



THE

PREACHER'S MAGAZINE

—proclaiming Christian Holiness . . .

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The Power of the Personal



THE ONLY TRUE GIFT is a portion of yourself," wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson. He must have been thinking about the greatest Gift in all of human history, for the Babe of Bethlehem represents the ultimate in giving. He is God himself come to be among us. He is Immanuel, "which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:23).

Indeed He is the Messiah, sent from God. He is Master and Lord, as Mary Magdalene so eloquently expressed it when she called Him "Rabboni!" He is the Christ, as every Christian knows. He is the Son of Man, as He so frequently called himself. He is the Son of God, as the unbelieving centurion acknowledged when he saw Him die on the cross.

He is "very God and very man," as the theologians describe Him. Not part God and part man, not a hybrid mixture of the human and the divine, not merely the nearest facsimile of deity that can exist in human flesh. He is God. And He condescended to take upon himself "the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7).

He comes where we are, so we may go where He is.

He is Immanuel. God is with us, and the most exciting aspect of Christmas is that it is so personal. The truly genuine gift is a portion of yourself, and the sages since the beginning of time have recognized in the Incarnate Christ the greatest Gift of all.

The Christian way to give begins with giving yourself. The meaning of stewardship, in its real sense, is the commitment of self first and foremost, with the gifts of time and talents and treasures a natural consequence. On Christmas Day and every day, it is important for the Christian to remember this and to be very much aware of the power of the personal.

A Christmas greeting card is a case in point. It is appreciated by the recipient, for someone has cared enough to address it and mail it. But it

is appreciated even more when someone has cared enough to write a personal note along with the printed verse. The personal touch makes the difference.

The small son is delighted, of course, with the bicycle his father gives him. But especially cherished are those moments the father gives of himself, teaching the boy to ride, sharing his excitement, being near enough to listen, and getting to know him better.

This is why an oil painting is worth infinitely more than a mechanical reproduction. The original is more than just a picture to enjoy. In it there is much more than a blending of shapes and colors to capture and preserve an experience on the canvas. It represents the skill, the energy, the time, the concentration, the effort, the training, and the very life of a *person*. The artist has given a portion of himself.

This is why a young pastor without much experience and with a minimum of training can be used of God in the care of souls. He is appreciated and he is effective, even in his first charge, by those who are lifted and inspired by *him* more than by his methods. He may not know just what he is supposed to say to someone who has seen a loved one die, but he is there, and he cares, and that matters most.

There is a new wave of interest among us in the power of the personal touch. One church has a group working every week seeking ways to express their care. They note news of tragedy in the papers, and write notes of sympathy. They see news of triumph and send words of congratulations. They are not satisfied to repeat empty clichés as they shake the pastor's hand after a Sunday sermon. They go home and write a letter telling him how much he helped them. They write a note to the choir director to express appreciation for music that was of special blessing to them. They are a giving group—and they are giving a portion of themselves.

Our first Christmas as a young professor in the seminary brought a pleasant surprise. We answered the knock on the door, and there stood one of the general superintendents of our church. Tall and handsome, a warm smile on his face and a gift in his hands, he had come to greet us. Our family would have appreciated his gift if he had mailed it—but somehow when he *brought* it, we received much more than just a gift. He was giving a portion of himself and his family to us.

Another friend for many years wrote a brief letter every time he heard anything of interest about us. Always, there was a note of appreciation. There were words of congratulation even for the slightest accomplishment. There was Christian love in every letter. That friend is in heaven now, and we miss him here.

For every person who writes a personal note, there are thousands who think about it but never do it. For everyone who presents gifts at Christmastime which include a portion of himself, there are many others who would agree that it should be that way. The question is, Will we make it that way?

“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel [or Immanuel, Isa. 7:14], which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matt. 1:23).

The Giver is also the Gift. That is Christmas. And that should remind us to never underestimate the power of the personal.



CALL TO SERVANTHOOD

C. S. COWLES, Pastor, Church of the Nazarene, Covina, Calif.

THE PASTOR DEALS WITH HURT FEELINGS

Now his elder son . . . was angry (Luke 15:25-32).

I am drawn to the elder brother because few others are. I will agree that his attitude leaves something to be desired. But I do not see textual foundation for the common practice of roundly condemning him to perdition. To the contrary, the father seeks him out, entreats him, and addresses him as Son. That is not the language of estrangement and lostness.

