

UPLOOK

MAY 1996



We've Named Our **Change!**



Avram, Abraham, Ibrahim

My latest issue of *Christianity Today* (May 20, 1996) includes an ad for a new book by Peter Kreeft entitled "Ecumenical Jihad." One segment of the copy reads:

Peter Kreeft argues that we need to change our current alignments. We need to realize that we are at war and that the sides have changed radically: many of our former enemies (e.g. Muslims) are now our friends, and some of our former friends (e.g. humanists) are now our enemies. Documenting the spiritual and moral decay of modern society, Kreeft issues a wake-up call to all God-fearing Christians, Jews and Muslims to unite together in a "religious war" against the common enemy of godless secular humanism, materialism and immorality.

Aware of the deep theological differences between these monotheistic faiths, Kreeft calls for a moratorium on our polemics against each other so that we can form an alliance to fight together to save western civilization. God is calling for this unity, Kreeft says, and if we respond, God will do something wonderful.

Would you find it surprising if I told you that the three endorsers of this author (Richard Neuhaus, Chuck Colson, and J. I. Packer) were also instigators of the recent proposed alliance between Protestants and Catholics? This must be the next whistle-stop on the journey to that great world confederacy that will at last bring peace in the worldwide kingdom of religious tolerance and international brotherhood. Haven't I read about that somewhere? Was it Revelation 17 or 2 Thessalonians 2?

In reading the advertising copy, some questions obviously come to mind. Have Muslims—part of the world of sinners which God loves and for whom Christ died—been our enemies? "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of

this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12).

And when were the humanists our "friends"? The Humanist Manifesto declares unabashedly its opposition to the God of the Bible and its devotion to the supremacy of man. If such have been the friends of the Church, they have proved to be Judases.

Have we been called to "save western civilization"? One is reminded of the wag who, when asked what he thought of western civilization, responded, "I think it would be a good idea." Western civilization, such as it is (and always has been), lies in the lap of the Wicked One. God does not want it, saved or otherwise. It, along with the rest of Babylon, is destined for the flames. The Lord cannot find anything worth salvaging in it. He has sent us instead to call men and women *out* of this world system to find refuge in Christ.

Our Lord spoke of this world system and our relationship to it in His prayer in John 17: "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me *out* of the world...I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine...I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (Jn. 17:6, 9, 14).

What would it cost us to form such an alliance? It requires, says Kreeft, "a moratorium on our polemics against each other." Read that: "an end to the proclamation of the gospel to all Muslims and Jews."

Avram, father of the nation of Israel, and Ibrahim, Al Kuds, the friend of God and also father to the Ishmaelites, would have something to say about this. He rejoiced, said the Lord Jesus, "to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad" (Jn. 8:56). What was it he saw? He saw the Lamb that God would provide, Jehovah-jireh. He saw the Saviour that neither Islam nor Judaism will accept. Abraham's two sons (Gal. 4:22) have not the faith of their father, by which he was justified (Rom. 4:3), as are we. **U**

My daughter told me last night that her teacher says the three great world religions are pretty much the same. Then where are the Saviours of Judaism and Islam? You expect such views from the world but what happens when the Church starts thinking this way?

UPLOOK

(USPS 620-640)

Founded in 1927 as *Look on the Fields*,
is published eleven times per year by



UPLOOK MINISTRIES
P. O. Box 2041
Grand Rapids, MI 49501-2041

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to:
UPLOOK
P. O. Box 2041
Grand Rapids, MI 49501-2041

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UPLOOK magazine is intended to encourage the people of God in fidelity to His Word, fervency in intercessory prayer, labors more abundant and love to the Lord. Believing in the practical Headship of Christ and the local autonomy of each assembly, this is not intended to be an official organ of any group or federation of local churches. The editor and authors take responsibility for materials published. For any blessing which accrues from this publication, to God be the glory.

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Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope with all unsolicited material.

ISSN #1055-2642

Printed in the U. S. A.

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Uplook Ministries is a tax-exempt corporation looking to the Lord to provide for the needs of this ministry. This magazine is sent freely to those who request it, but evidently is not freely produced. Donations should be made payable to "UPLOOK" and sent to:

U.S. donors:

P.O. Box 2041
Grand Rapids, MI
49501-2041

Canadian donors:

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

Contributions may also be made using your *Visa* or *Mastercard*. When you write, please include your card number and expiry date and the amount in US currency that you wish to donate.

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Mixed Marriage

*We can all say Amen to the need to emphasize unity in the body of Christ. But in Charles Colson's book, *The Body*, he went beyond unity with those who hold to a biblical gospel. In a tremendous broadening of what is a Christian, the book argued for unity among all those who take the name of Christian.*

Many evangelical leaders would have us believe that there is no longer—and never was—a need to evangelize Catholics. Thomas Nelson Publishers issued *Evangelical Catholics* in 1990. Written by Keith Fournier, a Roman Catholic apologist, the book argues that a large number of Roman Catholics in this country today are also evangelical, and that Roman Catholicism is by nature evangelical because it holds to the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

The Body by Charles Colson came out in 1992. This “Christian best-seller” was named Book of the Year by the Christian Booksellers’ Association. In his articulate way, Colson argued in this book for unity among all who take the name of Christian. The book’s reception had a great impact on Mr. Colson and evangelicals associated with him. The response told him that the time was ripe in the US for greater unity of Christians of all kinds.

Next, the Christian Research Institute (CRI) began a five-part series on Roman Catholicism in their *Christian Research Journal* called *What Think Ye of Rome?* It really wasn’t a series on what you think of Rome and what Roman Catholicism teaches, as much as it was for evangelical Catholicism in the United States. CRI was founded by Walter Martin, and is continued by the Bible Answer Man of radio, Hank Hannegraf. This series of articles argued that Roman Catholicism holds to core orthodoxy and does not deny any of the major doctrines of the Christian faith.

Then the book, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals*, by Norm Geisler and Ralph MacKenzie was published (Geisler has become the primary spokesman on Roman Catholicism for the CRI). In his writings, Norm Geisler has made tremendous contributions to us. But in this curious book, he argues that though Roman Catholicism has doctrinal differences with evangelical Christianity—including a gospel condemned as heretical by the Protestant Reformers—Evangelicals and Catholics agree on many doctrines and should increas-

ingly work together in proclaiming that Jesus died for our sins and rose again.

Released in March of 1994, the accord titled, *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: the Christian Mission in the Third Millennium*, was a document spearheaded by Charles Colson and Richard Neuhaus. Neuhaus was a Lutheran minister who converted to Catholicism and is now a priest. This accord, signed by Bill Bright of Campus Crusade and Mark Knoll of Wheaton College, and many other leading evangelicals as well as leading Roman Catholic priests and bishops, states that we are brothers and sisters in Christ and that the evangelization of active adherents to our different communities has been a terribly inefficient use of the Lord’s resources. It more or less called a truce on “proselytizing.”

The book, *A House United*, also written by Fournier, a signer of *Evangelical and Catholics Together*, is a large treatment for the wider acceptance of that accord, as “a winning alliance for the 21st century.” What troubles me about this book foreworded by Pat Robertson, is that it is published by NavPress. The Navigators joined this alliance building, venturing into a five-year publishing agreement with Fournier. Our correspondence with Dr. Terry Taylor and Dr. Johnny White (leaders in the Navigator movement) is available to enquirers. They have no intention of turning back.

More recently, yet another book has been published by Word, authored by Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus: *Evangelicals and Catholics Together Toward a Common Mission*. Despite the severe criticism of the *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* accord by men like R. C. Sproul, John MacArthur, James Kennedy, and John Ankerburg, still Charles Colson says he could not be more thrilled by the response to ECT. This new book is endorsed by Bill Bright, a signer of ECT, as well as leading Roman Catholic priests.

“The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine,” wrote Paul (2 Tim. 4:3). Without doubt that time has come.

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Front Lines

YP ALERT

The saints at Brandywine Bible Chapel, Wilmington, DE, would appreciate prayer concerning a series of youth conferences to be held on the third Saturday of each month from the fall through the spring. Young people from PA, DE, NJ, NY, MD, and elsewhere are expected to attend. Beginning at 10 AM with three Bible study sessions, the afternoon will include tract distribution and other planned activities. The day will end with an evening meeting and fellowship time. Accommodations will be provided by local families for those traveling from a distance. Contact:

John/Tim Bhatt
(610) 882-0455
Internet: tcb3@lehigh.edu

SINGLED OUT

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Annual Young Singles Conference held at Seabrook Island, near Charleston, SC. Singles ages 21 to 40-something are expected to attend the weekend of May 24-27 for a fresh look at the foundation chapters of the book of Proverbs with George Cofresi (SC). Contact:

Skip or Cathy Elliott
(803) 873-7083

YOUTH CONFERENCE

The Ottawa Valley Assemblies will be holding their 2nd Annual Spring Youth Conference on May 24-25, 1996, at the Rideauview Bible Chapel (Ottawa, ON). Speaker will be James Martin (ON). Contact:

Shawn Abigail

(613) 820-9720 or E-Mail:
ad873@freenet.carleton.ca

TROUBLING TIMES

"God's Word for Troubled Times" is the theme of a special weekend planned for May 24-26, Lord willing, at Greenwood Gospel Chapel, 949 Greenwood Avenue, Toronto, ON. Brother William MacDonald is the expected speaker. For information:

Greg Edwards
(905)837-6672

A MEMORABLE WEEKEND

Meadow Ridge Bible Chapel (West Fargo, ND) has announced their 1996 Memorial Day Weekend Bible Conference to be held on May 24-27. Steve Hulshizer (PA) and Steve Price (KS) are the expected speakers. Contact:

Myron and Kathy Martinson
R.R. 2, Box 197
Moorhead, MN 56560
(218) 233-9790

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Bethel Gospel Chapel (Worcester, MA) will host its Annual Bible Conference May 25-27. Speakers expected are Billy Stevenson (IL) and Neil Dougal (MA). Contact:

James Funk
(508) 939-5349

WHAT'S UP AT GREENWOOD

Greenwood Hills Bible Conferences and Camps schedule events throughout the year. In the will of the Lord, Congress (singles 16 and older) is scheduled for June 21-29. John Gordon (NC) will bring helpful ministry from the Word of God. For more

information on this or any of the other camps and conferences scheduled for 1996 contact:

Greenwood Hills
7062 Lincoln Way East
Fayetteville, PA 17222
(717) 352-2150

SKYLAND CONFERENCE

The 40th Annual Skyland Bible Conference will be held June 29-July 5 at Covenant College (Lookout Mtn., TN). Speakers expected are Tom Taylor (PA) and James Cochrane (Dominican Republic). Nursery and children's meetings. Contact:

John or Tina Taylor, Registrars
P.O. Box 754
Jamestown, NC 27282
(910) 454-4927

SUMMER CAMPING

With summer fast approaching, Camp Li-Lo-Li (Randolph, NY) is gearing up for several great weeks of ministry. Some of this year's camps and speakers:

Family Camp June 29-July 3
(Boyd Nicholson, ON)
Pre-Teen Camp July 7-Aug 10
(Dave Stiefler, NY)
Youth Camp
(Bill Meyers, NH)

For registration, contact:
Cathie Whitcomb
c/o Camp Li-Lo-Li
8811 Sunfish Run Road
Randolph, NY 14772
(716) 945-2747

OHIO CONFERENCE

The 1996 Indian Brethren Fellowship Conference is scheduled for July 3-7 at Nazarene College,

Ohio. Speakers expected are Dr. James Naismith, Kurian Parayil, and other visiting speakers from India.

COMMENDATIONS

The Christians of Lynde Creek Bible Chapel (Whitby, ON) have commended *Miss Arlene Spry* to the work of the Lord among the deaf in Puerto Rico. Arlene will serve in an administrative role at the Evangelical School For the Deaf, as well as tutoring six MK's on the mission compound. Please remember her in your prayers.

PRESENT WITH THE LORD

Mrs. Agnes Boswell, after a long bout of suffering from Alzheimer's disease was at last given release when the Lord promoted her to glory on March 19, 1996. She had served the Lord faithfully in Portugal and then with her husband, the late J. K. Boswell in evangelism all over the world. She will be missed for her Christ-like example and faithful service to the Master. She is now "far better."

