad as originally feared. Peru, where the outbreak started a year ago, has had 300,000 cases, but most of these people have survived. Most other countries have been able to take quick action to head off epidemics. Still, long-term health problems remain. The Pan-American Health Organization says it will take an infusion of $200 billion to recapture the ratio between population and services that existed 15-20 years ago in Latin America and the Caribbean.

WHO'LL CARE FOR THESE?

—the 50,000 to 70,000 children living on the streets of Manila;

—the 15,000 child prostitutes in Manila;

—the 14 million underprivileged children under the age of 5 who die each year from infection and malnutrition;

—the 7 million children worldwide who are refugees of famine and war;

—the 150 million children who suffer from malnutrition;

—the 50 million underprivileged children working in "slave-type" labor in unsafe and unhealthy conditions;

—the 800,000 girls, ages 12-16, who are actively involved in prostitution in Thailand;

—the 40,000 children under the age of 5 who die daily in developing countries;

—the 100,000 children between the ages of 3 1/2 and 15 who are in slave-type work situations throughout India;

—the 5,000 to 9,000 children living on the streets in Bogota, Colombia;

—the 1,900,000 underprivileged and street children in Mexico City -- 240,000 of whom have been abandoned;

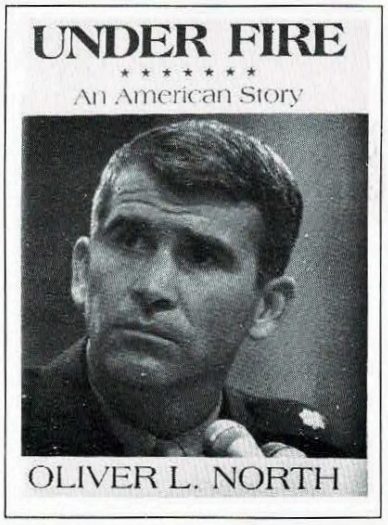
—the 12 million homeless children fighting to survive on the streets of Brazil;

—the 500,000 teenage prostitutes in Brazil;

—the 50 percent of Mexico City's over 20 million people who are under the age of 14.

PASS THE AMMUNITION

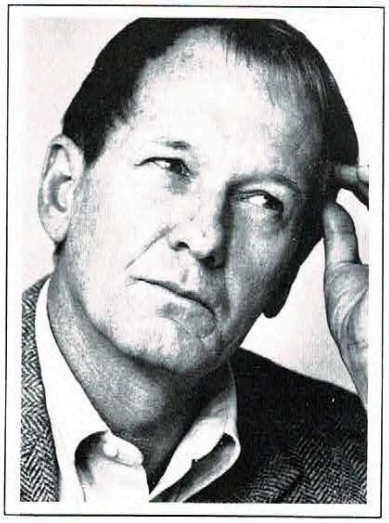
After announcing that Zondervan Publishing House would co-publish Oliver North's *Under Fire: An American Story*, Stanley



Gundry was quoted as saying, "He (North) has many admirers in the Christian community. He felt it was a natural partnership." No one need mention to Zondervan that the illegal sales of arms to Nicaraguan rebels and financing the deal through profits of secret arms sales to Iran does not make Olie North another Corrie ten Boom.

ORIGINAL QUESTIONS

The Christian Reformed denomination is embroiled in a controversy on biblical inerrancy, and the Genesis account of creation over the last decade. At the vortex of this dispute is



Howard Van Till

Howard Van Till, a professor of physics and astronomy at Calvin College since 1964. Van Till has taught "theistic evolution" (the theory that God created the universe, but that He used evolutionary processes to do it) in his book *The Fourth Day.*

PRAY FOR INDIA

Currently India has more than 900 million people; the Christian population (of every brand) stands at less than 4%. In the past there has been an open door for the Gospel but that is changing. Militancy among both Hindus and Moslems is leaving little room for religious freedom. Harrassment against local evangelists is becoming more common. Recently The Truth, a magazine distributed by the Gospel Literature Service of Bombay, reported the deportation of two foreign missionaries who had been in India for over 40 years and have not been back to their own countries in decades. They have expressed their desire to die in India. But it seems that is not to be.

In this state of Madhya Pradesh it is reported that 150 hospitals and dispensaries, 1528 schools, and 122 other services are being operated by Christian missionaries.

STILL AT WORK IN NAZARETH

Brother George Khalil writes from Nazareth:

"It is now one year since we opened the Book Center and since then over 1,000 portions of Scripture have gone out, mainly whole Bibles.

"To our surprise, these have mostly been in Russian. There is a real spiritual hunger among these people, so please pray that they would read and be convicted by the Word.

"One day the Director and some of the professors of the Moscow University of Medicine were on a private tour in Israel and, when driving through Nazareth, they saw the Russian sign outside our shop offering free Bibles. They came in and took 20 Bibles and two copies of every Russian Christian book to put in the University library!

"Praise the Lord for Dinah, a Russian-speaking Jewish believer who comes to help every Saturday to speak with the immigrants who come in."

SPREADING THE WORD

According to the United Bible Societies, the number of languages with at least one book of the Bible increased last year by 32. The new worldwide total is 1,978 languages, with between 3,000 and 6,000 to go. That means more than 80% of the world's people have access to at least a portion of the Word of God in a language they can understand.

MINDING YOUR SABBATH P's & Q's

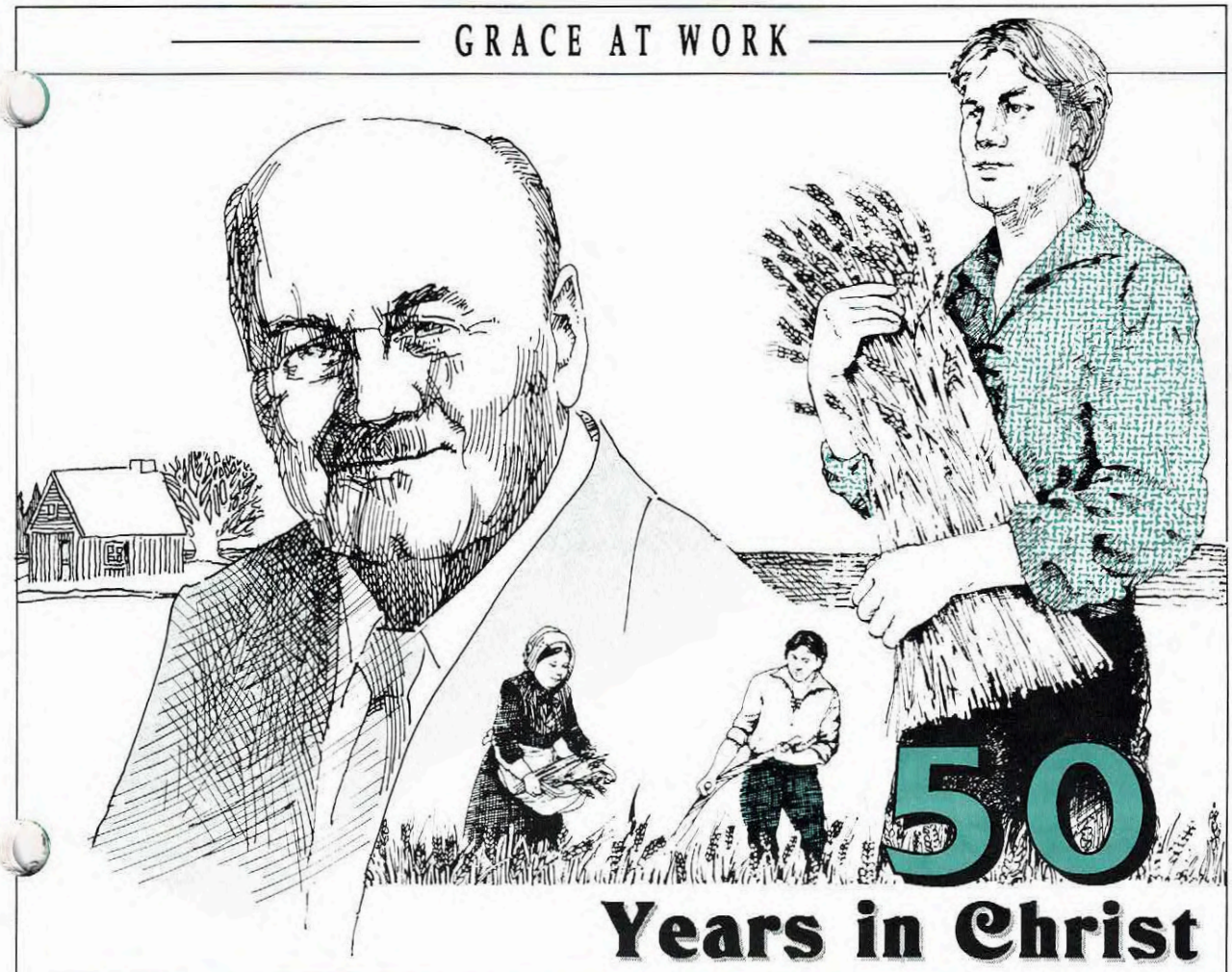
Chief Sephardi Rabbi Mordechai Eliahu reminded pious Jews that "one should not carry an umbrella on the



Sabbath, even if it was opened on Friday." *–Israel Science*

ZAMBIA WATCH

Zambia's new president, Frederick Jacob Titus Chiluba, recently created a stir when he declared the country a Christian nation. A former socialist, Chiluba now professes to be a Christian. *—Pulse*



50 Years in Christ

John Funk

"And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof. It shall be a jubilee unto you." (Lev. 25:10)

In olden times as well as presently, considerable significance has been given to 50 years—half a century. In ancient Israel, the jubilee was a time of great blessing and rejoicing. Today, married couples look forward to their Golden Wedding Anniversary. This year is my jubilee —50 years in Christ.

Suffer a sinner whose heart overflows,
Loving his Saviour to tell what he knows.
Once more to tell it would I embrace,
I'm only a sinner saved by grace.

In the town of Witmarsum, Holland, a man by the name of Menno Simons was born in 1496, (only four years after Columbus arrived in America 500 years ago). A priest in the Roman Church, the Gospel light began to dawn upon his soul as he prefunctorily performed the mass. But it was the killing of several hundred Anabaptists, including his brother, that drove him to renounce his unscriptural position and identify with these hounded saints. Until his death at age sixty-five, he was driven from country to country, always writing and preaching as he went. He is looked upon as the founder of the Mennonite churches.

My dictionary defines a Mennonite as one opposed to infant baptism, taking oaths, holding public office and military service. I find it strange to define someone in that fashion—by the things

they are opposed to, rather than by the things they stand for. Menno Simons, a defender of the faith, quickly gained many followers, mainly in Germany, Holland, and Switzerland, but also some from France and Poland. At that time there was very severe religious persecution throughout Europe.