What we do have here, however, is a vividly portrayed example of *massive ministerial hurt feelings*. The elder brother, faithful in the Father's house, has been dealt a staggering blow to the ego. He has been a victim of inexcusable oversight. The musicians have been engaged, the dancers notified, the robe ordered, the ring selected, and the fatted calf killed. But, unaccountably, somebody forgot to stamp his invitation. Nobody thought to phone. He was utterly bypassed, forgotten, ignored. If anyone in the world had a legitimate right to be properly outraged, it was he. I feel for him.

Recently I heard about a young woman who was called out of the graduation line at rehearsal in one of our colleges. She was informed that a last-minute check had disclosed that

she lacked one unit necessary to graduate. A further investigation revealed that she had been misadvised by her freshman class counselor, and that the error had gone undetected to this point. There was no recourse except to postpone graduation for at least another semester. Now when I tell you that she left that campus never to return, and is today exceedingly bitter about the whole thing, I think that we can understand.

Several months ago I read the heartrending story of Gordon "Buzz" Aldrin, the second man on the moon.

After the celebrity tours had been completed, Aldrin found himself out of a job in the space program. So he resumed his career in the Air Force. But, to his dismay, he was assigned as flight director at a pilot's training school—a very low echelon position. Further, the high command passed him over when he was reviewed for what would have normally been an almost automatic promotion. It became clear to him that the law of the chicken coop was in operation—that is, if one rooster flies too high, the others make sure that he has no soft place to land. This blow plunged him into a severe depression which led to

a period of hospitalization which further damaged his possibilities for a real future in the Air Force. When I read further that he had decided to take an early retirement, I was with him all the way. Who would want to devote one more day to serving an institution which treated its faithful and distinguished servants in such an offhand manner?

There is a kind of inner logic that always accompanies hurt feelings. There are gross inequities in life—and in the church. There are absolutely unjustifiable events which do sweep people under. There is an irrational element at work in the affairs of men. Most often, the person who has been plunged into the brackish waters of hurt feelings *really has been hurt!* No matter how trivial the cause may seem to the person standing on the outside, from the perspective of the victim, he suffered a stunning blow.

Hurt feelings find fertile soil during times when we are under unusual stress anyway. “Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends,” reports the elder brother. But what he neglects to tell us was that he hasn’t asked for a kid in a long time. He hasn’t planned any parties lately. He has become so engrossed in his labors in the father’s kingdom and so consumed with the endless demands upon his time that he hasn’t made provision for seasons of merrymaking with his friends. It has been a long time since he played a round of golf, took a day off, frolicked with his family, laughed at a good story.

Consequently, he was abnormally uptight, lacking in good humor, and unable to savor the moment. He was always on the run, always straining ahead, always driven. When he did come home, it was probably after dark—for the party was already well under way.

Stress shortens patience. Fatigue plays havoc with the nerves. That resilience which normally would have enabled him to roll with the punch was missing. His emotions had become so taut that the slightest incident would have been enough to set him off.

A pastor with two decades of distinguished service to the church was being interviewed by another church’s board. The church which was considering him was much smaller than the one which he had organized and built up. After the meeting, a leading board member took him aside. He complimented him upon his fine presentation and applauded his obvious professional competence and spiritual stature. But he went on to confidently inform him that the church would not call him. When the astonished pastor asked why, he was told that he was too old. The church needed a younger man. How old was he? Forty-four!

With that, the pastor went home, resigned his church, and departed into secular business. One thoroughly audacious, thoughtless, and unkind remark by a virtual stranger—which would undoubtedly have been shrugged off earlier—became the straw which broke the camel’s back. Perhaps it came at a time when he had been already suffering some painful ego-shattering and spirit-crushing blows in his ministry, and it was simply more than he could handle.

A great pastor of national prominence a couple of generations ago told a conference of ministers that “no pastor is to be held entirely responsible for all that he says and does, when the fires are burning low.” How prophetic he was. For shortly after he spoke those words, a group of young laymen—many of whom he had baptized as infants—mounted a campaign against his

leadership and succeeded in bringing his 35 years of spectacular ministry in that church to an inglorious end. It is said that he died two years later, a bitter and broken old man. He never recovered from that blow.

Lest you assume that I am being too sympathetic toward the elder brother and making a case for hurt feelings, may I assure you that I am not. All I am trying to do is to face up to something that has destroyed countless faithful servants in the Father's household and has crippled the effectiveness of many more. Furthermore, I have been faithful long enough to know that disappointments do come, disillusionment does arise, and hurts do have the power to cut deeply.

Unless we can find a way within the grace of God to deal creatively and positively with these hurts, they have the potential to bring the carefully built ministerial career of a lifetime down in sudden ruins. Under the shock of a shattered ego, men often do strange and uncharacteristic things. They will impulsively resign their church, abandon their wives, engage a lawyer, write a biting tract, have a nervous breakdown or a heart attack. Some may even take more extreme action.