In the early morning hours of April 24, *Paul Logan* was called into the presence of the Lord he loved and served so faithfully for many years in Zambia. In the past Paul has had three operations for brain tumors and had a good measure of recovery. However in recent weeks he began failing and was waiting to go Home to be with the Lord. Please pray for Lois and the family in these days of sadness for them, but rejoicing for Paul.

On April 28, 1996, *Les Green* was also promoted to glory, hav-

ing served his Lord for many years in Zaire. Remember Peg and the family in your prayers.

SPREAD THE WORD

Over the last year Barry Kirk of J&J Ford has arranged for Spread the Word (York, PA) to attend large dealer's auctions in order to obtain cars for commended workers and missionaries. Brother Kirk is also willing to personally assist workers and missionaries in obtaining cars. Workers and missionaries who desire assistance in obtaining automobiles may call Spread the Word at (717) 767-2900 or brother Kirk at his office (304) 789-2431 or home (304) 789-6335.

Spread the Word has also established a Transportation Fund which will be used to help with added, and often unexpected expenses associated with buying a used car. Those expenses include: inspections, taxes, new tires, brakes, hoses, etc. These funds will be utilized for those commended workers obtaining cars through Spread the Word and J&J Ford. Any who care to help in this ministry may send tax-deductible gifts to Spread the Word's Transportation Fund.

Brother Kirk is also making available to Christian businessmen or assemblies, radio tapes with short devotional messages for use on radio. These messages, often taken from *Our Daily Bread* (used by permission), are approximately one-minute in length and can be customized with the sponsor's name. Mr. Kirk is willing to provide these tapes free of charge on a regular basis. Contact:
Barry Kirk

J&J Ford
P.O. Box 86
Terra Alta, WV 26764
(304) 789-2431 office
(304) 789-6335 home

PRAISE

James Comte of Barrie, ON writes:

"The Lord gave us a good week of VBS at Scottlea Gospel Chapel (St. Catharines, ON) during the March school break. The numbers were not only encouraging (average 97) but most consistent. One girl professed faith in Christ as I took up *Pilgrim's Progress* with them—please pray for her.

"The week of May 19-28, I will be using a model of the Tabernacle for a series of meetings on the subject at the Wallenstein Bible Chapel (Wallenstein, ON). Presently I am preparing messages for the Family Bible Hour radio ministry, and will be recording in May and would appreciate your prayers for this. Our summer is more than full with camp and VBS work in Ontario, New Brunswick, New Hampshire, and Maine. We value your prayers as we work with the assembly here, as well as minister in other places."

BRANCHING OUT

Several families from the Brooksville Bible Chapel (Brooksville, FL) have begun meeting as the Cornerstone Bible Chapel in Clearwater, FL. The brethren at Brooksville commend the work there with their encouragement and prayers. For information, contact:

Bill Davis
(813) 535-4430



We've Named Our Change!



It should be no surprise that the new Uplook Ministries logo includes an arrow pointing, well, up! It makes its way from the U through a field of lines, to remind us that the truth of God is to be taught "line upon line," leading us ultimately to glory.

Yes, you read it right. We've named our change! The board of Gospel Folio Press believes the new name—Uplook Ministries—more accurately describes our range of services available to the Lord's people. Gospel Folio Press will be retained as the name of the publishing arm of Uplook Ministries. Let me explain.

George Santayana in his *Life of Reason* wrote: "Progress, far from consisting in change, depends on retentiveness...Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Thankfully for the believer, the things that are really important never change, like the Word (Mt. 24:35), the Lord Jesus (Heb. 13:8), and the blessed hope of glory awaiting us (2 Cor. 4:17). And we want to remember our past at Gospel Folio.

GFP has its roots in the godly heritage and evangelical fervor of the Pell family. Mr. Pell Sr. was a wallpaper hanger and the first publications produced by his teenage sons, Bill and Peter, were hand-lettered on the paper scraps. Bill distributed these gospel tracts on his days off in nearby communities. This caught the attention of a local businessman who helped Bill acquire a handpress. Soon others were requesting quantities of the tracts and encouraged Bill to form a company to produce these.

From the little print shop nestled in a hollow near downtown Grand Rapids, this gospel beacon has continued to shine around the world. There have been millions of calendars, Sunday School supplies, books, booklets and tracts over the years since then. "Little is much when God is in it."

Since the early days, GFP has been serious about ministering to the needs of the Lord's people the world over with publications that are timely, affordable, and doctrinally sound. We trust that those who have received this publication since it was redesigned in 1991 and other materials from us can agree that our purpose and goal—biblical encouragement and Christ-honoring ministry—has not

changed from the original direction this work first took in 1925.

However, some things *have* changed. We believe the Lord has opened up opportunities in several related areas that also are being used to encourage and edify the people of God. Some of these include:

- **CHRISTIAN MAGAZINES**—*Uplook*, our monthly magazine (for some years called *Assembly Annals*) has been distributed around the globe since 1927. Intended to bring helpful information, varied ministry, and encouragement to God's people, it continues to grow in its readership, many of these readers in Third World countries. Our new *RightsideUp* quarterly youth magazine, begun this year, has had an encouraging beginning, with 1,500 readers already, and hundreds more for each printing. Comments or new subscriptions can be sent to this address for either magazine.

Because there are some who cannot afford this literature, we send it out as the Lord provides. We thank those who give sacrificially and regularly to support this part of the ministry. Some assemblies and individuals have begun sending a regular monthly gift for the ministry here, thus investing in the work of God worldwide. This is deeply appreciated and allows us to place not only these magazines but helpful books—books unavailable anywhere else—into the hands of the Lord's people.

- **BIBLE CONFERENCES**—The Uplook Conference in Lexington, KY, this past year was, we believe, used by the Lord to encourage many of His people. It's ministry continues through the ongoing distribution of audio and video tapes of the messages given there. Another similar conference is being planned, Lord willing, for the year-end of 1997. As well, specialized mini-conferences are being arranged to help improve the caliber of public ministry in assemblies across the country. For example, this June, in co-operation with Markham (ON) Bible Chapel, there is to be an intensive



study week with Dr. David Gooding, comparing Daniel and Revelation. Next June, D.V., we are planning a special study week for 50-60 serious Bible students in conjunction with the Scriptorium, one of the largest private collections of biblical artifacts in the world.

- **TAPE MINISTRY**—We are presently distributing hundreds of audio and video tapes with some of the best ministry available today, including a complete line of teaching by Dr. David Gooding and audio books by William MacDonald. The list of offerings continues to grow each month.

- **BOOK PUBLICATION**—The majority of Bible book stores today are not worth a visit if you're looking for good, dependable study books. And to find Christ-centered, dispensational, pre-tribulational books, or books teaching New Testament church truth—the types of books we need these days—they are almost non-existent.

This is the reason we committed ourselves to rebuild the ministry here at Gospel Folio Press; to make such books available again to the Lord's people. These books are not "best sellers." They are not money-makers. But they *are* the books that build solid foundations into believers and assemblies. GFP does not make its decisions on what to publish according to the bottom line. We are very grateful to those of you who understand this, and have helped us in providing this kind of material to meet present need. At any given time we have six or more excellent, life-changing manuscripts waiting for resources so that they can see the light of day. The Lord

knows, and we await His time.

- **MODULAR BIBLE LESSONS**—We were deeply concerned that many of our young people were leaving our local churches in their teen years. One factor was that they were not being taught about the New Testament church. Our S.S. curriculum is the only material on the market to do so. We invested five years to provide this unique (pre-school to adult) series now used by hundreds of assemblies. Call for samples.

- **LITERATURE DISTRIBUTION**—We also bring the best books from other publishers to you—only the best. We already distribute John Ritchie, Precious Seed, and Christian Year publications. But this year we begin the task of compiling a catalog like you've never seen! Called *All the Best* Christian Emporium, it will be an Uplook Ministries selection of choice material from scores of publishers—all available from one source. We will be selecting only those products that we find most helpful and trustworthy. But be patient. It won't be ready for a while.

These are crisis days. The needs are great; but so are the possibilities. We believe the Lord has brought together a team of workers at Uplook Ministries to help at such a time as this. We express our gratitude to those who have encouraged us with kind words. We especially thank those who go beyond words to sacrificially invest in what you believe to be a ministry seeking to build up those truths you hold to be most dear. And we do appreciate your continued prayers as we seek to make the best use of the resources the Lord places in our hands.

COMMERCIAL PRINTING SERVICES AT GOSPEL FOLIO PRESS

With the completion of the MODULAR BIBLE LESSONS, our pressroom staff have time available to help *you*. We can provide simple layout services as well as printing tracts (perhaps your personal testimony, or a custom tract for a special event), newsletters, brochures, gospel outreach announcements, missionary prayer cards, letterheads, etc. Prompt service and reasonable prices. For information, call our Commercial Printing Division manager, Scott Tucker. He'll be happy to help you with all your printing needs.



A four-color custom tract printed for distribution at a county fair.



GFP COMMERCIAL PRINTING
P. O. Box 2041, Grand Rapids, MI 49501-2041
Phone: (616) 456-5123 Fax: (616) 456-5522

What's Going On?

WHEN IN ROME...

Israeli Religious Affairs Minister Shimon Shetreet, at a meeting with John Paul II in Rome has asked for Vatican co-operation to locate the 60 kg. gold Menorah from Herod's Temple. It was brought to Rome by Titus in 70 AD and is thought to be among the treasures in the Vatican catacombs. The Pope will probably visit Israel during 1997 and could return the Menorah at that time as a gesture of goodwill to the Jewish people.—*Spotlight on Israel*

UNPLUGGING JESUS

Newsweek, in their April 8, 1996, issue reported on how Jefferson Parish (LA) officials "inadvertently" approved the installation of a five-foot-high by 21-foot-wide blue neon sign of the word JESUS for the Church of Abundant Life in Harvey, LA. Now they are fighting to unplug the \$5,000 sign, saying it exceeds the maximum size for a residential area. The church has countered by saying that it is not a sign but rather a religious symbol which the government cannot regulate.

WE WANT A PEACE PIECE!

On February 16, thousands of devout Moslems came to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem to pray in their mosque on the last Friday of Ramadan. Their Moazin (Moslem preacher) concluded his prayer through the loudspeaker by saying: "All Palestine will be Islamic from the Sea (Mediterranean) to the River (Jordan)." The battle for the Promised Land and the city of

Jerusalem is far from being over. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!

OPPORTUNITIES

Paul and Carol Beverly and family are looking forward to a new opportunity in the Yaroslavl region. The head director of 60 handicapped centers in the region has asked them to preach the gospel and distribute Bibles in each of the centers. The centers represent approximately 60,000 people that could be reached with the evangel. Paul requests prayer from the Lord's people for this large undertaking. They do not have 60,000 Bibles to give, nor do they have the room to store these Bibles—but God is able to supply the need. Pray!

SOLID GOLD

"We are a society perched on the brink of self-destruction," Billy Graham told 700 congressional, diplomatic, and religious leaders in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda May 2 as he and his wife, Ruth, received the Congressional Gold Medal. Graham said that earlier recipients of the award (like George Washington, etc.) would not recognize the society they sacrificed to establish. "We have confused liberty with license—and we are paying the awful price," he said. —NIRR

HOLDING THE FAMILY HOSTAGE

There was a near tragedy on the National Day of Prayer (May 2) at Focus on the Family (Colorado Springs, CO). A gunman entered the ministry's administration building and threatened

to blow it up. Kerry Dore, 43, who had an extensive psychiatric history, entered the lobby brandishing a handgun and took two men and two women hostage. Dore surrendered to authorities after a two-and-a-half hour standoff. No one was injured and no bomb was found. James Dobson's wife, Shirley, was the national chairperson for the National Day of Prayer.

HELPFUL OR HARMFUL?

Evangelical churches are described by the Belgium government as "ordinary sects." In a move to identify potentially dangerous religious groups, the government is investigating 100 groups. According to its definition, all evangelical churches fall under the category of sect, but are not thought to be harmful.

GREEN FIELDS

The Lord's people are encouraged to pray for gospel efforts that are scheduled to commence in June and July in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

John Bjorlie and J. B. Nicholson (MI) plan to lead a group of 10 young people in door-to-door evangelistic witnessing and gospel meetings in several communities. The group plans to depart at the beginning of June.