Catherine the Great, empress of Russia, lived from 1729 to 1796. She knew that the Mennonites were excellent farmers and so offered them land in the Ukraine, which at that time was known as the breadbasket of Europe. She also granted them exemption from military service. One of my ancestors, a man by the name of Peter Funk, whose forefathers came from Rotterdam, had moved to Danzig (now called Gdansk). He received the invitation from Catherine, and decided to move with his household to the Ukraine. My father's brother, also Peter Funk, had an exact list of how many people went, including even the number of pigs and chickens they took along.

These Mennonites spoke the German language and also a dialect called Low German or Plat Deutsch. They kept largely to themselves and rarely intermarried with the people in the area. The soil was good, the people were industrious, and they soon became prosperous.

And so it was that, on the 30th day of April, 1923, I was born in a little village in the Ukraine called Nieder (Lower) Chortitza.

My father was a school teacher and my mother was the daughter of a prosperous farmer. My father served with the Red Cross in the First World War. He had professed salvation in 1910 and had even gone out evangelizing the villages round about, but the horrors and atrocities of the war and the following Communist revolution turned him aside and stumbled him. He became a silent Christian, and in all my life he never spoke to me about Christ or salvation.

We were fortunate enough to get out of that country just as the purges began. I was six weeks old and it was during a time of famine (some say induced by Stalin to subjugate the people). We were able to book passage to Western Canada and settled in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, where we lived until 1938.

I went to Sunday School and outwardly was a moral, upright person. Like the rich young ruler, I could say, "I have not murdered or committed adultery; I am not given to stealing or lying; I honour my father and mother." In other words, I was self-righteous. I didn't know I was lost.

We moved to Vineland, Ontario and as a boy, I picked fruit in the orchards. On one occasion, a young man picked me up and asked me if I was saved. I told him that no one could know until they died and then our good deeds would be weighed up against our bad deeds to see where we would go.

"There was nothing in all the world I wanted more than salvation"

By this time, I had turned 17, and still attended the Mennonite Church where the services were in German. It was the thing to do, so I applied for church membership. I spoke to the bishop and he quoted a verse from Matthew 7: "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." He said to me, "John, you are on the broad and crowded road that leads to destruction." For the first time I realized I was not right with God. I was lost. What an awakening!

God had called me. I began reading the Bible. In fact, I couldn't keep away from it. I listened to many Gospel radio broadcasts, but I still did not clearly understand how to be saved. I tried desperately to be saved. I wept and prayed. I felt that perhaps it was not meant for me to be saved since nothing happened. I was in dead earnest and there was nothing in all the world I wanted more than salvation. God was working in my life. As I look back now half a century later, I can see how God was bringing me along to the point of salvation. I tried and I tried, but I couldn't seem to become saved.

The Bishop had given me one other verse—John 6:37—"All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." I clung to this verse.

Then one day, over the radio I heard a man speaking on John 3:36 —"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." By now I had learned that Christ had paid for our sins on the cross and I

believed and I had eternal life.

The joy, the satisfaction, the fulfilment, can scarcely be described. I spoke to everyone about salvation. I thought it so wonderful that all I would have to do is tell others and they too would be saved, but I found it wasn't quite that easy. My younger brother was saved a year or two later, but my older brother, as far as I know, is not saved yet, even though I have prayed for him daily for 50 years.

Life is brief and death is sure,
Sin's the curse, but Christ's the cure.

The most important decision you will have to make involves Christ and it decides your eternal destiny. Why not make the decision I made half a century ago? You will never regret it.

So I was saved, but I knew very little about the Bible. However, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it began to unfold to me.

I had a tremendous urge to spread the Gospel. I used to take my bicycle and go through a large area, leaving Gospel papers in the rural mail boxes.

At that time, passenger ships came from Toronto to Port Dalhousie, near St. Catharines. There were many hundreds on board and as these came off the ship, each one was given a Gospel paper.

Then I began to look around for Christian friends and a place where I could enjoy Christian fellowship which I so much craved.

I dropped into a small mission in St. Catharines which was run by two sisters who did most of the preaching. I wasn't taught in the Word, but I had read that Paul had said, "Let the women learn in silence with all subjection," and, "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." I knew this form of meeting was not for me.

Then there was a group who were very involved with prophecy and I was greatly interested in prophecy, but I soon found out that their main interest was keeping the Old Testament sabbath. Sadly I turned away.

Eventually I came across a small building with a sign on it: "Christians Gathered in The Name of the Lord Jesus Christ Meet Here." There was no denominational title, just simple believers who preached the Gospel and taught the Word of God.

It was now 1944 and I knew I had found what I was looking for. They were simple folk, but they were real! What impressed me was their reverence for the Lord. He wasn't referred to simply as "Jesus"; they gave Him His proper title: "the Lord Jesus Christ." It seemed that all they talked about was the Lord Jesus. He was central to everything.

Then gradually I began to learn other truths regarding a scripturally-gathered assembly.

These people gathered alone in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They had scriptural elders who had the oversight of the assembly. The believers were all involved in the work of the Lord, not just one man who was the minister.

"It seemed that all they talked about was the Lord Jesus Christ"

I learned about the priesthood of all believers; how Christ was the Head of the Church and the local assembly; and how the Holy Spirit was allowed to guide the believers in their worship and service.

I was particularly taken with the Lord's Supper which was held every Lord's Day. They told me it was "as often," and not "as seldom."

I had been sprinkled in the Mennonite Church, but I was not saved then. I was now baptized by immersion.

There was a young man who was a few years older than I, who took me under his wing. His name was David Marwick, and he nurtured and discipled me.

I wasn't looking for a girl, but there she was! Evelyn and I were married in 1947. So for all these years, we have been active in the Lord's work among the assemblies. As we look back over 50 years, we realize a little bit of what we owe to the Lord. But only heaven will unfold the mighty work He has done on our behalf.

When this passing world is done;
When has sunk yon glaring sun;
When I stand with Christ on high
Looking o'er life's history:
Then, Lord, shall I fully know,
Not till then, how much I owe.

u



EL SHADDAI

The All-Sufficient God

William Lincoln

"And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it" (Gen. 28:12).

The Lord alludes to this passage in John 1:51: "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." I think the right way of looking at this chapter is to view it in contrast with the previous one where man fills the scene, and confusion is the result. Here God fills the scene and, where He is, all is blessing. What a pity He cannot have His way always.

In chapter 27, we find Isaac in haste to give the blessing, and Jacob scheming to get it, while Esau is sorrowing. Yet, after all the hurry and confusion, Jacob did not then really obtain the blessing. Jacob fled the family compound as a fugitive, with no peace, no joy, and no relationship with God. Hardly a blessed man! But when he was low down, God came to him: "And behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed" (v. 13).

The Lord presented Himself to Jacob as "El Shaddai," the Self-sufficient One, who is equal to every emergency. The very same night, He gave the blessing to Jacob. What a wonderful God!

Jacob was a homeless stranger without a friend in the world, but of course "man's extremity is God's opportunity." Jacob had no idea that God would visit him that night. He was full of trouble which he had brought upon himself. Man would have said, "You have made your bed, so you must lie on it," but God's grace does "much more abound" (Rom. 5:20). God took Jacob by surprise—the way He always loves to do.

There are four "Beholds" in this chapter. They reveal to us the El Shaddai who delights to surprise us with joy and unexpected blessing.

1. *"Behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven"* (v. 12). In John 1:51, Christ speaks of this, and in John 14:6 shows how He is "the Way." Again in Hebrews 3:1, He is seen as the Apostle and High Priest. He is Apostle down here and High Priest up there. Christ fills the scene: He has been on earth, and is now up there; yet He is here also: "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt. 18:20). Christ is with us personally too, I in Him and He in me (Jn. 17:23; 1 Jn. 5: 20).

We must not think the idea in the ladder is that there are steps up to God. Not so. God said to Moses: "Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto Mine altar" (Ex. 20:26). The Holy Spirit wishes to show us how Christ fills the vision between us and God—a living Christ at the bottom and at the top as well. This is God's way; grace comes down to us, and brings us up to God. If I believe in Christ, I am in Christ. "God dwelleth in Him, and He in God" (1 Jn. 4:15).

2. *"Behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it"* (v. 12). As already mentioned, this is referred to in John 1:51, and is evidently a millennial scene. Observe the thought; there is a time coming when Christ will fill heaven and earth. This has not been yet, but God will have it so. We have an illustration of this in the case of Israel who murmured against God. As a result of their murmuring, God said they would not enter the land (Num. 14), and we must remember that without Israel, God could not bless this earth. Thus God appeared frustrated in His purposes. Yet it was at that very time that God swore, "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num. 14:21). Thus God waits forty years for Israel. He can look right on over difficulties and say, "It shall be done."

In 1 Peter 1:3-4, we have another sweet portion for ourselves: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . who hath begotten us again . . . to an inheritance." Looking right on, this is God's blessed way, beyond our failures and sinning and wrong turns to the fulness of our inheritance. So here when Jacob is thoroughly in a mess on account of his sin, then God looks right on to His Son and sees "angels of God ascending and descending." Oh, what a Christ we have!

3. *"Behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of*

Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed" (v. 13). Nothing can thwart grace, and God is dealing with us in grace. It is true we are unworthy, but grace does not look at that. God says He will give it. God is dealing with His people today in greater grace than He did with Old Testament saints, because He puts great honor on His rejected Christ, and therefore blesses us who first trusted in Him.

I don't know what Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would have thought of Ephesians 1, which we are so fond of, or of John 14. They would have been astonished. Their blessing was earthly as well as heavenly. "I will give you the land of Canaan," said God. Yet in Hebrews 11:10, we read: "He looked for a city which hath foundations." Our



portion is: "I will come again and receive you unto Myself" (Jn. 14:3). All is sovereign grace to us, and that being so, a Christian should never talk about claiming his rights. It is all grace from first to last, which simply means that God is giving us what we do not deserve, as surely as at the cross He did not give us what we did deserve.

4. *"Behold, I am with thee . . . and will bring thee again into this land"* (v. 15). "And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of the place Mahanaim" (32:1-2). "Mahanaim" means "two hosts." In Hebrew there is a dual number as well as a singular and plural, and it is the dual that is used here—a host before and a host behind. Is there no such assurance bestowed upon us? Look at Hebrews 1:14: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" I don't know how many angels there are. Daniel speaks of "thousands of thousands" (Dan. 7:10). And they are sent forth to minister for them "who shall be heirs of salvation." "I will keep thee," said God, and Jacob knew not how. Oh, this wonderful God! The more I know of Him, the more wonderful He seems.

"He sees my thoughts, He knows my fears,
And counts and treasures all my tears."