I had lunch with him on a Tuesday. My friend was a highly regarded evangelist, educator, and now a clinical psychologist with an earned doctorate in this field. He had pioneered experimental ministries along the counseling line in his denomination, which intrigued me. That was why I had sought him out on that particular day.

The following Saturday he purchased the first handgun he had ever owned and blew his brains out. I discovered later that he had run into some difficulties in regard to his counseling program. His own clinic had just been voted out of his church.

He felt somewhat rejected by his ministerial colleagues. None of this was visible to me, or even to his wife. But apparently it had been working deep within him, and had comprised a hurt which he could not handle. After giving a dedicated lifetime to helping others in Christ's name, he could not cope with his own deep disappointments.

I have come to believe that no man, regardless of how spiritual, is entirely immune from such hurts. Everyone has a sensitive nerve somewhere. And sooner or later, that nerve will be struck. For everyone who yields to a destructive impulse under the despondency of a moment, there are more who just sink into a stagnant pool of their own psychic bitterness which sours their spirits and cankers their attitudes. Such ministers radiate to all with whom they come in contact, "Unclean! Unclean!"

Whatever I have said in trying to understand the reason for the elder brother's explosive outburst, I must hurry on and say that it is a very bad scene. There is nothing that is attractive or winsome about his attitude. It is a repugnant and repulsive display. We are ashamed that we have been witnesses. We are embarrassed for him. We are ambivalent in our response to him. We are drawn by compassion to the wounded spirit that needs healing. And yet we are repelled by the stench of the infection and corruption. When this kind of attitude becomes a permanent fixture in a minister's personality his usefulness in the kingdom has almost certainly come to an end.

Therefore, there is no question more important for the minister who has suffered a blow that has him reeling than that of the Apostle, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24).

Thank God there is an answer.

Help comes from our parable. "Therefore came his father out, and entreated him" (v. 28). He senses our disappointment. He feels our distress. And He takes the initiative. He comes to us. He seeks us out. He "entreats" us, comforts us, calms us. He restores our spirit, reaffirms our confidence, readjusts our perspective. What a beautiful description of the quiet healing work of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, he continues to call us "Son." Praise God! He no more casts us out because we have fallen victim to less than laudable attitudes, than we turn our children out when they throw a fit. There is something in His tone of voice which stops us short, gives us insight into our own ugliness of spirit, and lets us know that this is not appropriate behavior for His chosen and choice servants. But that very chastening itself lets us know that He is very near.

"Thou art ever with me" (v. 31). What difference does it make if we have been rebuffed by the mayor, when the President has taken us in! What difference does it make if we have been voted off the city council when we have already been elected to the Senate of heaven! "All that I have is thine" (v. 31). Think of it!

Hurts will come. But if we will let our Heavenly Father entreat us, minister to us, restore our sense of perspective, put our great disappointment in the light of eternity, then we can be healed. We may even discover that our own dark night of the soul will enable us to be more sensitive, empathetic, and compassionate in our ministry to others who also are passing through deep waters. "If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation" (2 Cor. 1:6, RSV).*

*From the *Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, copyrighted 1946 and 1952.

Christmas Beyond Bethlehem



Once again we travel back across the centuries and eastward to Bethlehem. There in the life of the Christ Child we behold the divine significance of things—God's love giving that which in turn would be given back as an atonement for our sin. Time contains only a small part of the Christmas meaning. We must go beyond Bethlehem—even to the court of the eternal God. There we behold the eternal Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. So our human longing has its hope realized in eternity. So let the angels sing, let the shepherds go now even unto Bethlehem. Let the wise men leave their seeking footprints in desert sands as they follow the star to Him. For the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. No, not created by God, but begotten by Him. The mystery of the Eternal—redemptive and glorious!

This is the meaning of Christmas.

—Forrest W. Nash

Portraits of Paul

IV. Paul, the Missionary

Someone has said, "God had only one son, and of him He made a missionary." And thus Jesus came, Friend among strangers, Sheep among wolves, Light in the midst of darkness. He came as a missionary.

Of us, He would make missionaries. He told us to go to all people—everywhere. He would not let us be isolationists. He would not be content that we go only to our own. He has constantly projected our sights to new horizons. He stirs us with a divine discontent. If we are sensitive to it, it shall be said of us, as it was of Barnabas and Paul, "... they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed" (Acts 13:3-4).

In such a framework it is not surprising to find that Paul was a missionary. So determined was he to reach all the world that he said, "So have I strived to preach the gospel,

not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation" (Rom. 15:20).