Pray for the Lord's blessing during the Northfield (Newcastle, Co. Down, NI) campaign. David Gooding (N.I.), John Speirs (Scotland), and Robert D. Hewitt (N.I.) will be holding meetings weekdays and nights and Sundays from July 7-21, 1996.

U

The Separated Life

In the history of Abraham, discipline through separation is graphically illustrated for us, stroke by stroke.

God called Abraham from the city of Ur in Chaldea, situated on the banks of the Euphrates. Archaeologists have recently brought to light wonderful discoveries there and have shown that it was a mighty civilization. From a luxurious life Abraham, at God's command, left all to become a nomad, "dwelling in tents."

SEPARATED FROM KIN & COUNTRY

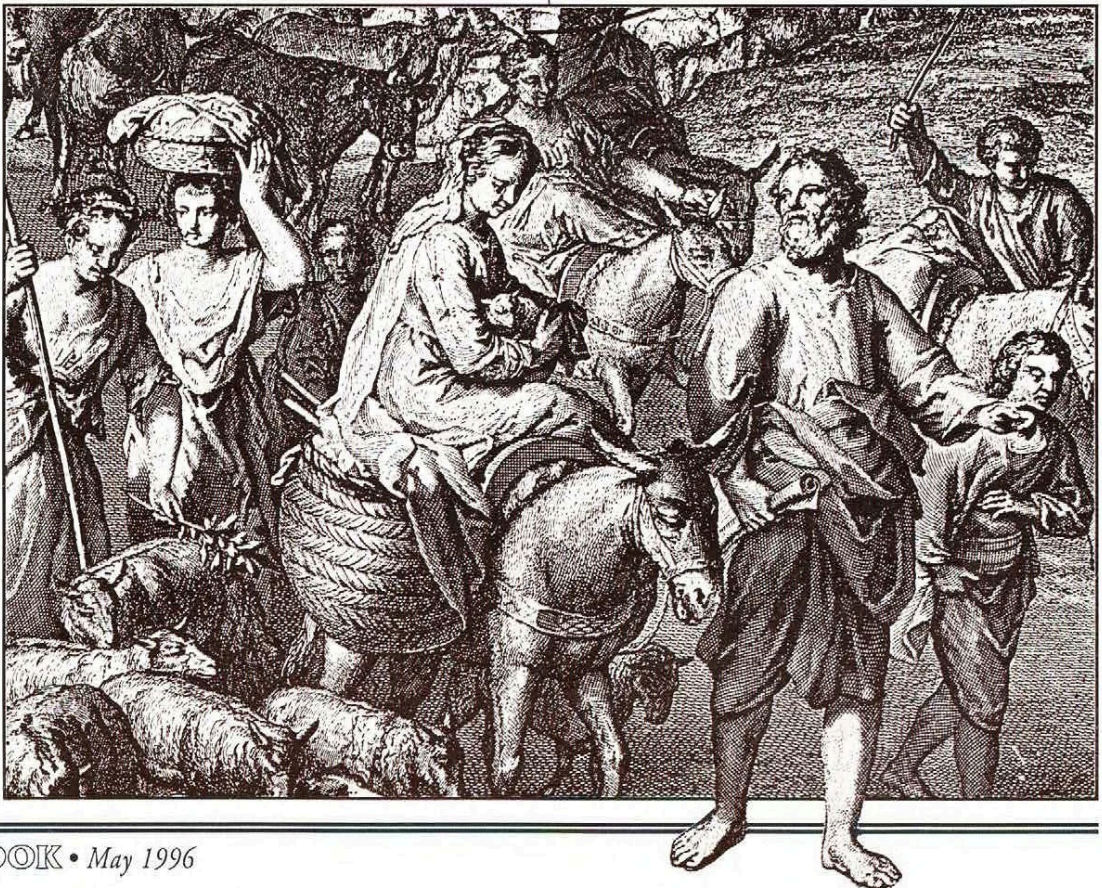
The call is described in Acts 7:2-3. "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee."

In Hebrews 11:8, we read the response of faith: "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he

went out, not knowing whither he went."

In the call of Abraham we learn of the God-planned life. The life of a Christian begins with the call of God. We are called to real sacrifice even if it involves separation from all that is dear. No doubt, if Abraham had not obeyed the voice of God and left the city of his birth, he would have been like the other unknown dead of Ur. Yet the "friend of God" lives in honor on the pages of history because of his separation, and God speaks of Himself as the God of Abraham, the God of the faithful. Such is the path for the child of God; a path of faith and eternal relationship.

Though Abraham left his city, he did not completely obey, because he did not leave his kindred nor his father's house. At first he did not fully obey; his father Terah and his nephew Lot went with him. It is always difficult to break the ties of nature. So, in the days



Abram leads his family from Haran, by Gerard Hoet

of our Lord, as He spoke to one, "Follow thou Me," the answer was, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father."

With Terah Abraham lived for some years outside the land to which God had called him. Death finally dissolved the union and Abraham again rose in the energy of faith to pursue his course. Often the follower of Christ is impeded by natural bonds and must learn God's will through self-mortification, which is discipline. In war, men are called on to renounce the usual routine of life for a life of rigor, sacrifice, separation, and even to face death for the cause of liberty. The Christian who will live devotedly for God and the cause of Christ must also tread the path of self-denial and separation from the world. This will bring the sneer of the ungodly, but the smile of the Saviour. It will mean discipline to the soul, but will yield rich fellowship with Christ.

SEPARATION FROM EGYPT

Abraham, tested through famine, made a sad departure from the God-appointed path. He acted without consulting God and went down into Egypt. There he became seriously involved in the griefs of his own weaving; he was censured by an idolatrous king and sent out of the country. He had to return to the place of the altar and the tent. So the Christian life is at a standstill when one is out of the will of God. The road to Egypt leads to conformity to the world and the collapse of faith. Yet the way back is always there, allowing us to move forward into freedom.

SEPARATION FROM LOT

In this parting with Lot, Abraham learned further how the path of faith is the path of separation. His nephew, gratifying his ambition, chose the well-watered plains, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. Lot walked the path of sight. Abraham walked by faith and separation unto God. He was rewarded not with temporal position, but with the blessing of the Lord.

SEPARATION FROM ISHMAEL

Abraham was further disciplined in the putting away or separation from Ishmael. When Abraham

was in Egypt he met Hagar, and she proved to be a thorn in his side for many years.

In Genesis 15, God promised Abraham a son. The promise not being fulfilled immediately, he sought to bring it about through Hagar. Such a course resulted in contention, strife, and sorrow to this day. Abraham even prayed to God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before Thee." Yet, because he was not the promised seed, the patriarch must banish him. Why? The purpose of God did not lie in Ishmael, but in Isaac, the promised seed.

The day Isaac was weaned, Ishmael the son of Hagar mocked. He is seen as the opposer of the heir and son and as such he must be cast out. This was a great sorrow to Abraham and "grievous in his sight." It was hard for Abraham to part with Ishmael. Isaac was to have the promises, and the affections of Abraham must change from Ishmael to Isaac. How slow we are to give Christ His place, and to be able to say, "Not I, but Christ." It is only as the Christian learns to enthrone Christ as Lord of his life that the Holy Spirit will perform His work in us.

THE OFFERING OF ISAAC

The path of discipline is again taken by Abraham in his separation from Isaac on the altar of Mount Moriah. This was Abraham's final and greatest test. He had given up Ishmael; now God demands his only-begotten son, Isaac. Abraham was bidden to slay him, offering up the child of promise. He did not fail, nor stagger through unbelief, but was fully confident in the faithfulness of God, "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

When one is confident that God is almighty as well as faithful, one can obey any word of His without fear. What faith! What denial! What discipline of speech, of hopes, of plans is exemplified in the illustrious life of Abraham as he walked the path of faith and separation! Truly Abraham is the great pattern of faith, and, being disciplined through separation from his country, his father, his nephew, Ishmael and Isaac, he passed with honors in the school of God.

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*When one is
confident that
God is almighty
as well as
faithful,
one can obey
any word of
His without
fear.*

The Friend of God

*Friendship
has both its
privileges
and its
duties.*

To Abraham there came a divine call to leave his country for the land that would be shown him.

Why could he not have done God's work just as well at home? The answer to that takes us into the heart of God's method for the education of the world. God teaches His deepest lessons to men by election. Of course, what is meant is not election to special and unshared privilege, but selection for work, for service.

In the same way, God prepares and develops nations for His purposes. He takes Israel and isolates it; then He causes it to reject surrounding idolatries; then He deepens its hold on Him; and so He fits it for the supreme vocation of teaching and revealing His message to the world. This is the true election. The soldier is elected, not to wear a special uniform but to serve his country. The scholar is elected, not to monopolize his learning but to break its bread to others. So it was with Abraham. It was not God's purpose to be Abraham's private God but that through him all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

One thing was indispensable: the separation of the elected people. Here, precisely, the significance of Abraham's call appears. In it, God isolates Israel for His higher purposes. He summons the people to come to school with Him. So, further, the bondage in Egypt

was God's cementing of the nation into one; for nothing unites like a common experience of trial. And the wandering in the wilderness was God's leading of the nation to lean only on Him; for in a wilderness there is neither art nor culture to divert the homage men must render to Jehovah. The divine education of Israel began with Abraham's call: "Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee."

At the capture of a famous city, the heights were scaled first by one courageous man. Then, reaching down his bayonet, he pulled up a comrade; and he, in turn, pulled up the next, until the whole battalion stood on the crest, and the city was triumphantly won.

So Abraham pioneered the soldiery of Faith. Long before Muller, Carey, Luther, Paul, the son of Terah—father of the faithful—leads the van. What is this faith, of whose peerage Abraham stands as head? It is deliberate preference of the Unseen, an utter loyalty to the will of God. The farmer sows his seed, trusting in a harvest as yet unseen. We step into a plane, trusting in pilots and mechanics by us unseen. Our entire life pivots on faith. Why not lift that faith to its highest object—God? So many so-called "securities" turn out insecure, so many planes are wrecked, so many people whom we consider incorruptible snap like brittle reeds. God is the one Trustee who cannot fail. Though He bid you jump through a stone wall, you must obey. The jumping is your part, but the getting you through is God's part.

*O heart that shrinketh back appalled,
So fearful Duty's way and steep,
Know that whoe'er God's voice hath called,
His hand will keep.*

"I know *whom* I have believed," writes Paul from Nero's dungeon, his worn fingers trembling, and a tear falling on the page, "and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him



against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12).

The Old Testament is sometimes spoken of as though it manifested God's severity and sternness unrelieved. But a deep current of divine gentleness flows through it too. That appears early in one of the familiar designations of Abraham—"The Friend of God." What a tender word is friend! Acquaintance? No; you only recognise him on the street. Companion? No; you only eat bread with him. That is what the word "companion" literally means. But friend! That involves such a union of souls that Aristotle's definition of friendship becomes literally true: "One soul inhabiting two bodies." No discords or misunderstandings; but hearts, affections, sympathies all throbbing as one! What a gift of God is such a friend! Nobody has rightly reckoned up his riches till he has counted in such friends. "What is the secret of your life?" asked Mrs. Browning of Charles Kingsley: "Tell me, that I may make mine beautiful too." Kingsley simply said: "I had a friend."

Friendship has its duties also. "Your sincere friend," said Wordsworth in a letter to Sir Walter Scott, "for such I sign myself, though slow to use a word of such solemn meaning to anyone." One harsh word from a friend may give greater pain than a torrent of abuse from an enemy. And so God, through His very love towards us, is wounded by our sins. For the sake of the friendship we claim with God, let us cast away our sins. *Noblesse Oblige!*

A general appealed to his men in vain. They defied his order to advance. They faced round to retreat. The road lay between huge rocks on one side and a roaring river on the other; the footway was only broad enough for a single soldier to pass at once. The general lay down, himself, across the path, crying to his men: "If you will retreat, you shall cross my body, trampling me to death." Not a foot would stir. They could not do it towards one who had heartened them so long.

Jesus Christ lays Himself before us on the narrow way and cries: "If by one sin, you will be disloyal to the divine Friendship, you must trample over Me!" Although it is written in a very different context, could not the following verse stand as a sentinel to warn us of the danger of disregarding such a friendship as our Lord's? "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God?"