God, having promised to keep, made good His promise. I think, at the judgment seat, God will prove to us His faithfulness to His Word. You know Satan often tempts us to doubt in our hearts as to whether God will keep all His Word to us. This vision to Jacob was God's proof. When Peter walked on the water to go to Jesus, and fearing the waves, was about to sink, "Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Mt. 14:31).

Then when God had appeared in such blessing to Jacob, he awakened and vowed a vow: "If God will be with me . . ." This is of the devil. Jacob had only asked for food and raiment, yet he doubts God, and cannot rise to His grace. Why do I notice this? Because it is just such a doubting, mistrusting heart that you and I have. You know how often you say "if." When you rise in the morning, you ask for food and raiment according to your bit of need, when He tells us of the *exceeding riches* of His grace and His ability and willingness to supply all our need "according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4: 19). The trouble is, none of us is used to grace.

I would notice one point more. God begins with Jacob at Bethel, the house of God (v. 19), where He will begin with us, but it is important to notice that the name of Bethel at the first was Luz, which means *separation*. I must have done with self and everything that is against God. It is, however, not only Luz—separation—or I would become a hermit; it is "Bethel," the house of God. Separation alone is not good, there is no separation in heaven. Merely to be done with a given sin is not enough without God. Always keep Bethel and Luz together. Are you enjoying God and separate from evil? There are some who wish to dwell at Bethel, but know nothing of Luz, and vice versa, but the two cannot be separated.

We must come to the finale. Did El Shaddai keep His promise? Away down in Egypt many years later, old Jacob was dying. Listen to his boast: "God which fed (shepherded) me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil . . . " (Gen. 48:15-16). He *is* the All-sufficient One.

His Name

Like the many facets of a jewel, each making its contribution to the brilliance and beauty of the gem, integral to it and in perfect relationship to the whole, the names of God are numerous and varied; yet each is indispensable to the perfection of the divine revelation of our Lord in His person and work.



"O Lord Jesus Christ, who art the Way, the Truth, and the Life, we pray Thee suffer us not to stray from Thee, who art the Way, nor to distrust Thee, who art the Truth, nor to rest in any other than Thee, who art the Life. Teach us by the Holy Spirit what to believe, what to do, and wherein to take our rest. For Thine own Name's sake we ask it. Amen.
— *Erasmus*

"Wherefore He has given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, things in earth and things under the earth." (Philippians 2:9-10)

Join all the glorious names
Of wisdom, love, and power,
That mortals ever knew,
That angels ever bore:
All are too mean
To speak His worth,
Too mean to set
The Saviour forth.
— *Isaac Watts*

Dr. Clifton N. Howard, Chairman of the World Peace Commission, attended the opening session of the Conference for Arms Limitation in Washington, DC. Among the many interesting personalities was a Muslim who sat fingering his beads.
"What is that you are doing?" asked Dr. Howard.
"Each of these 99 beads is a name of Allah. I know my God by his full name," he replied.
This drove Howard to the Bible. He discovered 208 names for the Lord Jesus alone, with the name Jesus occurring over 700 times itself. Name above all!

A man with God is always in the majority. — *John Knox*

I'll follow Thee, and step by step along the track I'll walk;
Believing that Thy promises shall never come to nought;
Jehovah-Shammah, blessed Name, whate'er the danger be,
Thy promise is salvation sure, and Thine the victory.
The Lord of hosts my refuge is, Jehovah-nissi too.
Jehovah-jireh as my God provides the journey through;
I trust Thee, simply trust Thee, lay my troubled fears to rest:
I follow where Thou leadest, for my Father knoweth best.
— *E. Rowat*

"And Manoah said unto the Angel of the Lord, What is Thy name, that when Thy sayings come to pass, we may do Thee honor? And the Angel said unto him, Why askest thou thus after My name,, seeing it is secret [Wonderful]."
(Judges 13:17–18)

"Thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love Thee."
(Song of Songs 1:3)

It may seem remarkable that the beautiful titles of Jehovah found in the Old Testament are not found in the New. But our light is infinitely greater. Instead of revealing Himself through names, figures and types, Jehovah reveals Himself in the Person of His beloved Son. We have but to look upon Him to see that every one of the Old Testament titles are embodied in Him.
— *H. W. Webb-Peploe*

Tell them the name — its beauty, its perfection —
Who never heard our blessed Master's fame:
Tell of His life, His death, His resurrection;
Tell of His power to save. Tell them the name!
— *J. D. McK.*



Charles Stanley

John A. Bjorlie

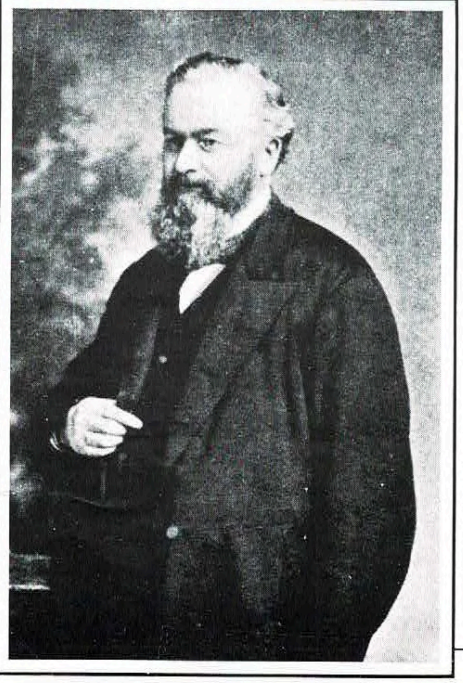
Charles Stanley (1821-1890), of Rotherham, England, was left an orphan at the age of four. At seven, he had to earn his living in the summer by working in the fields. With his energy he could have been a rascal. But it was his legal guardian who stopped the precocious little fellow and, with a firm hand on his shoulder, foretold, "Charles, you will either be a curse or a blessing to mankind."

By the mercy of God, "C.S." became a blessing to thousands. Converted when fourteen, that year he preached his first message. One Sunday, the preacher had not arrived, and so young Charles opened his Bible to John 3:16. God's hand was upon him. The quick-witted youth would be like that anonymous Christian that Paul spoke of: "We have sent with him *the brother*, whose praise is in the Gospel throughout all the churches."

At age twenty-three, with meager capital, he had begun his own hardware business in Sheffield. Then the businessman met Captain Wellesly, (the nephew of "the Iron Duke" of Wellington). Under his gracious teaching, the Bible became a new book to him. It was his daily study, and "he grew in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

As a salesman, he criss-crossed England, at the same time doing "the work of an evangelist." Forty years after, he said, "Seldom in those days did the Lord open my lips without some soul being converted. Not that this appeared at the time, but I have met them everywhere, ten, twenty, or thirty years after." His favorite Old Testament story was of Mephibosheth, the orphan who was tragically crippled. Speaking of his message on Mephibosheth, he remarked: "I believe the Lord rarely ever led me to preach from Mephibosheth without souls being converted." D. L. Moody told Stanley he had preached it in almost every city in America, and, he thought, never without souls being brought to God.

"C.S." expected the Lord's special and direct guidance. He pitied the Christian who did not enjoy looking to the Lord every day for directives from the Holy Spirit. His own record abounds with the mystic and subjective. As an example, he would be deeply impressed that he ought to go to specific places to preach the Gospel, often where he had never been. "Three of us felt led to go to Leamington. We had a small notice printed, asking the Christians of Leamington to come together in the Music Hall at three o'clock for prayer for the Lord's blessing on the Word to be preached in the hall that night. About two hundred came together, and oh! what a cry of united, expecting prayer went up to the Throne of Grace. At seven, the large hall was filled. That night God answered prayer. It was the birth-night of many precious souls. It was said some hundreds found deliverance and blessing that night." By the riverside, in railroad cars and steamboats, at balls and races, in halls and chapels, in kitchens and drawing-rooms, theatres and concert halls, Charles Stanley confidently witnessed to the grace of God.



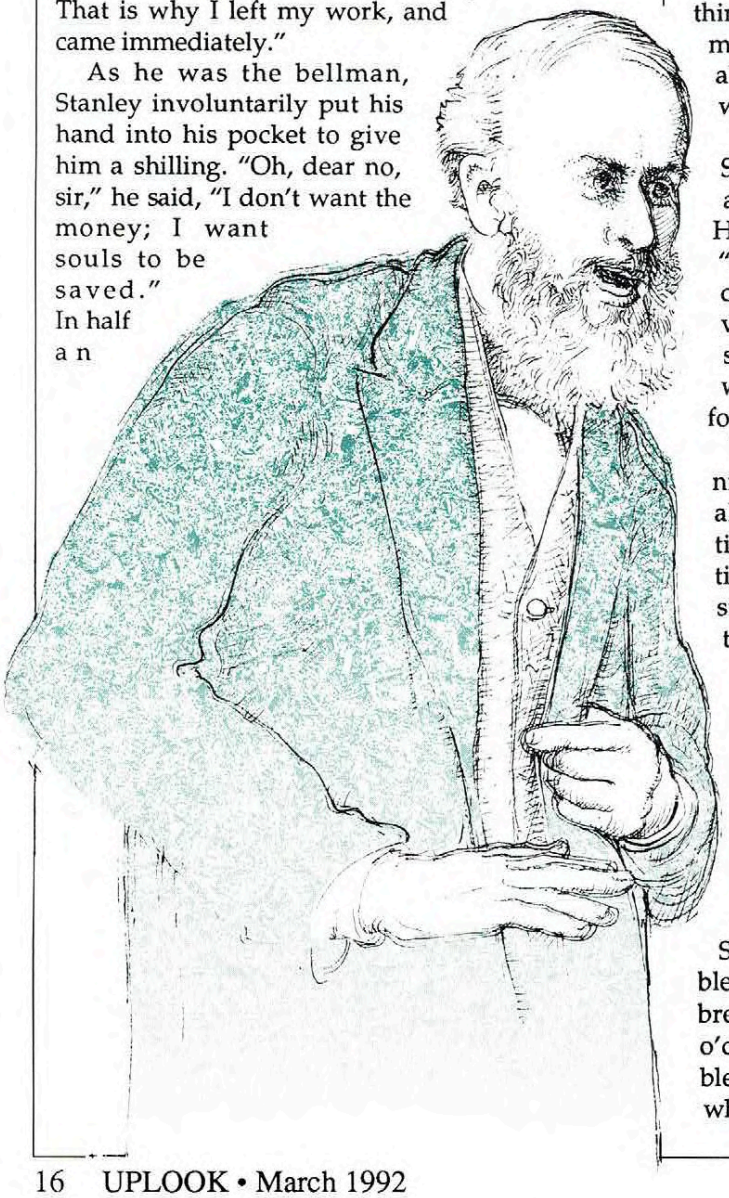
On one occasion, he was leaving Bristol, where he had been preaching, for Tetbury. A stranger to that part of the country, he said "On arriving at Wootton-under-Edge, I had some time to spare. It was about five o'clock on a hot day in the midst of harvest. There was scarcely a person to be seen in the little town. I was very distinctly impressed from the Lord, that I must preach the Gospel there that afternoon, yet there appeared to be no people to preach to. Nearly all seemed to be out in the harvest field. Yet the conviction deepened, that I must preach."