The record of Paul's first missionary effort begins in Acts 13. Here is recorded Antioch as his home church. They are his human ordainers, but they are only concurring with the Holy Spirit. He has been designated. He is selected. He goes forth. The things to which he was sent—to which all missionaries are sent—is indicated in the subsequent events.

The first section (13:6-12) reveals that he, as all missionaries, was sent to *do battle with sin and with Satan*. Pictures of missionaries of another day are rapidly vanishing. It is still true, however, that they *battle ancient superstitions*, concepts, and forms of worship. In Paul's case it was sorcery. Today's missionary still contends with magic, witchcraft, the black arts, voodooism. They deal with people who worship their own fears. They lead people from the worship of the natural world, with all that involves.

Paul ran head on into a force that is found worldwide now, even as it was then. He denounced Elymas, the sorcerer, as being "full of all subtilty" (v. 10); "a false prophet" (v. 6). He inquired of him, "Wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" (v. 10). This same falseness



by
J. Melton Thomas

Evangelist
Mount Vernon, Ohio.

maintains today. It is evidenced in the witch doctor, in those who, by any means, would exploit, and even in false teachers of Christianity.

Certainly like Paul, today's missionary becomes *engaged in conflict with the devil himself*. Paul pointed out that Elymas was a "child of the devil" (v. 10). So whether in Antioch, from which Paul was sent, or at Salamis, where the cited encounter took place, the source of the opposition is Satan. And as then, so now. Whether at the sending area, or in the area to which the missionary is sent, the disturber of righteousness is still the devil.

These scriptures (Acts 13:14-52) say another thing about missionaries. *They are sent to proclaim a message*. It is not enough to root out some negative elements, even evil. Paul was not content to point at many false gods. He went on to proclaim a God of might, and power, and love. Such was the message here.

It was a message of *salvation*, "To you is the word of this salvation sent" (v. 26). It was a message of a *resurrected Christ*, "But God raised him from the dead" (v. 30). It was a message of *forgiveness*, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins" (v. 38). It was a message with *no restrictions*, "I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation to the ends of the earth" (v. 47).

A modern counterpart of Paul's experience is given by Dr. G. B. Williamson. Speaking of R. H. Ingram, veteran missionary to Guatemala, he says, "Journeys on foot or horseback could be taken, strange languages could be mastered more easily than to penetrate this darkness, abolish the prejudice, and emancipate the slaves of a religion which was a mixture of degraded Christianity,

and the ancient concepts of deity known to the aborigines. They knew much about penances, pilgrimages, images of saints, and a plaster-of-paris Christ, confined and enshrined. But knowledge of a Saviour who is alive forevermore, whose Spirit comes to men to regenerate and cleanse their hearts and transform their lives, was as foreign to them as to those who never heard the name of Jesus spoken."

Every missionary is to speak the name, spread the news, and herald the message.

Paul's experience tells one more thing about missionaries. *They are to advance, that they may expand*.

Such has always been the pattern. Isaiah said it thus, "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes" (Isa. 54: 2). Jesus talked of the other sheep, not of the parent fold. He felt the impelling urge to visit more cities—and yet more. Paul, as already noted, wanted to find the places where the Name had not been named.

So the call continues—enlarge, advance, expand. Enlarge the force, the influence, the effectiveness of present fields. Paul was always returning to strengthen existing work. Advance the methods adaptable to given areas, knowing we are not called to present Western culture but a universal Christ. Expand the base of operation by entering new fields, by finding those pioneer places to announce the Name.

Such was the method of Paul the missionary. It would be hard to improve on it today. The call for missionaries is still heard. There is still a place for those who go as missionaries. There is still a place for others to support those who go, by studying about, praying for, and giving to missions.

Wesleyana



The Holiness Stream

By George E. Failing*

Dr. J. C. McPheeters, in an old issue of the *Herald* (then the *Herald of Holiness*), addressed himself strongly to the need for the revival of the teaching of the holy life.

"The holiness stream," as Dr. McPheeters writes, "is like the waters of an artesian well, which if capped at one point will break forth in a living stream at another. The doctrine of holiness so dearly esteemed by John Wesley and the early Methodists is not the dead issue which many would have us believe.