U

JEHOVAH-JIREH

*The God of Abraham praise,
Who reigns enthroned above:
Ancient of everlasting days
And God of love.
Jehovah, great I AM,
By earth and heaven confessed,
I bow and bless the sacred Name,
Forever blessed.*

*The God of Abraham praise
At whose supreme command
From earth I rise to seek my joys
At His right hand.
He calls me to forsake
Earth's wisdom, fame and power,
And Him my only portion make,
My shield and tower.*

*The God of Abraham praise,
Whose all-sufficient grace
Shall guide me all my pilgrim days,
In all my ways,
He calls a worm His friend,
He calls Himself my God,
And He shall save me to the end,
Through Jesus' blood.*

*He by Himself hath sworn,
I on His oath depend,
I shall, on eagle wings upborne,
To heaven ascend:
I shall behold His face,
I shall His power adore,
And sing the wonders of His grace
For evermore. —T. O.*



Friends

An old cowhand explained his idea of proving his friendship with the Lord in these words: "Now I'm working for Jim here. Jim and I enjoy sittin' and talkin' by the fire in the evening. Sometimes we just sit, thinkin' and lookin' at the fire. Sometimes I sing a song or two fer him. And I'm always glad to tell others what a good fellow Jim is. But it wouldn't suit Jim if that's all I did. When I buckle on my chaps and head out among the hills, an' see that Jim's herd is alright, not sufferin' from lack of water or feed, or gettin' off range, then I'm showin' my appreciation for Jim and servin' him as he wants to be served."

Say, is your lamp burning, my brother?
I pray you look quickly and see;
For if it were burning, then surely
Some beams would fall brightly on me.

There are many and many around you
Who follow wherever you go;
If you thought that they walked in the shadow
Your lamp would burn brighter, I know.

Upon the dark mountains they stumble,
They are bruised on the rocks, and they lie
With their white pleading faces turned upward
To the clouds and the pitiful sky.

There is many a lamp that is lighted,
We behold them both near and afar,
But not many among them, my brother,
Shine steadily on, like a star.

I think, were they trimmed night and morning,
They would never burn down or go out,
Though from the four corners of heaven
The winds were all blowing about.

If once all the lamps that were lighted
Should steadily blaze in a line,
Wide over the land and the ocean,
What a girdle of glory would shine!

A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.
Proverbs 18:24

You shall judge a man by his foes as well as by his friends.
—Joseph Conrad in Lord Jim

He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.
Proverbs 17:9

You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.
—Dale Carnegie

The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne
And worship only Thee.
—William Cowper

The funeral directors of many a friendship are envy and jealousy. Never be jealous of someone for knowing more than you do: it's not his fault. Never be envious of someone else's possessions: all we have is going up in the flames together.

A friendship that costs you nothing is worth that much.

And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends.
Job 42:10

I went out to find a friend,
But could not find one there;
I went out to be a friend,
And friends were everywhere.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.
John 15:13-15

Victory and Defeat



In Genesis 14 we trace the blessedness of the path of faith in answer to the call of God, and how our steps can slip unless held by the power of the Lord. In Chapter 13, we see the renunciation of the world by the believer who treads the path of faith; and, in contrast, the sorrowful choice of the world by the believer who allows himself to be governed by sight.

Chapter 14 presents the conflicts of the world—nations warring against nations—during which the believer, who has refused the world, obtains the victory; while the believer, who walks by sight, falls under its power.

Further we learn that the world's conflicts will finally issue through the judgments of God in the deliverance of God's people and the establishment of the reign of Christ as Priest and King. This is typically set forth in Melchizedek, king of Salem.

CONFLICT (vv. 1-11)

The chapter opens with a solemn picture of this present evil world. It is a scene in which the nations form themselves into groups, and enter into alliances to carry out their schemes of aggrandizement, and to defend themselves from attack.

Moreover, it is a lawless world where men are forced to serve governments against their will, or rebel against governments to obtain their liberty (v. 4).

Thus the whole world, whether in high places or in its lower spheres—the mount or

the wilderness (v. 6)—becomes a scene of warring interests and selfish conflicts.

CAPTURE (v. 12)

The account of these world conflicts leads to what is so deeply instructive—the contrast between the believer who is governed by sight, and the one who walks by faith. In the course of these conflicts, Lot, the man of sight, falls a captive to the world; Abraham, the man of faith, is victorious over the world.

Thus we read that the victorious kings “took Lot, Abram’s brother’s son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.” It is significant to notice that Lot, of whom we read in a former chapter that he chose all the plain of Jordan, and “pitched his tent toward Sodom” (13:12), has now taken a further step on his downward course; for here we read he “dwells in Sodom.”

We may be sure that it was never Lot’s intention to dwell in Sodom, when he pitched his tent toward Sodom. But one false step leads to another. Drawing near to the world, he is soon in the world; and dwelling in the world, he becomes involved in its conflicts and falls a captive to its power.

It is still true that the believer who settles down in the world has no power against the world. Where there is not the faith that keeps the coming of glory in view, there is not the faith to overcome the present evil world. This is the case of Lot. He never overcame, but was constantly overcome by one evil influence after another. He accepted the outside path under the leading of Abraham rather than in faith in God. When the test comes, he falls under the influence of fair prospects that appeal to the sight of the eyes.

Having drawn near to the world, he falls still further under its influence and settles down in Sodom. Finally, dwelling in Sodom, he finds in the day of conflict that he is a lonely man, without strength, without friends to help, and unable to count on the support of God. Powerless in the day of battle, he falls a



The difference between Abraham's friendship with God and Lot's being daily vexed with the ungodly seems to be a small but crucial decision.

captive to his enemies and all he has is taken by them.

CONTRAST (vv. 13-16)

In contrast to Lot, who chose the world, and becomes its captive, there is presented before us the man who renounced the world and is victorious over it. Lot, as we have seen, is unprepared in the day of battle; Abraham, dwelling as one apart, is ready for conflict. He has in his household those who have already been trained for conflict, and he is ready to fight the good fight—not, indeed, like the world for personal aggrandizement, or to obtain the riches of this world, but to rescue a brother who has fallen under its power.

The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, and we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. Nonetheless the Christian conflict is very real. We contend for the truth, and seek to deliver those who are in danger of falling into the world or have already been taken captive in it.

Paul, living in the light of another world, and glorying in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world was crucified to Paul and he to it, escapes the snare of those who would be rich whereby they pierce themselves through with many sorrows. He fights the good fight. He has great conflict for those who were in danger of falling under the power of the world (Col. 2:1).

Likewise Jude, in the spirit of Abraham, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh, is ready earnestly to contend for the faith, can have compassion on those believers who have been taken captive by the world and seek to pull them out of the fire (Jude 3, 22, 23).

COMPENSATION (vv. 17-24)

Moreover, Abraham is not only victorious over the hostility of the world, but he is proof against its honors and its gifts. We may rise above the world's enmity, and yet fall beneath its kindness. And we are never more in danger of a fall than in the moment of a victory. This the enemy knows full well and comes with his temptations at a moment when we may be off guard. Thus with Abraham, "the king of Sodom went out to meet Abram after his return" from his triumph over the opposing kings.

But if the king of Sodom comes to tempt Abraham, the king of Salem is there to support him.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews the Holy Spirit has given us the spiritual significance of this fine scene. There Melchizedek is introduced as a type to set forth the glories of Christ. His name, and that of his country, signify that he was King of Righteousness and King of Peace. Moreover, he was "the priest of the Most High God" (Heb. 7:1-3). As a king he brings righteousness and peace to his subjects; as a priest he leads the praises of his people to God. As the representative of God before man, Melchizedek blessed Abraham on behalf of God; as the representative of man before God, he blessed the Most High God on behalf of Abraham.

Thus, in the coming Millennial days, God will be known as the Most High, who will deliver His earthly people from their enemies and deal in judgment with every hostile power. Then, indeed,

Christ will shine forth as King and Priest. So we are told by direct prophecy, "He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne: and He shall be a priest upon His throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Zech. 6:13). He will be the true King of Righteousness, King of peace, and the Priest of the Most High God.

Melchisedek, having brought forth bread and wine, the needs of Abraham are met and his joy secured, and thus he can dispense with the gifts of this world. Abraham has lifted up his hands unto the Lord, the Most High God, the one who possesses all the fullness of heaven and earth. Blessed by God, he will take nothing from the world lest it should say, "I have made Abram rich."

Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and enriched with the unsearchable riches of Christ, the believer can rise above the seductions of this world, refuse its gifts and honors, and pursue in peace the life of faith in the path of separation. And faith treads this path in the light of the world to come. Faith knows that all the conflicts of this world will come to their end in the glorious reign of Christ, when His poor, failing people will be delivered from all their enemies and righteousness and peace will be established, as we read, "He shall judge thy people with righteousness and thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people."

U



George West Frazer

Though the exhilaration of his conversion experience had disappeared, the words on the pages of Scripture had not. That morning Frazer discovered that his assurance of God's salvation did not depend on his fickle emotions, but rather on the sure word of God.

Come! hear the gospel sound—
"Yet there is room!"

This contagious gospel song tied into the conversion of an Irishman named George West Frazer (1839-1896). He put his own conversion experience to poetry,

God's house is filling fast—

"Yet there is room!"

Some soul will be the last—

"Yet there is room!"

Yes, soon Salvation's day

From you will pass away,

Then grace no more will say—

"Yet there is room!"

We are indebted to Frazer. Once we know the truth in our minds, we are compelled to rejoice over it in our hearts, and George West Frazer helps us do that.

George's father hailed from the Lovat-Frazer family, of Inverness, in northern Scotland. He was a police inspector in the Royal Irish Constabulary. George was born at Bally, near Sligo, in the west of Ireland, the third of ten children. Though George had been shaken by the death of his younger brother, at the age of 20 he was nonchalant about his own soul's eternal destiny. But his older brother, William, himself recently converted, was eager to see his brother saved.

The great event occurred in October, 1859. The evangelist H. Grattan Guinness was holding crowded gospel meetings in Dublin in "The Rotunda." Guinness, then himself only 24, was witnessing a powerful awakening in the city. William had coerced his reluctant brother to come hear Guinness. Actually, George had just purchased a new reading lamp, and wanted to spend the evening with some book other than the Bible.

At the hall they found its entrances crammed with people. Instead of using this as an excuse to return home, George was challenged by this bulging crowd. No room? George took this as a dare. Leaving his lamp with his brother, he shimmied up a rain pipe

to grasp the ledge of an upper window. There he sat with legs dangling inside the room. Thankfully, this Eutycus did not fall asleep or fall off.

Below him a throng of intense expressions all faced Guinness. More striking was the Bible verse that Guinness spoke from. The preacher's voice floated to the open window as he set to work on his verse, "Yet there is room" (Lk. 14:22). After hearing so much about God's salvation from sin and the judgment to come, George was deeply troubled about his condition before the Almighty.

It was a considerably humbler young man who climbed down that rain pipe than the one who climbed up.

Determined not to rest until he had found the Saviour for himself, fourteen agonizing days followed for Frazer. Each night he knelt at his bedside, but no relief came. He so panicked, realizing he had sought salvation but could not find it, that he was about to quit seeking and instead plunge himself into the world. But that idea made him tremble even more. Ultimately he must meet God. "If I must perish," he cried, "I am resolved to perish at His feet." And so saying, he abandoned himself to the Saviour's mercy.

Once he yielded in this way, the words came to him as if by an audible voice, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "That's just what I want; I'm a sinner, and Christ Jesus came to save such." A calm came over his soul immediately, the joy and peace of believing.

A friend wrote, "After lying awake, praising God for hours, he fell into the first sweet, refreshing sleep he had had since that memorable night. Rising early the next morning to tell his brother the good news, the thought struck him, 'What shall I tell him?' For a moment, the peace and joy of the night before vanished. Then he remembered, 'It was that blessed verse, 1 Timothy 1:15, that gave me peace last night,' and it was just the same

though his feelings had changed." Those words that brought him peace had not disappeared, and George perceived that the assurance of God's salvation did not depend on his fickle emotions.