Taking a handful of tracts,

he began hunting for a congregation, great or small. He was standing in a little shop, speaking to a woman about her soul, when from up the road, a man puffing with exertion, perspiration streaming off his face, charged into the shop, and said, "Please, sir, are you a preacher of the Gospel?"

"Yes," he admitted, "I am, through the Lord's mercy, but why do you ask?"

The man, who was the town bellman (town crier), said, "I was working in the field, and a woman came past and told me someone was distributing tracts in Wootton, and it was just as if a voice had said to me, You must run, and there must be preaching in Wootton today. That is why I left my work, and came immediately."



As he was the bellman, Stanley involuntarily put his hand into his pocket to give him a shilling. "Oh, dear no, sir," he said, "I don't want the money; I want souls to be saved." In half an hour he had washed himself, publicly announced the preaching, and they were on the way to the preaching location.

Just outside the town, they were passing a house on the right when, wrote Stanley, "the Spirit of God stopped me, and distinctly directed me to stand on that doorstep, and on that end of it nearest the town." The crowd that gathered was not large. Stanley wondered what the purpose was in preaching from that place, when after the message the husband and wife who owned the house opened the door from behind him. They had been standing behind the front door and had heard every word. The man was openly weeping as he told Stanley: "We have never heard these things before." Stanley went in and spoke to the man, his wife, and his invalid mother, who had also heard the entire message from an upstairs window. All three trusted the Lord Jesus Christ.

A wave of spiritual awakening had reached Scotland. William Trotter had been to Glasgow, and saw hundreds of souls coming to Christ. He told Stanley of the wonderful works of God. "A remarkable sense of the Lord's presence came over me," said C. S. "I felt moved by divine power to go at once to Birmingham. A strength of faith and expectation that souls would be saved, such as I had never had before, filled my soul."

The large room in Broad Street was crammed night after night. At the after-meetings, nearly all stayed. The preaching was devoid of emotional string-pulling or psychological manipulation. Stanley did little inviting, or pleading with sinners. He spoke almost entirely of the righteousness of God in justifying the sinner, and of justification in the risen Christ. "Indeed, I have always found the more God is revealed in Christ in preaching, the more lasting the results. There must also be undoubting confidence in the Word of God: that all who are brought by the Holy Spirit to believe God, *are* justified from all things."

While these meetings were held in Birmingham, a brother in Christ came over from Stafford. He believed that God was about to bless souls there. He returned, and asked some brethren to come together to cry to God, at six o'clock the next morning. A number prayed for blessing on the Word there that same night. But when this brother borrowed chairs, so as to seat

every available space in the large meeting room, some doubters smirked.

But at 6:45 P.M., the large room was packed. Several were fainting, but could not be taken out. The danger from the crush was so great, that a gentleman stood up, and offered the use of a large church building nearby. Then it also was quickly filled. One drunk man unexpectedly lurched in and the solemnity of God's presence had him sobered in a moment. With many others he professed to be converted that night.

Stanley was not interested in tallying numbers. He viewed the results of his Gospel preaching with caution. Looking back at a very encouraging Gospel campaign, he would say, "Many professed to be saved, some fell away as stony-ground hearers; but the day will declare what was of the Spirit of God."

Charles Stanley was called from his earthly home in Rotherham, to his Heavenly Home on March 30, 1890.

Stretching beyond his preaching, perhaps his greatest Christian work has been the "C.S." tracts. A brother asked, "'Why don't you print some of those incidents of the Lord's work in the railway cars? I am sure the Lord would use them.' I said I had never thought of it. He urged me to do so. How little did I think at that moment that the Lord would use them in so many languages." The goal in writing the tracts was "to look to God to give me to write just what He pleased, and to enable me to write it plainly without any adornment. To never allow me to write with a party feeling, but to write for the whole Church of God, or Gospel to every sinner. In every incident related to give the exact words as near as I could recollect."

His counsel to Christian workers should be heralded among believers across the continent: "I have always found blessing and results in proportion to communion with Christ in His love to the whole Church, whether in writing or preaching; and no Christian can prosper in his own soul unless he is seeking the welfare of others."

FURTHER READING:

Incidents of Gospel Work: Showing How the Lord Hath Led Me, by Charles Stanley, G. Morrish

Chief Men Among the Brethren, by Hy. Pickering, Loizeaux Bros.

The Gospel in Black & White

"We had a preaching of the Gospel one night in the Pottery, just after the close of the day's work, in one of the large workshops, called the Throw room. A number of colliers (coal miners) had also come in, just as they left the pit. It was a strange-looking company, some as white as millers, some as black as sweeps.

"At the close, I was repeating the following scriptures, slowly, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). Precious words of Jesus. Also, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38). I did not make a single remark, but there was the deep sense felt that God, the Holy Ghost, was speaking these words to lost, guilty sinners.

"You have seen the wind pass over a field of corn, bowing every blade and stalk. It was just like that. The divine Presence passed over the meeting, from end to end, and bowed every heart and every head. A deep sigh was heard from end to end. Many fell, some against the wall, some on forms. There was a profound silence, only broken by sobs. Then the Christians present began to speak to the unconverted. I will give one instance. D. M. said to one who leaned against the wall, one who had been a very careless youth, "David, are you anxious to be saved?" "No," he said, "I am saved; I have everlasting life." David had passed from death unto life, and the new creation was manifested in him to the last. There were few words said to any, but the Lord opened their hearts to receive His Word. They heard His words, they believed God that sent Him, and the Spirit imparted faith to believe it, because He said it.

"Is not that a blessed moment when the ear is opened to hear God's message of forgiveness of sins, and then to know one is justified from all things, for God says so? But what was so remarkable, Lydia, a Christian of very clear judgment told me years after this meeting, that she had carefully watched the result, and she had no doubt that every unsaved person at that meeting was converted, and had either departed to be with the Lord, or were living proofs of the grace of God."

My God

Seven times Paul speaks of God in a deeply personal way. It was from the lips of the Saviour Himself that such a revelation came: "My God and your God." Like the sunshine, I can enjoy this relationship all myself, basking in His undivided attention.

1. *"I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world"* (Rom. 1:8). The apostle does not give thanks for their knowledge, or position, or riches, but for their faith. How appropriate this is to the epistle to the Roman church, where faith is emphasized in opposition to works, and believing and grace in contrast to law. So faith ought to characterize the believer. We are to walk in the footsteps of Abraham, whose life was brilliant with faith, remembering that faith has to do with the living Word, and the living word brings us to the living Christ.

2. *"I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ"* (1 Cor. 1:4). If faith is appropriate to the Roman church, so is grace to the Corinthian, for the saints there had fallen into grievous sin. Thus it behoves us to see that the doctrines of God in all their preciousness should go hand in hand with a holy, separated life. Let us beware of a mere intellectual reception of truth, and not bringing it out daily in a Christlike walk. Paul wrote to the Philippian church, "only let your life be such as becometh the Gospel."

3. *"I thank my God I speak with tongues more than ye all"* (1 Cor. 14:18). Yes, but let us read the next verse, where he minimizes this gift of God, "yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." "Tongues are for a sign to them that believe not," and such signs are not needed now, but what is needed is a deep humility, and a walk in all lowliness and meekness.

4. *"And lest when I come again my God will humble me among you"* (2 Cor. 12: 21). Paul's burning zeal for his converts and for their "worthy walk," when he heard of the grievous sin breaking out at Corinth, made him tremble in anticipated humiliation lest anything in his walk or words should have tended to loosen the bonds of a holy life. If they mourned, he mourned, if they were humiliated so was he. "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it."

5. *"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you"* (Phil. 1:3). How could Paul forget his memorable visit to Philippi. The prayer meeting by the side of the rippling river. The haling before the magistrates, the earthquake in jail, the bleeding backs of himself and his companion, the singing praises at midnight, the conversion of the jailer, and many other causes of joy filled the heart of the apostle with thanksgiving as he wrote the joyous, happy epistle of experience to the saints at Philippi. Let us ever praise God for the fruits of His own grace springing up in the hearts of the Lord's people.

6. *"But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 4:18). What a precious text we have here. Every word sparkles like a gem. The word for "supply" really means to fill full. He shall fill up to the full all your not wants, for we may want things not good for us, but all your need, and the measure of it is not a mere dole, not a "snippet," but according to his riches in glory, inexhaustible, unending, and the channel is our gracious Lord and Master. Praise God for such a blank check.

7. *"I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers"* (Philemon 1:4). And what does he thank God for? For his love and faith toward the Lord Jesus, and towards all saints. Can anyone thank our God for the love and faith we have to our Lord and all the saints? Oh, that we may have this real, warm love to our loving Lord and this faith which works by love, that with Paul we may say "to me to live is Christ," and may our life be a reproduction of Christ in all His attractive grace and beauty.

He is the God of the stars, God of the ages, God of the nations . . . but He is *my* God too!

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Don't Forget God

J. H. Jowett

There is one word of God which runs through the Scriptures like a sad and poignant refrain: "My people have forgotten Me." "Forgotten" is an intense and awful word. It surely expresses the final issue in human alienation from the Divine. Open and deliberate revolt against God shows, at any rate, some respect to His power. And even formal prayer, empty though it be, offers some recognition of God's existence. But to forget Him, to live and plan and work as though He were not, to dismiss Him as insignificant—this is surely the last expression of an alienated life.

People are never really dead so long as they are remembered. The real death is to be forgotten. How, then, do we come to forget God? In what sort of conditions is this appalling forgetfulness brought about? I wish to quote four descriptive words from the Scriptures in which I think some of these cases are described.

"Afraid of a man that shall die, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker." The fear of man destroys the nobler fear of God. I suppose that one may say that two commanding fears cannot occupy the soul at the same time. One fear can drive out another. The fear that is created by the cracking of a whip can drive out the fear of a shying horse when he sees some unfamiliar object on the road. If a fire breaks out on a cold, wintry night, the fear of the flames can drive out the fear of the frost. It seems as though one fear draws to itself the energies of the mind, and other fears are left with no sustenance.