"Dr. L. Roy Smith, in an editorial in the *Christian Advocate*, then the national Methodist weekly, in a brief review of the new book, *The Path to Perfection*, by W. E. Sangster, the great Wesleyan preacher of England, says: 'Let it not be forgotten that all of the denominations, sects, and fanatics who teach this doctrine received it originally from Methodism. That they have perverted and distorted it may go without saying. But that there is a vital core in the teaching none can deny. Our preachers can do no better than to make an entirely new and careful study of this

whole question, for *the things that once made Methodism distinctive might so do again.*'

"Here are words for Methodists to ponder well: 'The things that once made Methodism distinctive might so do again.' The thing which Dr. Smith is talking about is referred to in the preceding paragraph of his editorial in these words: 'So dearly did Mr. Wesley esteem the doctrine of holiness that he once said, "If we can prove that any of our local preachers or leaders, either directly or indirectly, speak against it, let him be a local preacher or leader no longer. I doubt whether he shall continue in the society. Because he that could speak thus in our congregations cannot be an honest man."' "

"We believe that the thing which made Methodism distinctive in the early period of her history can again make her distinctive today. What would happen, if present day Methodists should place the same emphasis upon holiness as did John Wesley and the early Methodists? We believe that the same things would happen in our day, as happened in their day, only on a much larger scale. There doubtless would come a worldwide

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revival, which would mean, not only the individual regeneration and sanctification of vast multitudes, but social redemption in vast areas of life over the whole earth. Holiness is the answer to the need for a dynamic, conquering faith which attempts great things for God."

The various denominations, including our own, that include in the Articles of Religion, biblical emphases on entire sanctification, by crisis and process, stand true to the Wesleyan emphasis. More importantly, we believe that holy love is the very essence of the Triune God—whose attributes include eternity, omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence—who creates and sustains all things. Whatever God does in justification, in regeneration and growth, He does with the purpose of producing a holy man. Eternal life is not simply living forever; it is living in the likeness and presence of God—forever.

Everyone understands that as long as we are mortal, there will be infirmities that cling to us. These infirmities, John Wesley taught, also required the atonement in the sense that our thoughts and activities are unconsciously influenced by "this present evil age." But volitionally, up to the full measure of our faith and apprehension of the full benefit of Pentecost, we may be holy now. We dare not be content with less. Christ-likeness must become a passion with us. Then we will be in "the holiness stream" where living waters flow; multitudes of unbelievers and believers alike will come to us to inquire the secret of a commitment that makes us holy and happy, patient and courageous.

Are we—you and I—really in "the holiness stream"? If not, let's preach it until we believe it, then preach it because we believe it. And let's do all this in the lowly Spirit of Christ.

Practical Points

*that make
a difference*

When Evangelism Loses Its Appeal

Dear Son:

You know my interest in evangelism, and its relationship to the Body of Believers. For years, your mother and I have answered the appeals of our pastors with time, money, and a spirit of urgency. We are sold on the fact that it is of the nature of the Church to grow—and that we are to be an instrument in that growth.

But frankly, I am weary of all the talk from the pulpit. I have a "sneaking suspicion" that if our pastor talked less, and allowed the Spirit to gradually work through the organization, we would obtain better results. So much can be done behind scenes on a one-to-one basis, without using the pulpit as a "sounding board."

We hear so many things about the urgency, skill, methodology, and organization of evangelism—and that is good. But it is good only if from the heart of the pulpit comes the Word. When my pastor shares God's Word with me, the first thing I want to do is to *tell another*. Isn't that the heart of evangelism?

Son, just don't say you are evangelistic, or tell your people to be evangelistic, but quietly do it! See if the sharing of the Word might become both the foundation and background of New Testament evangelism.

My pastor preached from 1 Cor. 4:16 and 11:1 yesterday. I was so moved by the challenge to follow Christ that I shared Him with another this morning.

Love,
Dad

The hour we may have considered to be
our worst could well turn out to have been our
very finest

Their Darkest Hour Was Their Finest

By Ralph F. Pynchon*

Pressure Produces Power

In physics it is an axiom that pressure produces power. Progress in the natural and the spiritual alike is dependent on the interplay of counter-acting forces. The dialectic philosophy of history is true, at least, at this point. Intensive heat is required to separate the dross from the gold. The application of this principle holds in the spiritual also. The hour when the mills were grinding the hardest was the hour when our experience received its finest edge. The hour we may have considered to be our worst, in retrospect, could well turn out to have been our very finest.

Since example is more effective than precept, let us examine a couple of case histories from the New Testament to prove our point.

The Apostle Peter

Most of us can identify with this disciple. The whole rhythm of his life and his responses to its ebb and flow, his actions and reactions to its high moments and its low, present an all-too-familiar pattern to us. We have "sat where he sat."

If we were asked to name the high moment in Peter's life we would almost certainly point to Pentecost. Acting as the acknowledged spokes-

man for the little band of Spirit-filled Christians, he delivered a message that swept 3,000 souls into the kingdom. But was this his finest hour?