Frazer confessed Christ to his family and afterwards to a wider circle of friends. The blessing that resulted stands as a testimony that God honors those who honor Him. His example incites devotion to the Lord. How vital to confess our Saviour in our immediate circle, beginning at home.

"From that time," his sister wrote, "his one endeavor was that others should be brought to the Lord. He was much blessed in our family circle. In many places around Dublin he, with another earnest Christian, had gospel meetings, and many were brought to the Lord." Another related how "he labored diligently in the Lord's service, preaching the gospel acceptably, and ministering to the Lord's people out of the Word."

He worked as a clerk in Close's Bank in Dublin. There his Christian demeanor earned the respect and enduring friendship of his employer, brother Farnham Close. Through this friendship, he was introduced to scriptural assemblies of saints, and thereafter discontinued his membership in the Church of Ireland. This move was not easy. The Frazers were high church people and nine of his cousins were clergyman, but whatever prestige he had once experienced in the state church now seemed minuscule compared to the preciousness of meeting around Christ alone. The value he put on the meetings of that despised band of Christians in Dublin is evident in his poetry.

*On that same night, Lord Jesus,
When all around Thee joined
To cast its darkest shadow
Across Thy holy mind,
We hear Thy voice, blest Saviour,
"This do, remember Me!"
With joyful hearts responding,
We do remember Thee.*

David Beattie said that this Dublin assembly "for a time lay dormant; and while there would doubtless be those away from the public gaze, who chose to carry out God's will in humble obscurity, still it was not till the early sixties that the mists of uncertainty were dispelled by the penetrating beams of the gospel light, bringing in its train a joyful return to the carrying out of New Testament teaching."

The restoration of the lampstand in Dublin is traced to "the great revival." As in Ulster, there was a spiritual visitation in and around Dublin. Multitudes "in the bondage of sin, were brought into the conscious enjoyment of the peace of God, while many of His own people were awakened to a fuller knowledge of their blessings in the Risen Christ."

A habitual fellowship with his God marked George's years in Dublin. His days were exhausting, but happy. After office hours, he visited from house to house and was also seen at a busy street corner giving open-air discourses. His passion to reach the lost did not lessen and eventually he left his position in the bank to give his time more fully to the Word of God and prayer. And if his hymns are any indicator, we believe that George knew how to pray.

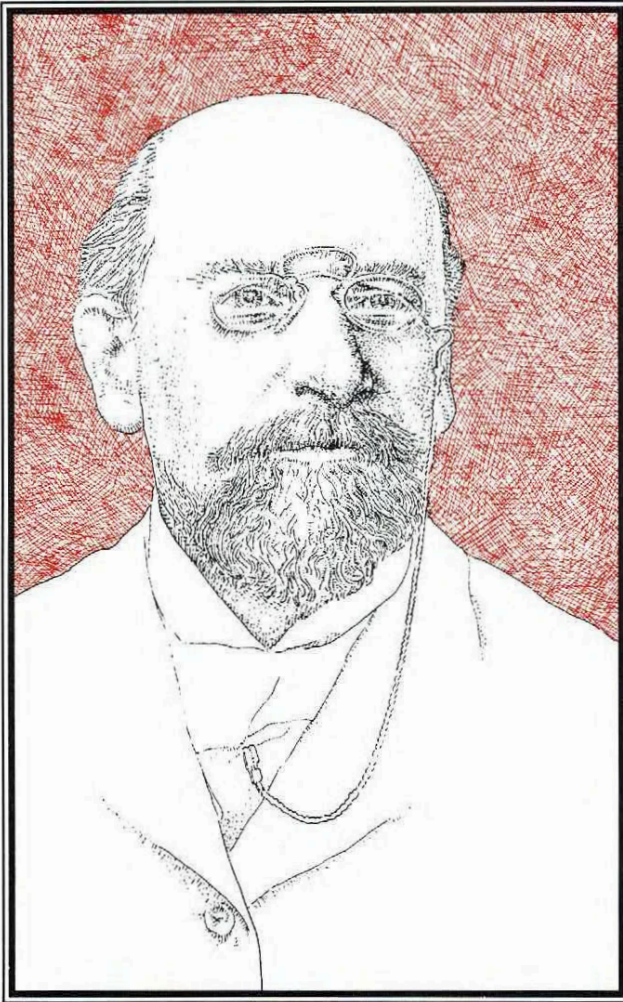
*The throne of grace surrounding,
In Jesu's peerless Name,
Supply for need abounding
With confidence we claim!*

One vital concern for prayer was a life companion. But he had a legitimate concern. Such was his zeal for God that he feared that the lovely girl he was engaged to would distract him from devotion to Christ. During this time of engagement, he penned these lines,

*Have I an object, Lord, below,
Which would divide my heart with Thee,
Which would divert its even flow
In answer to Thy constancy?
Oh! teach me quickly to return,
And cause my heart afresh to burn.*

*Down to the depths of woe
Christ came to set me free:
He bared His breast,
Received the blow,
Which justice aimed at me!*

*Here again, in this poem by
Frazer, he shows himself as
a daring man whose mission
is to rescue the thrilling
doctrines of the gospel from
the captivity of sterile,
mildewed minds. He has
taken those same truths
which were mumbled in the
liturgies of Christendom
and presented them back to
us with the sparkle and
energy that they
deserve.*



*Be Thou the object bright and fair
To fill and satisfy the heart;
My hope to meet Thee in the air,
And nevermore from Thee to part:
That I may undistracted be
To follow, serve, and wait for Thee.*

Happily, he discovered that he that finds a wife finds good, and obtains favor from the Lord. His helpmeet in life only encouraged him to love Christ all the more.

The Frazers' early ministry centered around Dublin, then they moved to England, where he expended his time strengthening assemblies. He settled at Cheltenham, in Gloucestershire, next door to C. H. McIntosh, the editor of *Things New and Old*. The two neighbors enjoyed close fellowship. C. H. M. called Frazer his "son by adoption." E. E. Cornwall knew Frazer in those days, and marvelled at "his freshness of spirit and evident enjoyment of that whereof he spake. He delighted in the company of saints, and gave himself to their service: the meet-

ing-room was to him a hallowed place."

At the age of 56, he became critically ill and the doctors suggested he undergo surgery. The operation was not successful and he died on January 24, 1896. Consistent with his life, his end was a triumph. His sister gave Christopher Knapp the account of his final hours. "On his deathbed he ceased not to proclaim Christ to all who came near him. I heard a nurse say to him, 'You would make me wish to die and go to heaven with you.' He called his wife and me to his bedside and said, 'I feel grieved to leave my work for the Lord, and you, and Tillie, and all I love; but it is infinitely more to me to be with Christ.' His deathbed was a scene of rejoicing. To those around him, the doctors and nurses, he said, 'What matters it about my sufferings if it is the means of bringing me to my Saviour?'"

His body awaits the resurrection in Cheltenham cemetery near to C. H. MacIntosh's burial plot. The epitaph on his tombstone is from his pen:

*His spirit now has winged its way
To those bright realms of cloudless day:
Then, mourner, cease to weep;
Far better is it thus to be,
From self, the world, and Satan free,
By Jesus put to sleep.*

Frazer's hymns, such as 'Twas On That Night of Deepest Woe, and What Rich Eternal Bursts of Praise, rank among the finest. His hymns were published in three volumes—*Midnight Praises*, *Day-Dawn Praises*, and *The Day-Spring*. Many of these treasures are still in use.

Those close to him, said Frazer's character was "lovely and pleasant." George showed us that the doctrines of Scripture are most beautifully expressed in soul-thrilling song. For him doctrine did not remain long in the realm of theory. Devotion to the Lord and obedience to His Word were the hallmarks of our brother's ministry. Christopher Knapp summarized his thirty-five years of pilgrimage as "redolent with the savor of Christ."

MATERIALS FOR THIS ARTICLE HAVE BEEN TAKEN FROM:

Christopher Knapp, *Who Wrote Our Hymns*, Loizeaux Bros.
Jack Strahan, *Hymns & Their Writers*, Gospel Tract Publ.
David J. Beattie, *The Brethren, the Story of a Great Recovery*,
John Ritchie Ltd.

The Intercessor

Who was the man who had influence with Sodom? Certainly not Lot, the man in Sodom. He had not influenced 10 men for God there. No, it was the man under the oak at Mamre.

Three times over in the Bible, and each in an entirely different context, Abraham is called "the friend of God" (2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; Jas. 2:23). In 2 Chronicles 20:7, King Jehoshaphat prayed to the Lord in a time of national crisis and referred to Abraham as God's "friend forever": while James, at the close of his argument about faith and works, refers to Abraham as "the friend of God" (2:23). First of all, however, it is to be noted that in Isaiah 41:8 the Lord Himself calls Abraham "My friend."

Chapters 17 and 18 of Genesis, perhaps as no other passages, reveal the familiarity and intimacy that Abraham had with the Lord, but Abraham's portion should be, in far greater measure, the portion of every believer today. The friendship of God is offered to us in the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 15:15).

Regarding our specific study and consideration of Genesis 18:16-33, let us observe first God's purpose in visiting Abraham.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD (18:16-22)

In verse 16, either the two angels (as in v. 22), or the Lord and the two angels, "looked toward Sodom." A guilty people may well tremble when God fixes His gaze on them. He waits a long while before He unleashes His judgment (e.g., Gen. 15:13-16; 2 Chron. 36:16;

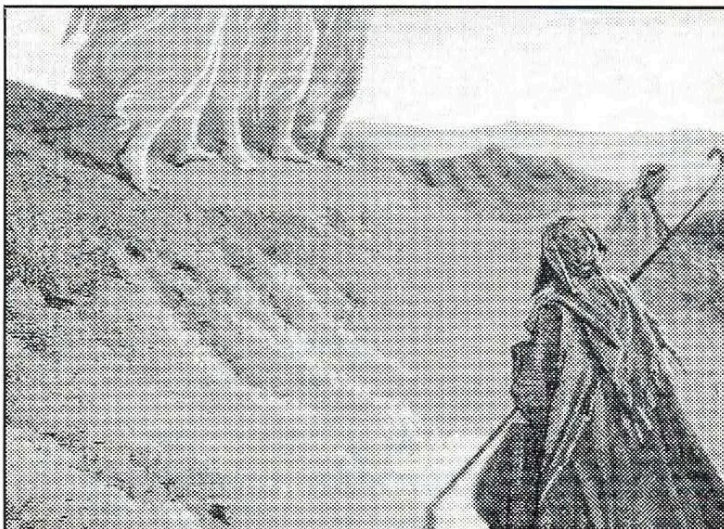
2 Pet. 3:9; Rev. 16:19), but eventually it comes. It is noteworthy that Abraham accompanied his guests on their way in order to direct them to Sodom, and this act of courtesy opened to him a marvelous opportunity of intercession.

It is a revelation of condescending grace that the Lord desires, as evidenced in 18:17, to share His purposes and secrets with the godly (cf. Ps. 25:14; 103:7). How much do we really know of such intimate and enriching fellowship with Him?

Of Abraham's experience at this time, W. Graham Scroggie has concisely yet instructively stated, "God takes certain men and women into His deep counsels, and reveals to them His purposes, and in this way history is set forward. That is the meaning of Hebrews 11. One God-fearing man is made the means of universal blessing; but that man reaches the world through his family and that nation of which he was the origin."

In 18:18 we have the reason for the Lord's condescending grace, and just as Abraham was caught up in the purpose of redemption, so also have all true believers (see Rom. 8:28-30). God's purpose in making Himself known to Abraham was that He might bring into being a family that would give witness to Him, enabling Him to fulfill His promises (18:19). Today, this purpose and witness are being carried on through the Church the Body of Christ, until such time as the witness of the Church on the earth is completed at the rapture and God once again starts His time clock with respect to Israel.

There is one important detail in 18:19 which has both pertinent and practical significance today, and this is represented by the words, "command his children." Parents have a definite responsibility to train their children in the ways of the Lord and to evangelize each generation (cf. Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4). Part of this training includes the responsibility of believing parents to bring their children regularly to the local church, thereby



making the place of worship and testimony an integral part of their family life.