So it is with "the fear of man." It drains to itself the mental energy and devotion which ought to feed the fear of God. A politician who is moved by fear of man, and who tacks and trims to avoid his hostility, can never retain an efficient thought of God. So it is with a preacher who is afraid of man; his mind is not filled with a vision of "the Lord high and lifted up." But the same is true of anybody. If the barometer we consult for our guidance is the opinion and conventions of man, God Himself will be nothing. If we are always consulting man, moved and governed by his expediencies, God will vanish away. The fear of man is "a snare," and the power of the snare is found in its fascination to allure our mind from the Lord of hosts.

Here is another type from the portrait gallery of the Bible. *"Thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy strength."* Here is a forgetfulness that is born when we have recovered from some weakness. Pride of strength makes us forget the rock out of which we are hewn. This is a most common and insidious peril. Our weakness helps our remembrance of God; our strength is the friend of forgetfulness. Perhaps this is most apparent in our physical weakness. In our weakness, we remember the Lord, and the dim things of the unseen come clearly into view. But when our strength is regained, the vivid vision fades, and is sometimes entirely lost.

Our strength is really a drug, an opiate which ministers to spiritual forgetfulness. Frailty makes us lean on the power of the Almighty, and our remembrance of Him is keen and clear. But our strength helps to create a feeling of independence and we become unmindful of God. Therefore a strong man has a stupendous task in maintaining communion with God.

A third scriptural type of spiritual forgetfulness is this: *"They have gone from mountain to hill, and have forgotten their resting places."* It is the figure of a flock of wandering sheep, roaming away over the distant hills and mountains. They have gone from one place to another, and in the range of their goings have forgotten their place of rest. Their very vagrancy has made them insensible to their real home.

I think this word is descriptive of much of our modern life. It is a vagrancy rather than a crusade. We go from "mountain to hill," and from hill to mountain. Always on the move, we are forever seeking something else and never finding satisfaction. We get weary and tired with one thing, and trudge to another. Here, there, and everywhere, our lives become jaded and stale. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." We turn anywhere and everywhere rather than to this. Our lives can become so vagrant that God is exiled from our

minds. It seems as though there is something in vagrancy that stupefies the soul, and renders us insensitive to our true home and rest in God.

When I first came to New York, during the first few months of my ministry, I was continually asked by people, "Have you got into the whirl?" The very phrase seems so far removed from the words of the Psalmist, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters." Not that the Psalmist luxuriated in indolence, or spent his days in the fatness of ease; the rest was only preparative to a march. "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness." But from the march he returned to his resting place.

We can be caught in such a whirl in our modern life that we just rush from one thing to another, and forget the glorious rest that is ours in God. I think the enemy of our souls must love to get us into a whirl! If once we are dizzied with sensations, we are likely to lose the thought of God.

Let us give one further example from the Word of God. *"According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted: therefore have they forgotten Me."* Here is a rich pasturage, and in the enjoyment of it there is born the spirit of forgetfulness. Surely this is the stupefaction of abundance. In Southern France, where attar of roses is distilled, a very curious ailment imperils the workers. The very abundance of the rose leaves induces a sort of sleeping sickness. Surely it is even so in the abundances that are sometimes given to man. They are prone to sink him into the sleep of spiritual forgetfulness.

A man's devotion is apt to dwindle as he becomes more successful. Our piety does not keep pace with our purse. Absorption in bounty makes us forgetful of the Giver. We can be so occupied with the pasture that the Shepherd is forgotten. Our very fulness is apt to become our foe. Our clearest visions are given us in the wintertime when nature is scanty and poor. The fulness of the leaf blocks the outlook and the distance is hidden. The summertime of life, when leaves and flowers are plentiful, is apt to bring a veil. And the plentifulness impedes our communion.

These are some of the types of forgetfulness which are described in the Word of God. Is there any help for us?

There is a very gracious promise of the Master in which I think all these perils are anticipated, and in the strength of which they can be met and overcome. *"He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."* Here is the promise of a gracious minister to the memory, strengthening it in its hold upon the unseen. I suppose that one of the most urgent needs of the common life is the sanctification of the memory. If the memory were to be really hallowed, it would forget many things which it now remembers, and it would certainly remember many things which it now forgets. We are apt to retain worthless things, destructive things, things that ought to have been dropped and buried and left in their graves. But we carry them with us to our undoing.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit will deal with this unwise retention, and will make a memory leaky where it is wise for it to lose. But more than that, it will strengthen its power of spiritual comprehension, and will enable it to keep hold of the unseen and the eternal. What should I most like to remember? I would like to remember with unfailing constancy the glorious, holy Being of the eternal God, the unspeakable ministry of His grace, which worked in my redemption in Christ Jesus, my Lord. I should like to remember the benefits of His daily providence which shine along my road in unfailing succession, and the eternal significance of transient events. And when new occasions and new duties arise, and I am face to face with novel circumstances, I should like to be reminded of those words of the Lord Jesus through which the Holy Spirit would give me the needful illumination: *"He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."*



What is His Name?

Harry Foster

The title "Lord" was originally used by the disciples as a mark of respect, and in fact the word is sometimes translated simply as "Sir" (Jn. 20:15). Steadily, however, the apostles began to appreciate the greatness of their Master and were ready to refer to Him as "*the* Lord" (Lk. 19:31). Their convictions crystallized on resurrection morning. They spontaneously began to call Him "*the* Lord" (Jn. 20:25; 21:7).

When the Holy Spirit came, they had a new insight into this unique Lordship, and boldly announced to all men that it was God Himself who had constituted the crucified Jesus "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). From this time on, there was no place in their thinking for any doubts or questionings; He was "the Lord Jesus" (Acts 4:33), and they gladly accepted the implications of this title, calling themselves His bondslaves (Acts 4:29). More than this, they reinforced their message of His Lordship by making themselves servants to all men for His sake (2 Cor. 4:5).

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Without the Holy Spirit's aid, men cannot truly call Christ their Lord (1 Cor. 12:3). Of course, they can use the empty words (Lk. 6:46; 13:25), but this means nothing to Him and will bring no benefits to them. Only the Spirit can make Christ to be Lord in an effective, living way. It is useless to call Him "the Lord" or "our Lord" unless a man has first come to know Him as "my Lord." The Holy Spirit has come into human experience for this very purpose—to bring men into true liberty by leading them into wholehearted submission to the Lord Jesus. So He is rightly described as "the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:17).

In the case of Peter's visit to Caesarea, we have a striking illustration of the Spirit's work in this matter of liberation. Peter's message was simple enough—"He is Lord of all" (Acts 10:36), but the effect on his hearers was phenomenal. The whole group was electrified into a vital experience of salvation. We do not have to guess the reason for this display of the Spirit's power, for Peter not only spoke with His help, but spoke from a new committal to the Lordship of Christ in his own life. He went to Caesarea hot from a new challenge and a new submission; he who had long preached and proved Jesus as Lord had been asked to obey in a matter which offended his deepest prejudices and had refused in that monumental contradiction in terms: "Not so, Lord" (Acts 10:14). However, grace was given him to set aside his own will in favor of the command of his Lord, with the logical release of the Spirit's unction and power. On that day, Peter could certainly not have said that Jesus was the Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

It was given to the Apostle Paul, the great bondservant of Jesus Christ, to enunciate the full significance of this title. He explained that Christ's exaltation was God's just recognition of His perfect character; only the One who had Himself rendered perfect obedience could demand obedience from others. He affirmed that one day all creation, including the powers "under the earth" which have not been reconciled to God through the cross, will bow to the supremacy of this name of Lord. This, he asserted, will bring the deepest satisfaction to the Father's heart (Phil. 2:11). Paul then added that his personal reaction to these truths had been gladly to sacrifice all his own interest for the great honor of knowing Him as "Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8).

If it cost Paul everything to call Jesus Lord, it certainly cost Jesus everything to attain to that Lordship. The cost was that of His own life, a fact which stresses to us the great importance to God and man of His being Lord (Rom. 14:9).

In the New Testament, the title "Lord" is used to describe the Jehovah of the Old Testament, a point which can easily be proved by comparing parallel passages. When, therefore, the apostles called Jesus "the Lord" they made Him equal with the great I AM, and they did not hesitate to quote from the Old Testament to substantiate this amazing claim (Rom. 14:11). The Bible ends by commending all believers to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is what the Book is all about (Rev. 22:21). u

The Two Chief Names of God

H. F. Stevenson

There are many names for God; no one name could express all that He is, in Himself. The study of them is not only most illuminating but should lead us into intimate fellowship with Him. By it we enter into the heritage of all His people, in the unfolding of the progressive self-revelation of God through the ages.

Most of the Old Testament names of God are made up of two words—**El** (the shortened form of Elohim) or **Jehovah**, and another word added, revealing some specific attribute or grace of God, or facet of His character. In these composite titles, the first part has the full wealth of meaning which we see Elohim and Jehovah to possess, but with some further unfolding of His Person, or will, or provision for His people.

First in order of use, is **Elohim**, the word used in Genesis 1:1-2:3. It occurs in the Old Testament some 2,550 times, second only to the covenant name Jehovah. It means, quite simply, God—as it is always rendered in the Authorized Version. The opening words of Scripture make clear its meaning. They declare Him to be supreme, eternal, and almighty; the Creator of the universe.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The absolute monotheism of this statement, written at a time when the peoples of the world believed in many gods, bears the hallmark of divine self-revelation, and is one of the most striking attestations of the inspiration of the Scriptures. There is not even a sidelong glance at the gods of the heathen: Elohim is alone the Fount and Source of all life and being.

This declaration concerning God is the more striking in that the word Elohim is afterwards used in the Bible not only for God, but also for the gods of the heathen. That does not mean that these are true gods: they are the figments of men's minds and the work of their hands—though behind them lurk the powers of evil (Deut. 32:17; 1 Cor. 10:20). When fallen men departed from the true self-revelation of God, they created for themselves the gods they wanted, and in so doing they also corrupted the divine title Elohim (Gen. 31:30; Ex. 12:12; 23:24). God had created men for Himself. Estranged from Him, their hearts were restless: but the gods they made in a vain hope of satisfying their need were a degradation of the true revelation of God.

This distinction between God and the gods of the heathen is the theme of many a Bible story. In Egypt, Pharaoh's magicians could simulate some of the signs which God gave of His power, yet in the real tests the gods of Egypt were proved impotent, while He led forth His people by His mighty power. Later the Philistines, having captured the Ark of the Covenant, thought that this indicated the greater power of their god over Israel's—until they twice found Dagon ignominiously lying on his face, the second time smashed. And on Mount Carmel the issue was, "The God that answereth by fire, let Him be God"—with the resultant cry, "The LORD, He is the God, the LORD, He is the God" (1 Kings 18:39).