To be sure, the man who had quailed before a little maid in the court of Caiaphas was now thundering out a message of hope with great boldness. He was now confronting fearlessly the same men who had cried out for the crucifixion of Jesus. He had unhesitatingly donned the mantle of leadership when that leadership was most urgently needed.

But it must be pointed out that Peter's stand here was but a result of all that had preceded it. He was now riding on the crest of a wave of momentum which had been generated by the two greatest events that ever shook or shaped the history of man. The reference is to the Resurrection and Pentecost. Peter was now coasting, so to speak, on the emotional uplift of these events. This was not the battle; it was the victory celebration.

It is the writer's belief that we must go back to the heartrending tension of the harrowing moments during the trial of Jesus to really determine Peter's finest hour. The real man comes into view during and after the terrible hour of sifting which occurred in the court of the high priest.

Although Peter sought to drive the

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chill from his body as he warmed by the fire, nothing could dispel the fear which held his heart in its icy clutch. Three times he had been challenged to identify himself with the Man on trial. Three times in the presence of witnesses, he had denied any relationship with Jesus, or the others who followed Him. Upon his third denial, the Lord turned and looked at him. It struck him with all the impact of a heavy Roman spear. For at that precise moment the rooster crowed a second time, and it brought the memory of Jesus' words flooding back: "Before the cock crows twice thou shalt deny me thrice." He was now in the furnace—a furnace heated "seven times." It was certainly his darkest hour—but it was also certainly his finest.

The break could have been final. Locked in with despair, he could have gone the way of Judas. But Peter was made of essentially better stuff. He could have gone to the bottom and stayed there, but instead, he rose to the top and there remained. His spiritual recovery has served as a source of inspiration for many a beaten saint.

It is noteworthy that when the Lord tested Peter in regard to his love after the Resurrection, He put the question three times: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" As many times as he had denied, he was made to affirm. He then received his commission back, "Feed my lambs . . . feed my sheep."

Saul of Tarsus

Now let us look at another apostle. Saul of Tarsus, as he was known before his conversion, was a spectator at the stoning of Stephen. Moreover, the Scriptures tell us he was "consenting" to the death of the first martyr of the Church. The sight of Saul, the vindictive persecutor, as he stood scowling on the radiant

Stephen, was not a pleasant one. An onlooker would have said there was no hope for this proud young Pharisee. Most certainly it was a dark hour for Saul.

But it could well have been his finest. For the first time, it was given to Saul to see the triumphant passage of a Christian. He knew in his own heart that he could not die this well. An incipient rebellion of which he himself was scarcely aware began to brew. This conflict below the level of his conscious mind drove him to still more violent acts of madness. But it was no use. Nothing could calm the storm that raged within.

From this moment on, all of Saul's finer instincts began to clamor for recognition. One cannot read the Epistles which he later penned, without getting the impression that their author was a greathearted and compassionate man. His zeal to destroy these Christians whom he regarded as heretics had completely warped his nature. It had made him false to the man he really was. Sin does that to all of us. We believe his awakening began as Stephen died under the hail of stones. His experience on the Damascus road was anti-climactic. The pricks of a festering conscience only prepared him for his meeting with the Lord. And so we read: "And Saul was consenting to his death." A dark hour? Yes, but certainly it seems that it was also his finest.

A personal testimony

With an apology for what seems an intrusion, the writer would like to testify. He too once passed through a very dark hour. At the time there seemed to be only the agony of hopelessness and despair. But as it turned out, this hour proved to be his finest.

Caught in the steely grip of a strong temptation which could have meant a permanent shipwreck, he was enabled to fight his way out of

the boiling tides of confusion and turmoil back to solid ground. Using the medium of a false cult, Satan made a high bid for his soul. The mental stress was so severe it made the burden all but intolerable. The enticement, the doubts, the questionings, turned the mind into a raging battleground.

Those who are skeptical about the reality of the demon world should pass through such an experience. The thing grew, and then one night the climax came. A decision had to be made. It was made; made for God and sanity and truth. But Satan does not give up easily. The powers of darkness descended in fury. Fear was added to torment.

Hell has a music of its own. The writer heard it that night. Ringing

in his mind through the long hours was the peculiar chanting sound of the cult as they sang their prayers to the weird strains that accompanied them. It was the song of demons reluctant to loose their weakening grip.

Even the longest night must end. Just as dawn filled the room with its welcome light, the Lord came with this comforting promise: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." And, all praise be to God, it did come! It did come! The temptation lost its hold and the darkness rolled back. Hell's music grew faint and faded away. Peace came, and the tumult died. The darkest hour had passed, and having passed left only victory in its wake. It was unquestionably our finest.