No doubt the Lord addressed the angels in 18:17 and 20, but Abraham was permitted to hear what was spoken and was thus taken into the Lord's confidence. Using common human terms, the Lord's action in 18:21 is similar to that of 11:7. Here, the two angels appeared as men, though sometimes angels appear as horses and chariots of fire (cf. 2 Ki. 2:11; 6:17; Ps. 68:17). God went down to Sodom in these two angels as His representatives (Mt. 13:41).

Please note that while there is most certainly a time and place for corporate prayer, Abraham waited until he was alone with God before he began his intercession (cf. 18:22 with Mt. 6:6).

THE PRAYER OF ABRAHAM (18:22-33)

This is the first great prayer in the Bible, and it is noteworthy that it is intercessory. Observe two main things about it. First, note its basis.

The Consciousness of God (18:22): The words "drew near" remind us of James 4:8a, "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you" (see Eph. 2:13; Rom. 5:10). To pray aright one must believe that God is, even as one must come to God in faith (Heb. 11:6).

The Covenant of God (18:17-19): Abraham had been taken into God's confidence and fellowship regarding His worldwide redemptive purpose.

The second main thing to observe about Abraham's prayer is its characteristics.

It Was Reverent: Believers today should show the same spirit of reverence reflected throughout this intercessory prayer, even though it is true that we have a far greater boldness of approach and access in the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 4:16; 10:19ff).

It Was Earnest: There is no mistaking the earnestness with which Abraham prayed (notice the occurrences of "oh" in vv. 30 and 32).

It Was Discriminatory (18:24-25): Abraham discriminated between the righteous and the wicked, and he was concerned for both. Of course, he was thinking primarily of his nephew Lot (19:29), and his prayer indicates that he understood what constituted righteousness in God's sight. Lot manifested almost no practical righteousness at all, yet he was—like Abraham—justified by faith (2 Pet. 2:7).

That God distinguishes between the righteous and the wicked is clearly set forth in His Word (e.g.,



Prov. 17:15; Mt. 25:46).

It Was in Accord with God's Character (18:25; see Jn. 14:13; 1 Jn. 5:14-15; Jude 20). Abraham's knowledge of God's character was used as basis for action, not inaction. He did not take a fatalistic attitude about things as some are prone to do (see Jas. 4:3).

It Was Definite (18:28-32). It may be that much of our praying is so general as to be pointless, at the same time lacking earnestness and fervency. General praying will never be rewarded by particular answers, and at that, Abraham himself could have been more definite than he was.

It Was Persevering: Six times over Abraham asked that Sodom might be spared, and each time God gave him the exact answer to his petition.

It Was Humble (18:27): Abraham never lost sight of the One to whom he was praying. One of the great lessons of this passage is that the wicked owe far more to the presence and prayers of the righteous than they would be willing to admit. This is indicated elsewhere in God's Word (e.g., Acts 27). Had there been ten believers in Sodom, the Lord would have spared the city. A further noteworthy lesson is that Abraham stopped praying of his own accord; he was not told to stop. In other words, Abraham ceased praying before God stopped promising. Perhaps he could have gone on petitioning, requesting that the city might be spared for just one soul, but he did not take this liberty, no doubt assuming that there would be at least ten believers in Sodom between Lot and the members of his family.

In these "last days" of this present age of grace, with the world hurtling headlong toward God's sure judgment, let us press on to realize more and more of our Lord's purposes through a diligent study of His Word, remembering that one of the chief ways of getting to know both His purposes and Person more fully is by prayer. Abraham's example is a good one for us today. May we be encouraged by it to frequently "draw near" to our Saviour-God, even this very moment.

Faith Believes God

It is hardly possible to overestimate the importance of understanding God's dealings with Abraham. He is mentioned more than 70 times in the New Testament, often being presented to us as a prototype of faith in God.

The progenitor of both the Israelites and the Ishmaelites emerges from the shadows of ancient history as the friend of God. Called from his native country, he established the principle that man's relationship to God was through faith and consequent obedience. The scene at Mount Moriah with Isaac on the altar is read frequently as an isolated incident with the result that we fail to see Abraham's career in its proper perspective—with success and failure duly blended. A biographical sketch should present the great moments of his earthly pilgrimage, whether on the heights or in the valleys, so that a true portrait looks down on us through the centuries.

The Third Dynasty of Ur came to an end in 2006 BC and Babylon rose to power, notably under Hammurabi, 1792-1750 BC. The call to Abraham to leave his city coincided with the passing of its power. The *first promise* to him (Gen. 12:1-2) gave assurance that he would be made a great nation and have a great name, that he should be a blessing and in him all the families of the earth should be blessed as well. In response, Terah took Abram and Lot, travelling northward along the fringe of the Fertile Crescent to Haran, six hundred miles distant. Here Terah died and Abram moved south into the land of Canaan when the Lord appeared to him and made the *second promise* (Gen. 12:7): "Unto thy seed will I give this land." Abram then built an altar to worship the Lord, the covenant-making God, who had given him the promises. As he called on His name, he proclaimed publicly his attachment to the One who had brought him there.

After these acts of faith came failure, however. Famine in Canaan prompted the journey to Egypt where Abraham stated that Sarah was his sister; half-sister, half-truth, a misrepresentation of the true position that she was his wife. Despite this, both were brought from Egypt back to Canaan to the place where an altar had been built before. At this point notice that Abraham did not imperil the

fulfillment of the promise that his seed should inherit the land because Sarah was not mentioned. This became a vital point only later in the story.

The next stage was the separation from Lot in which Abraham's faith was manifested clearly. His nephew had regard to material prosperity, seeing the wealth of the plains, and disregarding the perils of the cities. Abraham saw the city whose architect and builder is God. The result was a *renewal of the second promise* with the additional comment that the seed should be too numerous to calculate (Gen. 13:16).

His confidence was displayed then in his rescue of Lot, after which he was blessed by Melchizedek. A vision followed the refusal of the goods of the king of Sodom, assuring Abraham that the Lord was his great Reward. This brings the reply that he was childless—with a reference to the law that a childless couple could adopt a slave to serve for life and inherit after death. Eliezer of Damascus evidently fulfilled the conditions, but this brought the Lord's *third promise* that Abraham's own son should be his heir and his descendants would be as numerous as the stars. A covenant then guaranteed the promise.

A custom of that time was the sealing of a covenant by the dividing in two of a sacrifice and the partners passing between the pieces together. Here a furnace and a lamp appeared to pass between the halves, the former suggesting periods of trial, the latter the light afforded to bring the sufferers through it.

The story of Hagar follows naturally as Abraham sought to comply with another ancient law. A childless wife could supply a substitute and if a child were born it would be counted as that of the wife. Then neither the slave wife nor the child could be expelled. Sarah therefore gave her personal maid to Abraham, but instead of being ready to reckon her child as Sarah's she assumed superiority, resulting in a clash between two determined women. Sarah threw the matter back

to Abraham, declaring, "My wrong is your responsibility." Abraham severed his connection with Hagar, who reverted to her slave status as Sarah's maid (Gen. 16:6).

Probably the statement that Sarah dealt hardly with her does not imply more than this and Hagar, having tasted better things, was not prepared to resume her former situation. She fled, but returned as the Lord commanded and Ishmael was born in his father's camp. All this appears to be in accordance with the famed Code of Hammurabi, so the narrative does not suggest the praise nor blame attaching to the actors in the drama.

Thirteen years pass by and God appears again to renew the covenant, repeating the promise to Abraham and his seed. The sign of the covenant was circumcision on the eighth day. This brings us to the *fourth promise* which, for the first time, stated that Sarah was to be the mother of the promised son. An incredulous laugh was a natural reaction to the seemingly impossible proposition and the plea was made that Ishmael "might live before Thee." This was not to be and the statement concerning the promised son was soon repeated within Sarah's hearing. Her response, like that of her aged husband, was a laugh which led to an assurance that nothing was too hard for the Lord. The narrative is then interrupted by the account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the preservation of Lot.

The story of Abimelech is often taken as a doublet, a mere repetition in different form of Abraham's actions in Egypt. But this, quite apart from the doubt cast on the authenticity of the book, ignores a vital difference in the stage of the biography. As we noted, nothing had been said about Sarah in the first instance, but at the later episode she had been designated as the mother of the heir. This means that when Abraham repeated his half-sister tale he placed in jeopardy the future of the ancestress.

Again, the two were preserved and the gifts made to Abraham affirmed his honor, since no one could give presents to a dishonored person without dishonoring himself. The comment to Sarah (Gen. 20:16), however, hinted at criticism. Thy "brother... he is to thee a covering of the eyes," that is, critical eyes would be covered so that no fault

would be detected in Sarah.

The birth of Isaac followed so that Abraham became the ancestor of both Israelites and Arabs to the detriment of both and of the world to this day.

This brings us to the climax of the story and the triumph of faith. Abraham had displayed faith and failure before, but here the whole of the past rises to his gaze and by one act he outshines all his past. When he left Ur, he severed his connection with the past; when he stood on Moriah, he was ready to place the future in the hands of the Lord, the covenant-maker. This was the superb act of faith.

Who of us would rise early that morning to take the son of our love to the place of his death? How could we hold our peace for three days as we travelled northward? What faith is it to give command to the servants: "Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you" (Gen. 22:5). From where could such confidence come that he could answer Isaac's query: "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together" (Gen. 22:8)! And how could he raise that knife above his son's heart but for that assuring belief in which he was "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead" (Heb. 11:19)?

Abraham is the father of the faithful. May God grant us an ever increasing trust in our Lord's altogether trustworthy Person. For "without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6).

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Abraham the Widower

Abraham and Sarah had shared sixty years of married life. Now a new chapter begins with the old patriarch, as it has with many of God's people.

Genesis 23 tells of Sarah's death, giving her age at the time, and where she died. It appears Abraham was not at home (v. 2), and that her death was sudden—there is no account of the ailment, or how long she was sick. Death in such circumstances is most tragic; yet Abraham behaves in a decorous manner. She was in life a beautiful woman (12:11) and Abraham mourns, shedding tears, as is to be expected. This is a new experience now for him; he becomes a mourner.

As a pilgrim, he had no ownership in the land, so now sets about to find a burying place. He is no bargain hunter, but pays "current money with the merchant" (v. 16). The deal is duly witnessed by Ephron in the audience of the children of Heth, 400 shekels of silver. He acquires the Cave of Machpelah, meaning "staircase" or "spiraling." Is there a hint here of resurrection?

Sarah becomes its first occupant, and five others follow: Abraham (25:9), Isaac and Rebekah, (49:31), and Leah and Jacob. Rachel was buried near Bethlehem, Joseph in Shechem (Josh. 24:32). Machpelah became that hallowed spot wherein is laid the honored dust of the patriarchs. The universe abounds with Machpelahs, scattered worldwide, in which the sanctified vessels of the redeemed lie, secure in the glorious hope of the awakening shout from the Lord at His coming (1 Thess. 4:16).

We now observe Abraham the widower. He has sent Hagar and Ishmael away, he is bereft of Sarah, and Isaac has married Rebekah. Abraham begins to suffer the first pains of loneliness, the affliction which accompanies old age. If not already prepared for it, it comes with twofold force. Lost the tender affections, gone the daily ministrations of companionship and communion of Sarah, his partner. Many a brother or sister has been here. The decisions of adjustment must be grimly faced; the alternatives are few. Either a future life of increased loneliness in one's

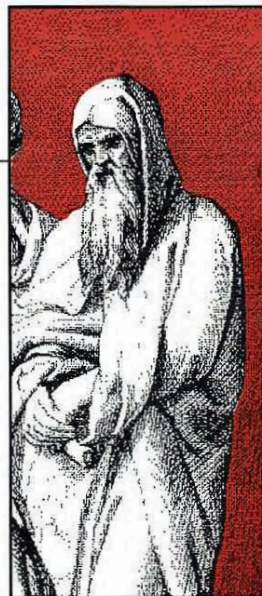
own home, or the courteous and well meaning invitation to share their home from son or daughter; bringing with it—though kindness is freely lavished—irksome irritations never faced before.

Another alternative is re-marriage, often bringing initial resistance from immediate family connections, as they envisage a loved mother replaced by a stranger, perhaps by them never consulted, far less approved.

But Abraham makes his choice—second marriage. He is still in the vigor of life, his natural force unabated. What vast physical changes took place in his body at 100 years old, when one who considered not his body now dead (Rom. 4:19)? Changes which he carried within him, even after Sarah's death, for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. He evidently was reinvigorated.