Elohim is a plural noun; and when God speaks, in Genesis, it is in the plural: "Let Us make man . . ." But the verbs used are singular—making indisputably plain that there is no hint in the plural noun of more than one God. This is often explained as a "plural of majesty," just as reigning monarchs today, in official proclamations and documents, refer to themselves as "we."

However that may be, devout Christians have ever seen in this first of the Old Testament names of God a foreshadowing of the truth of the Trinity. Not that the use of the plural noun declares, but rather that it contains, the truth that within the Godhead there is a plurality of Persons. The foundational fact established by the Old Testament is that "The LORD our God is one LORD" (Deut. 6:4); but within the one essential Godhead there are three Persons: God is a Tri-unity. In the Old Testament, however, this was merely hinted. It could not possibly be realized or understood until the full revelation came in the Person and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is ever self-consistent, however; and even if men could not then receive it, the truth of the Trinity was indicated in the very opening words of Scripture, the very beginning of the divine self-revelation.

A simplified form of Elohim, El, is often used, meaning "The Mighty One." Examples of this are,

Nehemiah 9:32, "Now therefore, our God (Elohim), the great, the mighty, and the terrible God (El)"; and Psalm 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God (El)." The thought that underlies both forms of the word is this—that God is almighty, able to do precisely and fully according to His will. "God said, Let there be light: and there was light." He spake, and it was done. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all.

The singular of Elohim, **Eloah**, is used principally as a poetic form of the word, and so occurs chiefly in the poetical books. It is from the same root word, we are told, as the Arabic Allah, and its meaning is "worthy to be worshipped." Its first use occurs in Deuteronomy 32:15, "Then he forsook God (Eloah) which made him." That God is the one only true object of worship is a needful note, alongside that of the almightiness of God. He is not only the One to whom we can turn when in distress: He is the One whom, at all times, we should worship.

Second only to Elohim, in order of appearance in the Old Testament, **Jehovah** is above every other name of God the one most precious to the Jews, and the most revealing of His grace toward His people. It is by far the most frequently used of the names of God, occurring some 6,823 times, according to the lexicographers.

A more literal translation of the Hebrew is Yahweh; but that is strange-sounding to us, and Jehovah has come to possess a distinctive value we would be reluctant to forgo. In the Authorized Version it is usually rendered LORD, in capital letters. The only exceptions are when it is joined to Adonai (translated "Lord"): then it is rendered GOD—Lord GOD (Adonai Jehovah).

The precise meaning of the name is obscure. In the Hebrew, it was originally composed of four consonants: YHWH—known to theologians as "the tetragrammaton"—to which the vowels of Adonai were afterwards added (except when the name is joined to Adonai: then the vowels of Elohim are used). The Jews came to regard the name as too sacred to pronounce, however, and in the public reading of the Scriptures they substituted Adonai for it. Jehovah was to them "the incommunicable name."

It is generally regarded as derived from the verb "to be," and some scholars suggest that it means "I am, was, and will be"—anticipating, from the very beginnings of the divine self-revelation to man, the majestic title ascribed to Him by the heavenly host: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (Rev. 4:8). But God's own exposition of the name makes its meaning clear—I AM THAT I AM (Ex. 3:14). And lest there should be any doubt, He added, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

ELOHIM

The true, almighty God

Whereas Elohim reveals Him as the Almighty, Jehovah sets Him forth as the eternal God—"the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." We shall never, in time or eternity, exhaust the revelation of His Being and grace, but we shall go on forever discovering new glories of His Person and attributes. This name, therefore, has aptly been described as "the ineffable name."

While Elohim speaks of His almighty power, then, the name Jehovah reveals, in part, His character. All the moral and spiritual attributes of His Person are linked with it. No one name, of course, can fully express who and what He is: but, by manifold names, at different times and in varying circumstances, He led on His people step by step in the knowledge of Himself.

There is a progressive revelation, indeed, in the use of this name, Jehovah. We first find it in Genesis 2 and 3, used in relation to man. Whereas He created the heavens and the earth as Elohim, as Jehovah He made man in His own image and likeness. The two names are, in fact, joined together in the story of Adam and Eve as Jehovah Elohim (LORD God) to make indisputably plain that Jehovah is Elohim: they are one and the same God.

JEHOVAH

The covenant-keeping Lord

It is significant that the only exception in Genesis 2 and 3 to the use of the two names coupled together is in the dialogue between Eve and the serpent: there Elohim alone—the impersonal name—is used. But when Eve bore her first son, Cain, she said, "I have gotten a man from Jah." And in Genesis 4:26, after the sad story of the rapid degeneration of the descendants of Cain, we read concerning the godly line of Seth—"then began men to call upon the name of the LORD."

Much later, when Moses had suffered his first rebuff from Pharaoh, "God said unto him, I am the LORD: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by My name JEHOVAH was I not known to them" (Ex. 6:2-3). This has perplexed many people, for the name Jehovah occurs frequently in Genesis, as we have seen. What is meant is, that God was here investing the name with a new meaning. Before this, it had been a title—"the Self-existent One"; now it was to become a personal name. He was not merely "God," but Jehovah, whom they knew by name, in all the wondrous intimacy which that implies. More than that: He was entering into covenant with them, and Jehovah was His covenant name. It contained within itself the pledge of all that He had promised to do for them and be to them. They were to be His people, and He their God. They were to know Him in a personal, covenant relationship.

In that relationship, His self-revelation continued to be progressive—in His acts, His law, His manifold mercies. They learned that He is not only mighty to save but also able to succour; not only gracious but also holy; not only longsuffering but also uncompromising in His attitude to evil (Ex. 34:6-7; Num. 14:18). They learned that, though they daily affronted His divine majesty, yet He provided means of grace whereby they might be pardoned and restored (Ps. 106:25, 43-45). They learned to trust Him as their Shield and Defender in time of distress.

In those years of gradual unfolding of His will and purposes and grace, the name Jehovah took on ever new meanings for them: and to express these, other names were attached to Jehovah—such as Jehovah-rapha, "the LORD that healeth"; Jehovah-tsidkenu, "the LORD our righteousness"; Jehovah-nissi, "the LORD my banner," etc.

Upon the foundations of this knowledge of the LORD gained in the wilderness, Israel in the land of promise proved Him to be all that His name Jehovah had pledged—One who, almighty and unchanging, was indeed "the glory in the midst and a wall of fire round about"—so long as His people were true to the covenant into which they had entered with Him: but One who also was jealous of His rightful place as the Lord their God, and would by no means ignore their sin. And as the people apprehended what He was to them, they began to express their faith in the names they gave their children—Jehoram, "exaltation of God"; Jehoshaphat, "God judges," etc.

A contraction of Jehovah, **Jah**, is used some fifty times in the Hebrew Scriptures, and is always translated LORD in the Authorized Version with the single exception of Psalm 68:4, where it is transliterated. It seems to express the thought of gladness on the part of His people, in the realization of what God is and does for them. It first occurs in the Song of Moses—"Jah is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation" (Ex. 15:2; cf. Isa. 12:2; 26:4, Jah Jehovah). And "Praise ye the LORD," occurring some twenty-five times in the Psalms, is "Hallelujah."

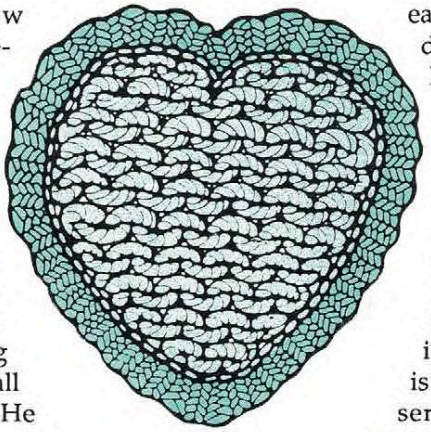
And finally, God who had revealed Himself at different times and in various ways, came in the Person of His Son to make Himself fully known. Jesus, whose name is an abbreviation of **Jehoshua**, "Jehovah the Saviour," reveals the Lord our God. He declared Himself to be the "I am"—again and again assuming that divine title, with all that it implied (John 8:58). He is the living One, having life in Himself. In this blessed God-man we have the heart of God revealed.

God's Precious Thoughts

J. W. Bramhall

"How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!" *Psalm 139:17*

Will you meditate with me on the eternal value of God's thoughts? The Spirit of God, writing by the psalmist, describes His thoughts with two descriptive words, saying: "HOW PRECIOUS!" Do we value them like David? Let us consider from the Psalms a few Scriptures indicating how precious they were to him:



OUR LIVES

His evaluation of our lives is revealed in Psalm 72:14, where we read the words of God, saying: "And PRECIOUS shall their blood be in His sight." Psalm 72 is messianic in character, presenting a description of the coming reign of the Messiah when He shall be King of the earth. As King, He will value the lives of His subjects, for to Him they shall be "precious." How different are the present thoughts of earthly kings.

OUR SOULS

His evaluation of our souls is seen in Psalm 49:8, which states: "The redemption of their soul is PRECIOUS." The context of the Psalm indicates that no earthly price could ever redeem us, and that no man could provide a ransom for his brother. The redemption of our soul is beyond *all* earthly conception in value—but there is One who has been able to provide it through the infinite gift of His beloved Son. Would you like to know how valuable you are in Heaven's estimation? You can gaze on Calvary and see the redemption price for your soul paid by the Son of God, and declare from your heart: *"How precious!"*

OUR FELLOWSHIP

His evaluation of our fellowship is described in Psalm 133. Here we find the joy God has in seeing the unity of His people manifested in practical experience. "It is like the PRECIOUS ointment upon the head . . ." How He values the evidence of Christian unity! Do we? Are we getting on happily with our fellow believers in the Lord, as true members of His body? We belong to a fellowship which the Spirit of God has placed us in, uniting us to our risen Head above, and also to every believer on earth. When it is manifested by our dwelling together in love, He Himself declares it is *precious.*

OUR SERVICE

His evaluation of our service is declared in Psalm 126:6, where we read, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing PRECIOUS seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." There is no doubt that God values all our service for Him. The seed of His Word which we sow is precious. In whatever service done for Him, large or small, we seek to distribute the blessed Word, by word of mouth or by deed. ALL done for Him is precious. Even a "cup of cold water" ministered in His Name, will not lose its reward. Let us then be faithful to Him in using the "seed," for all we do, even in weeping, to Him is *precious!*

OUR DEATH

His evaluation of our death is recorded in Psalm 116:15, where the words of David declare, "PRECIOUS in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Oh, what a God! From the beginning to the end, His thoughts toward us and of us can be described as precious! That which is to many the most dreaded occasion of earthly experience—the death of the saints—God declares even that is precious! Oh, let us worship and wonder before Him, saying with David, "How *precious* also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!"