Lost Christmas

Why wait till Christmastime again is here?
Why spend those precious hours in hectic ways
Doing the things that you could do all year
And let the noise of whirl of festival days
Drown out the angels' song? Why not take time
To lift the eyes to candles in the sky;
To walk some silent night, while carols chime,
And hear the hush of wings brush softly by?

Take time to meditate; to catch the spell
Of childish trust, that simple faith you knew
When love was everywhere, and all was well . . .
The gift you lost may now come back to you.
Seek not for Christmas in the busy mart
But cradled somewhere in a trusting heart.

—Rachel Van Creme
Source unknown

We may excuse ourselves for the lack of a personal mission by pleading we don't know what to say. But a doomed man in a burning building knows what to shout to others in the building

A Missionary or a Mission Field?

FOR AS THE HUMAN BODY apart from the spirit is lifeless, so faith apart from works of obedience is also dead" (James 2:26, Amp. N.T.).¹ "For Demas has deserted me for love of his present world, and has gone to Thessalonica" (2 Tim. 4:10, Amp. N.T.).

Every Christian is either a missionary or a mission field. Many would like to live in the half-zone exposure of a little spiritual passion and a little spiritual drag. But Christians cannot, in the light of their Lord's two final commands to "go," and to "tarry." As faith is dead without works so a missionless Christian has become a mission field.

The Church was born in the fire of evangelism, and it cannot stand the smoke of passionless, missionless re-

1. *The Amplified New Testament*, copyright 1958 by the Lockman Foundation, La Habra, Calif.



by
Neil E. Hightower

Superintendent
Canada Central District
Church of the Nazarene

ligion. Jesus said: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains by itself alone" (John 12:24, Amp. N.T.). Something of us needs always to be dying for lost souls.

We may excuse ourselves with the thought that a minority religion, such as today's Christianity, doesn't count much in influence. But history is punctuated with great causes that succeeded only by the skin of the teeth. One example is that of Patrick Henry's resolution in the Virginia House, defying the hated Stamp Act. It passed by the margin of one single vote. And how could we forget that New Testament Christianity was but a "drop" in the Roman Empire's "bucket"!

The choice before believers today is the same as before the Early Church—demonstration or desertion. Chief among the disciples who chose the latter is Demas. Something happened within Demas, and his actions externally reflected the crumbling of his inner defences. We can only guess at the details—but in that educated guess, we gain much spiritual instruction.

I. THE DECLINE OF EVANGELISTIC PASSION

Somewhere along the way in far-

ranging travels with the Church's great missionary-apostle, Demas allowed the sentinel fires of evangelism to die down.

This reflects itself in the loss of evangelistic imperatives. The haunting drive, created by the awareness of souls without Christ being eternally lost, is blunted.

Next it is reflected in the cooling of evangelistic fervency. Church members become a little disturbed about an unusual stir at the altar. We begin to be enamored by the progressive and educative factors of the gospel.

Finally, we begin to note the emptying of evangelistic priority. The church begins to multiply its ministries, providing for everything from the cradle to the grave, until its priority in winning souls from hell is second-rated. Priestly duties begin to override the prophetic proclamation of the pulpit. We begin to find it easier to "walk around on the other side" as did the priest in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Vance Havner defines this in his colorful way: "I think preachers are getting lost in a multitude of smaller duties. The preacher has a peculiar place in the economy of God. He is in danger of becoming so involved with secondary affairs that he loses his prophetic gift. The devil doesn't care how great a success a preacher is in any other field, if he can just kill the prophet in him."

II. THE DESERTION OF EVANGELISTIC MISSION

Not alone is decline of passion for souls the bane of preachers, but it is a deadly poison that harms the spiritual heart of the body of Christ in general. And from decline there is but a slippery step to desertion. Somehow, for Demas, it became easier to go to Thessalonica than to stay at Rome and face the ridicule and

persecution that association with St. Paul was bringing.

Perhaps Demas began to feel that Paul wasn't as intellectually stimulating as the Gnostic heretics he was fighting. These philosophic eclectics were so sure of themselves, and they certainly had plenty of "racy" speculation to attract interest. They specialized in the dualism between matter and spirit; and it was so simple to believe that all matter was evil and all spirit good. This ought to teach us something in our day. When we begin to preach petty notions, and to major on minors, we have scuttled our mission.

Going to some favored "Thessalonica," however attractive it may be evangelistically, when that isn't God's will for us, is desertion and deflection from our mission. St. Paul must have felt some frustration on his second missionary journey, when he was forbidden by the Holy Spirit on two different occasions to preach the Gospel in places that were evidently upon his planned itinerary for evangelism. Surely there were no more needy places than the province of Asia and Bithynia, but apparently God wanted Paul and his party in Troas.