Abraham marries Keturah, meaning "fragrance." By her he obtains six sons, and at least another two by his concubines. Wisely, he gives his all to Isaac, and sends his other sons away, gift-laden. After nearly 40 years with Keturah, he dies at the advanced age of 175 years.

His second marriage is of questionable advantage. One of his later sons, Midian, becomes an enemy of Israel. Thus he had two wives, at least two concubines, and Hagar. In all, they bear him at least ten sons. His long life is laid bare for scrutiny, some aspects commendable, much deplorable, yet he is the only man called "the friend of God" (2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; Jas. 2:23). Deploring our oft deficiencies, this is some encouragement to believe that perhaps some small reward awaits us lesser mortals.



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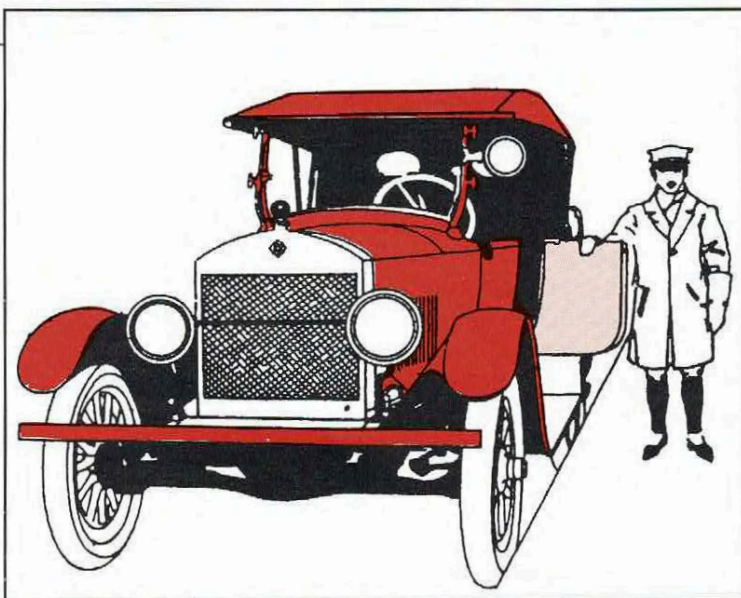
Hibbing or Bust!

It was a trip never to be forgotten. The trip the Lord used in Vernon Schlieff's life to teach him to follow Heaven's directives. This excerpt is taken from his autobiography, Our Great Adventure in Faith.

From the beginning of our marriage, Gladys and I used our vacations to either hold special meetings, or to distribute tracts.

The story really began the summer that A. N. O'Brien, an older brother who meant much to us in our spiritual life, called from Duluth, Minnesota. Dedicated to giving his life to the Lord's work in the Midwest, he was pained to learn that he would not be able to conduct two weeks of gospel meetings in the community of Hibbing, about 40 miles northwest of Duluth. Since this little assembly needed a substitute speaker, he asked me to consider going in his place.

Gladys and I prayed and felt a definite leading of the Lord to go. However, this would be a trip of faith. We had already spent almost all of our vacation money on printing tracts, planning to distribute them house to house, so we only had enough money to get us there—about a two hundred-mile trip. We had been practicing trusting the Lord for everything, and making our needs known to



none but the Lord. Did we dare trust the Lord to supply our gas money for the journey back? And what about food for two weeks?

We went, and the Lord did indeed supply for us, providing for all our meals and needs while we were there. Our prayers had been answered those two weeks, but when it came time to leave, we had nothing to get back home. At the end of our resources, we didn't want to have to borrow from those Christians, but we wondered to ourselves just how our needs would be supplied. The Lord was able to do anything, but could our faith be

OUR
Great
Adventure
IN FAITH



Vernon Schlieff

Imagine giving up a comfortable house, a well-paying job, and a flourishing local church, to live in a little trailer and labor among the poor and outcasts of the Deep South—arriving in New Orleans with \$25 in your pocket. Imagine living hand to mouth for years—God's hand to your mouth. Imagine starting a Christian Servicemen's Center, a radio station, a children's home, a Bible and Book Store, and more—without any visible means of support. One man didn't imagine it; he did it. Did it by God's grace and for God's glory.

Join Vernon and Gladys Schlieff on this amazing journey that spans the continent and profoundly touched thousands of lives. There is no adventure like the venturing of faith in the God who cannot fail. Paper. 160 pp.

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lacking? Just when we were about to leave, I looked in the little box by the door. Now when we came, we had made it clear that there would be no collections for us. We were going to pay our own way, not wanting to be a burden on these poor folks. Nevertheless, the saints said the contents of the box, if any, would be a love gift. I had noticed that the box always looked empty up to this time, but now in that box happened to be just the amount we needed. Just happened? No way! It was the Lord answering our prayer. Since this was the amount we had prayed for, we took it, thanking the Lord for His goodness, and for strengthening our faith.

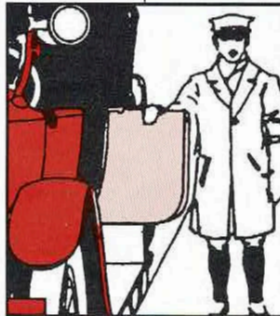
The meetings had been good; several souls were saved. The saints were overjoyed, and asked us to spend next year's vacation there as well. We promised to pray about it, and we thought we probably should. It was such an open door.

Over the course of the next year, we heard of another assembly in the town of Alexandria. It was a much larger assembly than Hibbing, and had a nice large chapel building. They were planning two weeks of children's meetings, and they wanted us to help them. We began to think that it would be nice to go there, but in the meantime the folks at Hibbing wrote us to be sure to come. We really wanted to go to Alexandria, though—it seemed that it was the better place to go, and we could reach more children there.

We basically shut our ears to the inner call of the Lord to go to Hibbing even though deep down we knew it was our duty. Just the way bright lights of the city attract some, we were attracted to Alexandria. We made arrangements to arrive on Saturday, giving us plenty of time to begin the first meeting on Sunday. These meetings were to be advertised, and maybe I was a little impressed by my name being in large letters on the flyers and signs.

After all the arrangements were made, Gladys turned to me and said, "Honey, I have a strong feeling that we should go to Hibbing; those poor folks really need us." I was growing more and more un-

easy about our decision and I too wished we were going to Hibbing because I feared that we were doing our own will, rather than the Lord's. However, the advertisements had gone out and the folks in Alexandria were expecting us, so we decided to go and make the best of it.



We were
feeling better
as we set out
on that last
sixty miles.
Surely
everything that
could happen
already had...

It was only a three-hour drive, but we left early Saturday morning so we would have plenty of time to set up for the meetings the next day. As we pulled out of our driveway, Gladys said, "I sure wish we were going to Hibbing."

I replied, "Me, too, but it's too late now." We stopped and prayed, asking the Lord to bless the trip, keep us safe, and use us to His glory. There really wasn't much spirit in that prayer, though, because we already knew that we were acting outside of the Lord's will for us.

This trip would be different from the previous year when we went on faith, setting out without having enough money to make the trip. This time we had all our vacation money in hand, plus some extra that we had saved up for the trip. Plenty of money; nothing to worry about.

We were hardly out of the city, when "Bang!"—a tire blew out. As I was changing the tire, Gladys said, "Vernon, I think we should have gone to Hibbing." I agreed.

Back on the road, about ten minutes later, "Bang!"—another blowout. Now we had no spare, so we had to buy two

new tires. The Lord is good to us, though, even in rebellion. This blowout happened just about a quarter of a mile from a filling station, thus making it easy on us. Already, our money was beginning to be depleted faster than we had planned.

I should state that before we left home, I had inspected all the tires. They all looked as though they were in good shape, with enough tread left to last another 20,000 miles.

Impossible as it seems, we had not gone another fifty miles before we had two more blowouts. Altogether we ended up purchasing five new tires—at premium prices. Every time we got going again,

Gladys would pop up with, "I sure wish we had gone to Hibbing."

Finally, all the obstacles seemed to have been surmounted. We were purring along nicely with all brand new tires, when suddenly a pounding noise in the engine signaled more trouble. Again, the Lord was mindful of us in our folly, a garage being right at hand, and we pulled in.

When the mechanic lifted the hood, he let out a long "Uh, ohhh!" Our hearts sank. We had blown a piston rod. He could fix it, but it would take the rest of the day. The cost cut very deeply into our funds again. While we walked a bit with Vernon Junior and the dog, Gladys reiterated that she sure wished we had gone to Hibbing, and believe me, I did, too. We were out of the will of the Lord, and He was letting us know it in no uncertain terms.

When we got the car fixed, we still had about sixty miles to go. Arrangements had been made to stay with a family who had agreed we should bring both our little boy, and our dog. We could tie the dog in the yard, and they assured us it would be no trouble at all. We were sure we could reach their home before they had gone on to bed.

We were feeling better as we set out on that last sixty miles. Surely everything that could happen already had, and we would buzz right up to Alexandria. Not so. A rainstorm came that was so severe it made it impossible to drive.

We ended up parked beside the road the entire night. To make matters worse, the dog insisted on going out every so often and every time he came back in, he would shake himself until we were all sopping wet. What a night! There's no telling how many times we said that we wished we had gone on to Hibbing. We slept as best we could, and in the morning the sun came out. It was a lovely day, but we smelled terrible!

Finally arriving at our hosts' for breakfast, we tied the dog outside, changed our clothes, and went to the meeting. The children's meeting was a flop. The attendance was only about a tenth of that expected,

and my message was bogged down. I never felt like such a failure in all my life.

Our host had arranged for us to live in the basement of his home. He had fixed up two guest rooms, complete with a bathroom. Brother Black, an evangelist, occupied the other guest room. He had dropped in unexpectedly, and I agreed to share the meetings with him. He would speak to the adults, and I would speak to the children.

Monday morning, Gladys and I were feeling down. The dog had broken loose and dug up all the flowers and shrubs in the yard. If we only had gone to Hibbing! Brother Black was a gracious brother and sought to comfort us, as he knew we were feeling discouraged. How could we expect to feel, knowing that we were out of the will of the Lord?

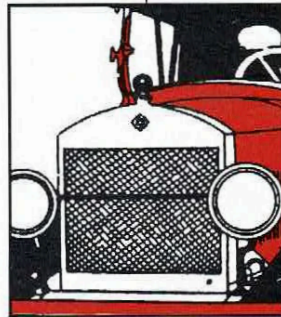
The climax came when Brother Black noticed a leak in the basement bathroom and suggested that we ought to fix it. He had tools in his car, and this would be a nice thing to do for our hosts. In the process of fixing the leak, the water pipe broke. Our hosts were off shopping, and the water shut off valve was nowhere to be found. By the time they came back, their beautiful thick carpet was completely underwater. If we'd only have gone to Hibbing!

At last, it was too much. We got on our knees and confessed our sin in forsaking what we knew to be the will of the Lord. Then leaving the meetings in the hands of brother Black, we tried to

make amends to our hosts, who graciously forgave us. All packed up, we headed rather sheepishly back home. The people were probably glad we were gone—I know we were! What a lesson we learned! That trip has remained in our memories throughout the years, constantly reminding us of the folly of taking a selfish, self-centered path.

Please pray for the Schlieff family. At time of writing, brother Vernon is very ill with cancer. As well, the Deep South in general and Louisiana in particular need a real investment of prayer made by the saints. It can be a difficult area to work with much satanic opposition.

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At last,
it was too much.
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Should We Preach the Gospel?

Well, should we? Some are shocked that one would even ask the question. To many the answer is obvious—a resounding YES! Others answer in the negative. Is there a biblical answer?

When we speak about preaching the gospel in the local church, we are not saying that it is the only place the gospel should be preached. There are many opportunities to preach the gospel both publicly and privately. Preaching the gospel at assembly meetings and on street corners are not mutually exclusive.

Also, we should not assume that gospel preaching is the only function of the local church. The assembly is not simply a gospel preaching center. There is more to it than that. It is for worship, prayer, fellowship and teaching doctrine. These are vital activities in the local church. To crowd out these practices because of busy evangelistic work is another extreme some have rightly warned us about.