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LOOK AT BOOKS

Seed to the Sower

Jim McKendrick

In 1945, a group of men met together in England to discuss the need for a publication that would endeavor to emphasize that aspect of truth known as "church truth." Out of this concern there arose a magazine called *Precious Seed* which was published bi-monthly. This magazine has continued to the present, with timely articles written by men recognized for their ability to teach the Word of God in a clear manner.

In 1970, their 25th anniversary, they published a book called "Church Doctrine and Practice." Its content was a compilation of reprints of articles from the first 25 years of the magazine and grouped together in a systematic fashion. This brought together in one book the essence of all the teaching. There is very little in print on this important body of truth today. I have a good number of books on my bookshelf but unfortunately they are all out of print. If you want a fine overview of church truth, this book should be in your hands.

The good response to this book encouraged the Precious Seed committee to venture into the field of book publishing. Over the years, they have added other books which have been a real help to many of God's people on both sides of the Atlantic. Their second book was a symposium on Bible doctrine in general. It is a storehouse of solid expository teaching which should be in the hands of all young believers. I have given both of these books to a number of young believers as a concise, accurate, and readable source of foundational truths to be learned and practiced.

Since then, they have brought out three devotional books. "Day by Day Through the Old Testament," "Day by Day Through the New Testament," and "Day by Day Through the Psalms." Each of these volumes, while a daily devotional book, is unlike many devotionals in that each has a solid exposition of the passage as well as a practical application to the daily life of the reader. Proper application and proper walk is a result of a proper understanding of the Scriptures. Fluff may give a nice emotional tug for the moment, but growth in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ comes from a solid understanding of the text. It is this solid exposition that makes these books outstanding.

The book on the Psalms is divided into twelve different themes and the Psalms are arranged in this manner. There are, of course, duplication of some of the Psalms under different themes and commented on by different authors. This only enhances the richness of the book. This was my first introduction to their devotional books. I was impressed by the solid exposition and practical application. It helped me study each psalm and meditate on it, thus helping me assimilate the truths into daily living.

One of the questions you are asking right now is: "Where can I get these books?" They are available in North America from Everyday Publications, or CMML, or Gospel Folio Press:

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To answer a question that has been asked me a number of times, all the books mentioned in this column can be acquired through Gospel Folio Press. We do maintain a small selection of books and are more than happy to order any book for you. While the focus of this column is not to sell books, we are happy to supply books to you if you need that service. Our primary focus is to introduce you to those materials which will cause you to grow in your Christian experience that in your life God Himself will be magnified, to whom all glory belongs.

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Every Day Reading Plan

Section 16: Ezra, Nehemiah, & Esther — Captivity & Return.

April 1	Ezra 1:1-11	The decree of Cyrus to restore the Jews
April 2	Ezra 2:1-70	The registration and return of the captives
April 3	Ezra 3:1-13	The sacrifices renewed & the Temple foundation laid
April 4	Ezra 4:1-24	The Samaritans resist and the building stopped
April 5	Ezra 5:1-17	The inquiry of Tatnai and the decree of Darius
April 6	Ezra 6:1-22	The Temple completed & the passover observed
April 7	Ezra 7:1-28	The proclamation of Artaxerxes
April 8	Ezra 8:1-36	The liberation of the Jews
April 9	Ezra 9:1-15	The intercession of Ezra
April 10	Ezra 10:1-44	The reformation of the people
April 11	Nehemiah 1:1-11	Bad news from Jerusalem
April 12	Nehemiah 2:1-20	Surveying the rubbish
April 13	Nehemiah 3:1-32	Reconstruction of the wall
April 14	Nehemiah 4:1-23	Opposition from without
April 15	Nehemiah 5:1-19	Opposition from within
April 16	Nehemiah 6:1-19	Enemies discouraged
April 17	Nehemiah 7:1-73	Gates guarded
April 18	Nehemiah 8:1-18	The book of the Law read and the feast kept
April 19	Nehemiah 9:1-38	Confession of the people
April 20	Nehemiah 10:1-39	Renewal of the covenant
April 21	Nehemiah 11:1-36	The consolidation of the work
April 22	Nehemiah 12:1-47	The dedication of the wall
April 23	Nehemiah 13:1-31	Religious appointments and reforms
April 24	Esther 1:1-22	The humiliation of Vashti
April 25	Esther 2:1-23	The exaltation of Esther & the plot against Xerxes
April 26	Esther 3:1-15	The malice of Haman
April 27	Esther 4:1-5:14	Esther's venture: If I perish, I perish
April 28	Esther 6:1-7:10	Haman's downfall
April 29	Esther 8:1-17	The avenging of the Jews
April 30	Esther 9:1-10:3	Mordecai's greatness



INSCRIPTION ON A WARNING TABLET NOTIFYING GENTILES NOT TO ENTER THE COURT OF ISRAEL

"LET NO ALIEN ENTER WITHIN THE BALUSTRADE AND EMBANKMENT ABOUT THE SANCTUARY. WHOEVER IS CAUGHT MAKES HIMSELF RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS DEATH WHICH WILL FOLLOW."

LET ME INTRODUCE

Ezra, Nehemiah, & Esther

The Medo-Persian Empire rose out of the ashes of the Babylonian Empire in 536 BC, at which time Cyrus (chart #3) offered the Jews their liberty (Ezra 1:2-4). This was directly the result of Daniel's prayer (#2) for the restoration of Judah when he discovered, in what we call Jeremiah 29:10 (#1), that the captivity was just about complete. Under the leadership of Jeshua and Zerrubabel (#4), a small contingent returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the altar of Burnt Offering and the Temple foundation (Ezra 3). However, this project was not without difficulty. Both opposition from without and apathy within delayed the work and required the stirring ministries of Haggai and Zechariah (#5) to spur the Jews to completion. With a renewing of the decree by Darius (#6) the Lord's house was finished in 516 BC, twenty years after the return (Ezra 6:15).

Between Ezra 6 and 7 is a gap of 58 years (516-458 BC), to which belongs the story of Esther. These were momentous years on the world stage. During this period occurred the deaths of Buddha and Confucius, and the battles of Marathon, Thermopylae, and Salamis.

The story of Esther takes place in Persia. Not everyone went home. For over a thousand years, the largest concentration of Jews outside Israel was in the region where they had been exiled.

The king of Persia married a Jewess named Esther, who uncovered a plot against her people—led by Haman, the prime minister. When Esther and her cousin, Mordecai, brought the plot to the attention of King Ahasuerus, Haman was deposed and replaced by Mordecai. Those who had taken part in the aborted plan were executed. The Jews narrowly escaped slaughter. To commemorate this, the feast called Purim was established.

Some have objected to this book being included in the Canon because it does not seem to have any theological themes, nor is the name of God mentioned. God is there, however, working behind the scenes. It has been shown that the Tetragrammaton (YHVH), the name of Yahweh (Jehovah), occurs four times as an acrostic at the crises in the plot (1:20; 5:4; 5:13; 7:7). In two cases, the name is spelled backwards; in two, forwards. In two cases it is the initial letters; in two, the final letters. This has been illustrated by using the divine title of LORD in the following four couplets:

Due Respect Our Ladies, all
Shall give their husbands, great and small (1:20).
Let Our Royal Dinner bring
Haman, feasting with the king (5:4).
GranD foR nO avaiL my state,
While this Jew sits at my gate (5:13).
IlL tO feaR decreeD I find
Toward me in the monarch's mind (7:7).

Ordinary life is not so ordinary; it is filled with eternal significance. Events fit into a normal pattern of cause and effect, but woven through it all are the hidden purposes of God. Human choices are of great importance and have profound consequences, whether for good or evil. The book of Esther says: Do not be deceived by appearances. More is happening than you think.

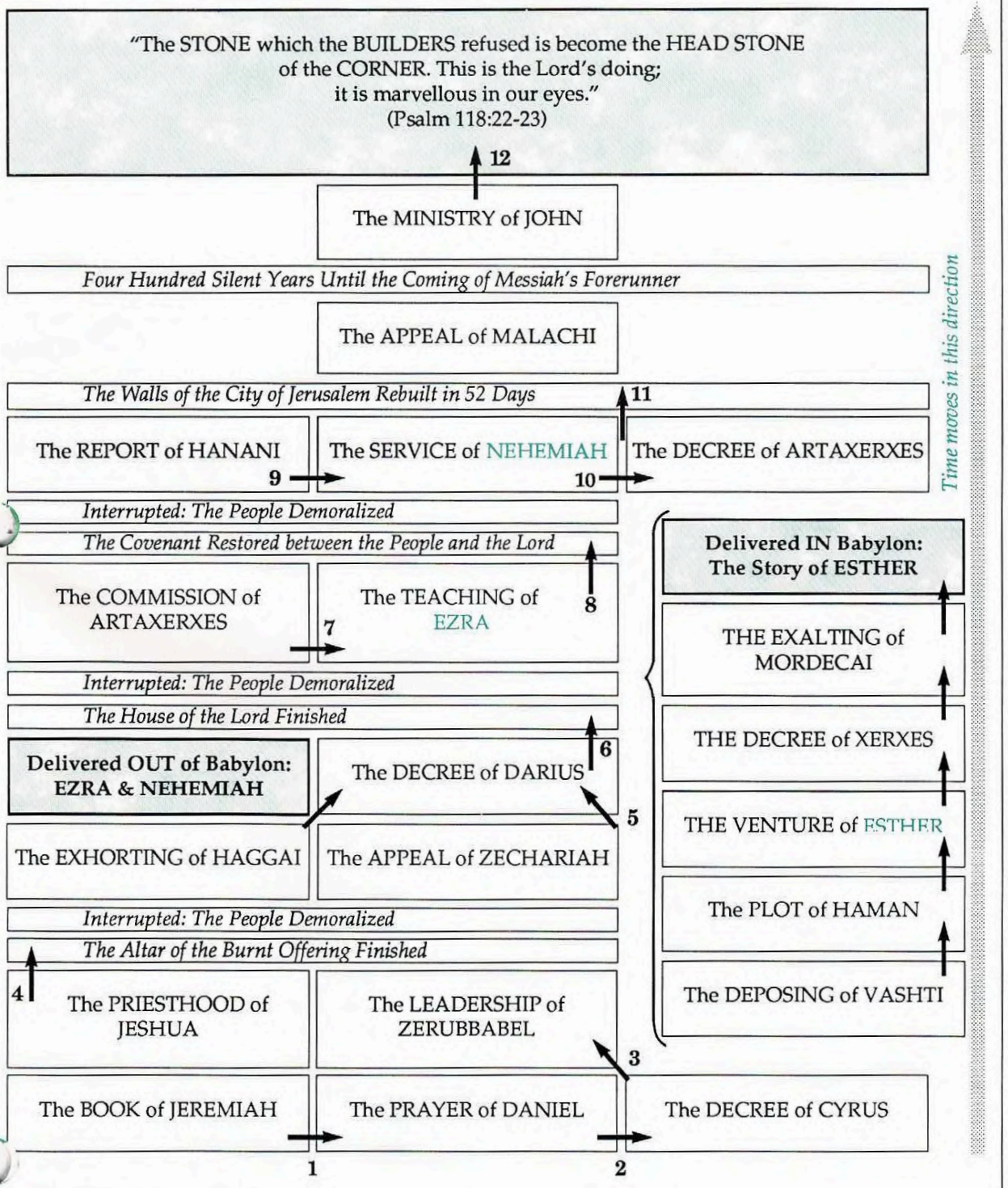
The second section of Ezra (7-10) covers Ezra's personal journey to Jerusalem (#7) with a new wave of refugees. He was appalled to find the people so demoralized. Under his careful Bible teaching, a revival in a measure took place (#8).