But, should we preach the gospel at the meetings of the local church? What is the evidence in the New Testament?

The apostle Paul did it. "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also" (Rom. 1:15). "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you..." (1 Cor. 15:1). It is evident that the apostle engaged in preaching the gospel at gatherings of the local church.

The early church did it. Paul's words to the enthusiastic Thessalonians are relevant, "From you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad" (1 Thess. 1:8). These Thessalonians had a clear ringing witness to the gospel. The local church has a corporate testimony—the reason the churches of Revelation are called lampstands. It portrays corporate witness.

It discharges our obligation to the lost. While it is true that we are not to remain cloistered in our assembly buildings waiting for the lost to come in, it is also true that in Western culture it is fashionable for people to visit what they perceive to be a church building. They may come by curiosity. They may come by coercion. They may come out of confusion, looking for answers. Whatever their motive, we

have an obligation to them to present a clear ringing witness to the truth of the gospel. It is an immense tragedy for an unbeliever to meet with a gathering of Christians and never hear the certain sound of the gospel.

The preaching of the gospel binds believers together. There is nothing like a common cause to bring people together. Petty differences are soon forgotten in face of a greater matter. This is the way with the preaching of the gospel. Paul says to the Philippians, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (1:27).

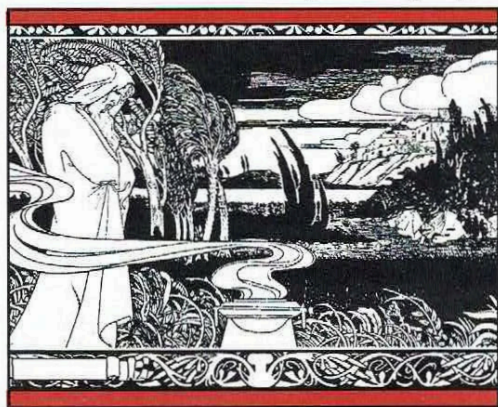
Believers are kept from false teaching when they revisit the foundation of faith. Paul was alarmed at the Galatians who were "removed...unto another gospel" (Gal. 1:6). So much so that he makes this startling statement, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:9). The Galatians were confused about Christian living because they got away from the foundation. The gospel of grace would have reminded them that not only is salvation by grace, but sanctification is by grace also.

Paul gave the Corinthians his reason for preaching the gospel among them as well. "...the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved [are being saved], if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." A solid foundation keeps us stable.

Preach the gospel? Preach it in the office and in the shop; preach it in the classroom and in the neighborhood; preach it on the radio and television; preach in print and on the internet; preach it to young and old, rich and poor, the skeptic, the thoughtful, the enemies of the cross. And don't forget: preach it in the local church. **U**

The Boldness of Faith

Never does faith aim more justly than when it aims high and draws with a bold hand.



What is the most precious dimension in our faith to God? The intelligence of faith is bright, and its victories glorious; but in the accounting of the God of all grace, its boldness surpasses all.

After Abraham's victory over the world, or over the offers of the king of Sodom, the Lord comes to him with some great pledges and promises. "After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15:1). After the heat of the preceding day, it was fitting, in the

ways of grace, that Abraham should be acknowledged again.

But faith is bold, very bold, apparently aiming higher than the purposes and undertakings of grace. And this is a wonderful

moment to contemplate. Abraham seems to throw back the words of the Lord. "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward," says the Lord. "What wilt Thou give me?" Abraham replies, "What wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?"

This was bold; but, blessed to say it, not too bold for the ear of the Lord who finds His richest joy in the language of faith like this.

Good it is to have a portion; but Abraham sought an object, an object for the heart; something far more important to us. Adam found it so. Eden was not to him what Eve was. The garden with all its tributes did not do for him what the helpmeet did. Eve opened his mouth; she alone did that, because she alone had filled his heart.

Christ finds it so as well. The Church is more to Him than all the glory of the kingdom—as the pearl and the treasure were more to the men who found them, than all their possessions, for they sold all to get them. The stray sheep, the lost piece of silver, the prodigal son, are more to heaven—to the Father, to the Shepherd, to the Spirit, and to angels—as occasions of joy, than all else; just because the heart has got its object—love has found its answer. This is the mind of Christ. Affection puts the heart on a journey; and it cannot rest, in the midst of all beside, without its object. It says even to the Lord and His pledges, "What wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless?"

Bold faith this was indeed, appearing thus to throw back the words of God. But it was precious to Him at the highest level; for faith acting thus and craving after this manner, spoke in the way and according to the taste of the divine mind itself. God Himself looks for children, as Abraham did. It is not the spirit of bondage that is to fill His house, but that of adoption; it is not servants but children He will have around Him. He has "predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to Himself." He has found in His children the object for Himself; and Abraham was, therefore, expressing the common secret of his own heart, and the bosom of God.

At once his desire is answered; and the sight of the starry heavens is made a pledge to the patriarch of something better than all possessions and all conditions; the Lord says to him, "So shall thy seed be."

How truly may we say, Never does faith aim more justly than when it aims high, and draws with a bold hand. Never is the mark it sets before it more God's own purpose. "Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God," says the prophet to the king, "ask it either in depth or in the height above;" range through the divine resources, and use them. What King Ahaz would not do, wearying the Lord by his reserve, and unbelief, and slowness of heart,

Abraham does and continues to do. The soul continues in the same power of faith to the end of this action. He holds on in the same track. "I'll give thee this land to inherit it," says the Lord to him shortly afterwards.

"Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" is his reply to the Lord. This is of the same fine character—speaking in the boldness of faith—and is still infinitely acceptable with the Lord. Abraham seeks something beyond a promise. Not that he doubted the promise. He was sure of it. It could not fail. Heaven and earth would pass away, before it could pass away. But "oath and blood" to seal it were desired by Abraham. He loved covenant title, and his faith sought it; but sought no more than grace and purpose and sovereign good-pleasure had already designed to give him.

Therein lies the richest, fullest consolation. Faith is never too bold to please the Lord. In the days of His flesh, Christ often rebuked the reserves and suspicions of little faith, but never the strength and decision of a faith that aimed as at everything, and would not go without a blessing.

So the very style in which God now answers the faith of His servant, Abraham, tells us of the delight with which He had entertained His servant's boldness. The very style of the answer speaks this in our ears; as it does afterwards in the case of the palsied man in Luke 5. There the words, "Man, thy sins be forgiven thee," tell how the heart of the same Lord, the God of Abraham, had been refreshed by the faith which broke up the roof of the house without apology, in order to reach Him. It is the same here. When a bold, unquestioning faith sought for a child, the Lord God took Abraham forth that very night, and, showing him the starry heavens, said to him, "So shall thy seed be." When like faith would have the land secured by something more than a word of promise, the same Lord pledges the covenant by the passing of a burning lamp between the pieces of the sacrifice.

This style, as I said, is full of meaning. It eloquently reveals the divine mind. The Lord does not content Himself by merely promising a child by word of mouth, or by merely giving some other assurances to Abraham that the land shall be the inheritance of his seed. In each case, He enters on certain actions, and conducts them with such august and striking solemnities, as lets us know instinctively the delight with

which He had listened to these demands of faith.

Would that we knew our God as He is to be known, for His praise is our comfort! Love delights to be used. Love is wearied with ceremoniousness. It is, in its way, a trespasser on love's very nature, and on its essential mode of acting. Family affection, for instance, puts ceremony aside all the day long. Intimacy is there, and not form. Form would be too cumbrous for it, as Saul's armor was for David. It has not proved it, and cannot therefore wear it. Love is doing the business of the house in one and another, and the common confidence of all allows it to be done in love's way. So will the Lord have it with Himself. The intimacy of faith is according to His grace, and ceremony is but a weariness to Him.

Grace, as we sing at times, is "a sea without a shore" and we are encouraged to launch forth with full-spread sails. The pot of oil would have been without a bottom, and the woman's faith still drawn from it; the king of Israel's victories would have been in quick succession till not a Syrian had been left to tell the tale had the faith of Ahaz trod the field of battle as one who knew it only as a field of conquest (2 Ki. 4:13).

How restrained we are when it comes to trusting God. The boldness of faith is too fine an element for the stingy heart of any man that cannot trust the Lord. True faith in the heart of God is that which answers, as well as takes full advantage of, the boundless grace of God.

The believing mind is the happy mind; and it is the obedient mind also, the God-glorifying mind. It is the thankful and the worshipping mind; the mind too that keeps the saint the most in readiness for service, and in separation from pollutions. We may be watchful, and it is right; we may be self-judging, and it is right; we may be careful to observe the rule of righteousness in all that we do, and it is right: but withal, to hold the heart up in the light of the favor of God, by the exercise of a simple, child-like, believing mind, this is what glorifies Him, this is what answers His grace, this is what above all proves itself grateful to Him with whom we have to do. "We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." It is not attainment, it is not watchfulness, it is not services or duties, which entitle us to take that journey, that gives the soul entrance into that wealthy place of the divine favor—*by faith* we have access into this grace wherein we stand.

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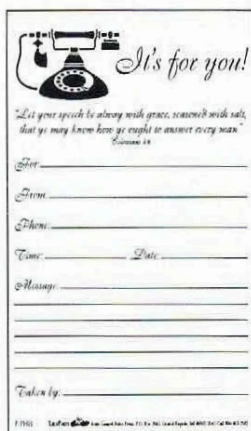
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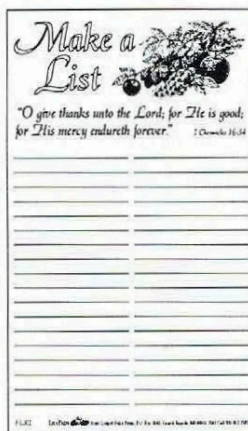
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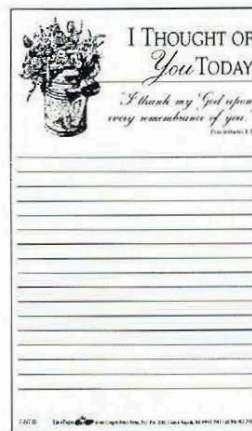
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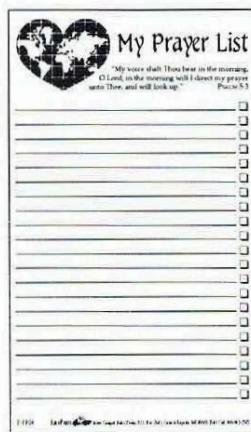
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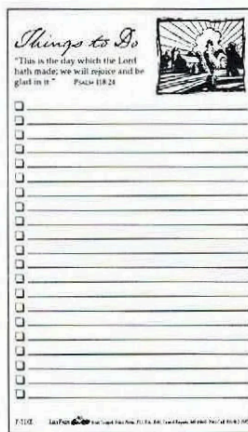
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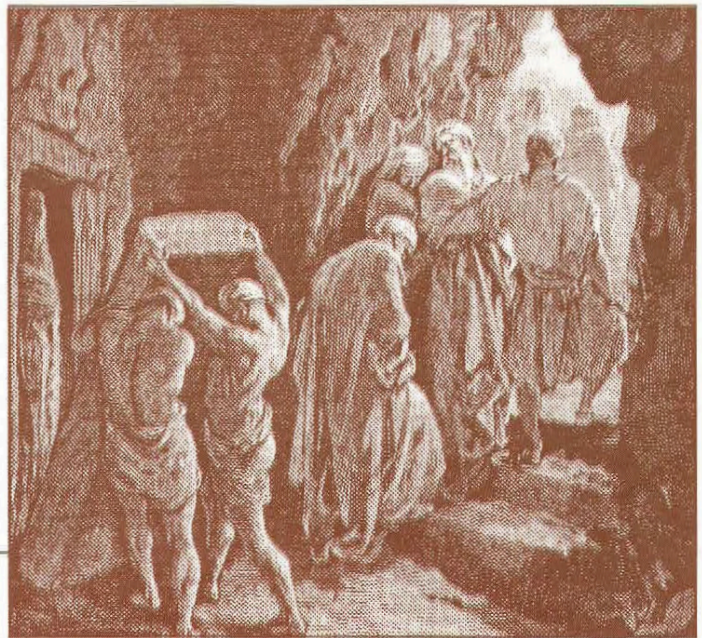
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