In some ways, Nehemiah is a parallel account to the one given by Ezra. Twelve years after Ezra's return in 458 BC, Nehemiah heard (#9) in far-off Babylon that Jerusalem was in ruins, her walls broken, and her gates burned. Although, as the king's right-hand man, he had every external comfort, there was no comfort for his soul. Offered a leave of absence (#10), he returned to the city of his fathers. However, Nehemiah found more than broken walls; he found broken lives. Discouragement had set in, God's commandments were being transgressed, and moral laxity, even among the priests, was common.

In spite of critics, unskilled labor, threats of violence, and an enormous task, the approximately four miles of wall were repaired in 52 days (#11). And what filled Nehemiah's heart with joy was the fact not only that the work had been completed, but that God was seen to have done it: "the work was wrought of our God" (Neh. 6:16).

Thus ends the history of the Old Testament, with the exception of the last O.T. prophet—John. Four hundred years will pass in which God is silent, until at last He will speak the Word (#12)!

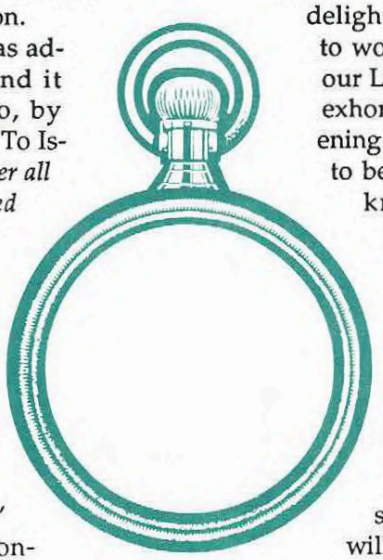
3 Books, 2 Lands, 1 People



No Time?

W. H. Bennet

"I have no time," the man of the world says. My business, my necessary recreations (i.e., my pleasures) and other things are too pressing to allow me time to consider what you call higher things. So he goes on, thinking much of a future built on the shifting sands of time that must soon end. At the same time, he disregards that real future which has no end, that solemn eternity to which our time on earth is only the brief introduction.



But the following exhortation was addressed to the people of God, and it comes as a call to all those who, by grace, occupy this blessed position. To Israel Moses said, *"Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee,"* and then, *"Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee"* (Deut. 8:1-5). Are God's people also tempted to say, by act if not by word, "I have no time"? Are we too busy to find time for quiet reflection? Are we so pressed that we cannot pause to "remember" God's dealings with us and to "consider" His designs in them?

It is very true that the rush and hurry of the world affect those who, though not of it, are still in it for a time, and many of whom, in order to "provide things honest in the sight of all men," are occupied both early and late, and cannot have the quiet which was more easily obtained a century ago. Yet our circumstances are of God's appointing, even if world conditions cause them to be what they are, and He would never have any of His children so pressed with the things of time that we have no leisure for the nourishment of the spiritual life by His Word and prayer.

It seems only a matter of weeks since we said our good-bye to the past year. The early months of 1992 have flown; we are almost one quarter of the way through another year. Is it not a sensible thing for us to consider what progress we have made? Few men of business are so foolish as to disregard this question; should we be less wise regarding spiritual things? Have we really made some progress? Have we a greater desire for the Word of God? Do we increasingly feel the need of prayer?

Do we see more clearly that in all our ways it is good to wait upon God, and that even in things of this life a little time spent in seeking help direct from Him is never lost? Have we a growing delight in assembling ourselves together to worship our God and Father, through our Lord Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, and to exhort one another? Does an ever-deepening sense of God's mercy to us lead us to be more concerned about those who know not God and have not the Gospel? Are unseen things becoming more real to our hearts, and is that blessed hope which God in His grace has given to us better known in its purifying power?

These are many things to "consider," and a little calm and true reflection will probably lead many of us to a humbling of our souls and confession of sin. If so, it will be for our profit and blessing.

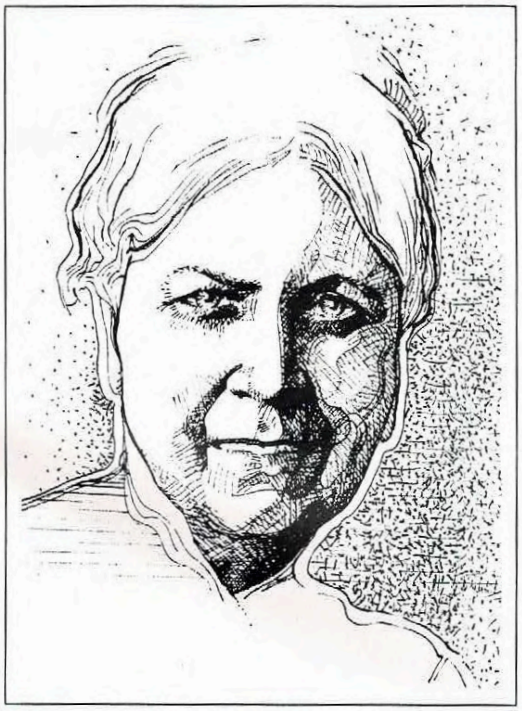
But let us not forget the special point of the verse referred to: "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." To chasten does not mean to punish, either here or in Hebrews 12, but to discipline. Discipline may be corrective, it may be preventive, or it may simply be formative.

At some times we may be more conscious of discipline than at others. We may also see some reason for it, or we may not. Whatever the case, let us seek to be exercised by it, that its proper fruit may be produced. The result may not, in fact, be apparent to us while down here; but He who sits as the refiner will behold it, and we shall see it in the coming day, and shall praise our heavenly Father for His gracious and patient ways with us. So let 's take time for eternity. Let's remember our Father's patient ways and kindly correction. U

Get with the classics

Sister Abigail

The story of Abigail Townsend Luffe



This is the thrilling account of God's faithfulness in the life of Abigail Townsend Luffe. One day this three-year-old girl stood by George Muller's knee and said, "I wish God would answer my prayers like He does yours, Mr. Muller."

"He will," was the prompt reply, and taking his friend's daughter up onto his lap, he simply quoted, "'What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.' Now, Abbie, what is it you want to ask God for?" From that day, it seems she maintained the childlike simplicity she witnessed in Muller's prayers.

As you see this young woman being challenged to put herself at God's disposal and go forward for Him, you will form a far better idea of what the life of faith is all about. This book is stocked with amazing answers to prayer, lessons in how God can guide in the particulars of life, and the highly encouraging record of some of the many that she led to the foot of the Cross.

By Clara S. Feidler, **214 pages, $5.95**

Does God Answer Prayer?

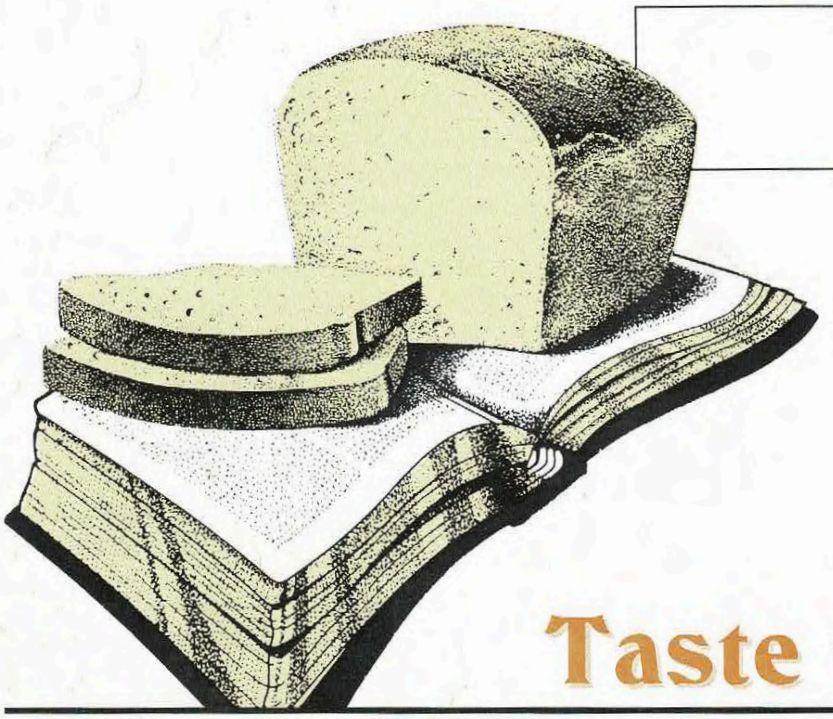
Sister Abigail says YES!

Abigail Townsend Luffe was neither apologetic or hesitant in answering this question: Does God answer prayer? In this delightfully readable book, you will get a peek at some of the experiences that gave "Sister Abigail" unquestionable proof that God is deeply concerned with the affairs of men.
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Taste the Truth

"Thywords were found, and I did eat them; and they were unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jer. 15:16).

Emperor Menelik II was the African ruler who defeated the Italian army at Adwa in 1896 and established the country of Ethiopia. He believed the Bible had curative powers and would eat a few pages of it to help restore his health whenever he felt sick. After a stroke in 1913, he ate the entire book of Kings, suffered the complications of a bowel obstruction, and died.

Unfortunately, Emperor Menelik had the wrong perception of a very right principle. Jeremiah's consumption of God's truth gave him great joy and strength. God does indeed desire for us to "eat" His words, but He wants us to do so with our hearts, not our mouths.

How should we really "eat" God's words? By reading the Bible with three simple objectives in mind and asking ourselves the following questions:

1. Observation: What does this say?
2. Exposition: What does this mean?
3. Application: How can I apply this today?

The Bible has healed many a broken spirit and wounded soul. Millions have been nourished by its words of hope and encouragement. However, this power is not released by consuming its pages but in applying its truth. We must take the time to not only read, but to live God's truth. For it is then that we will experience the supernaturally curative power of the Scriptures.

—Dan Baty