When we put self-interests and worldly care above invasion of the world with a rugged Gospel, we have deserted Christ. Separation from the spirit of the world is required for evangelism.

CONCLUSION

Christians without a consuming evangelistic mission are sentinels asleep at their post.

Alas for poor Demas, who has been the text of a thousand sermons. We cannot know whether he awakened or not. But we can profit from his example.

We must maintain our priority of love centered in Jesus, not this pres-

ent world. We must not allow our evangelistic passion and sense of mission to cool or decline. We must do what Paul counseled young Timothy: "Stir up the gift of God that is in thee."

This is the metaphor of the sentinel on duty in the night hours, pausing periodically to rake the coals of his sentry fire, and throwing on a few sticks of wood.

Or it is the metaphor of the shepherd watching his sheep through the night, and in the chilling night hours stirring afresh the fire and rekindling the blaze with fresh fuel.

Whichever the metaphor you choose, the truth remains the same. Love feeds whatever fires it. What drives you to perpetuate spiritual

life? Love of this present world, or love for Jesus Christ?

Love also is particularly careful to keep itself rekindled. The master passion of our Lord was: "I must work the works of him who sent me." That demonstrates a mission that reaches beyond this present world. How does your personal translation of the mission of the Church measure up?

We may excuse ourselves for the lack of a personal mission with the familiar cry, "I don't know what to say." But a doomed man in a burning building knows what to shout to the other doomed men in the building.

A missionless Christian has become a mission field.



Stewardship

1. Perhaps the answer for you is to prepare a budget for next year, listing your anticipated expenses. From this, figure how much you will need per Sunday on a base; then each month add in special needs such as revivals, Thanksgiving offering, etc. This gives a fairly accurate figure. Publicize the results.

2. For your next raise, ask the board to help you by giving a raise in the areas where it really counts. These are called the tax-free benefits. Those you may have overlooked include car allowance, furniture allowance, books, office supply allowance, and entertainment. The congregation may pay for your health and life insurance, social security taxes, and

pension contribution. Every dollar paid in this way equals \$1.20 in cash salary—or more.

3. Have you begun the Stewardship Honor Roll? List in the bulletin the names of all those who have agreed to tithe for the coming year.

4. Your church has had building funds before, so why don't you call it the "progress fund," or the "development fund"? For tracts, bulletin covers, and programs on other stewardship materials, try the Nazarene Publishing House.

5. Send a "Take-Your-Choice Letter" with three possible paragraphs. One of thanks for good stewardship, one for fair stewardship, and one for no giving. This should be sent with your quarterly giving receipt.

6. We do not make a big push in most churches for an offering at Christmas-time. If you are not following a special Christmas offering program for your denomination, you may like to make a gift list for the church—small items that people could buy for their church at Christmas.

DECEMBER



FOCUS

FOR
PASTORS
and LOCAL
CHURCH
LEADERS

Compiled by the General Stewardship Commission

EARL C. WOLF, Executive Director
DON WILDE, Office Editor

● **General Superintendent Lewis**



MY CALL to preach was very real. There is no doubt in my mind but that it was from God. It was a great compulsion which stayed with me, overshadowing my life. It had a great bearing on my decisions. It pursued and possessed me. It was pleasant, though domineering. It was warm and had a glow about it. I felt good in contemplating doing it. I had the assurance that God was "in it" with me. I knew He would be my Ally in whatsoever I must do to answer that call. Together we would win.

I had a sense of awe in the fact that He had chosen me. I sensed it was big, lifelong, and important. These impressions, convictions, and certainties were all wrapped up in my call to preach. I realize now that they furnished the dynamic that drove me to secure an education and spend years in preparation for my task. Furthermore, they did not lessen in intensity. They were and are part of "the call." It must ever be so for us all.

In the church we believe in a divinely called ministry. Our men are "marked men." You are the "set apart" ones. You have an awesome assignment. The *Manual* says, "The perpetuity and the efficiency of the Church of the Nazarene depend largely upon the spiritual qualifications, the character, and the manner of life of its ministers" (page 219, paragraph 401). Here is the admission that the church rests its present and future in the hands of you God-called men. What a tremendous burden is placed upon us by God and the church.

Let us look to our call. Let us allow it to rush through us again in memory and in reality. Its fresh strength will do us good. The call—the great call that changed and trans-



formed our lives—is with us today. It still changes and transforms us. It motivated us greatly when it was new, and its power is still ready to propel us into great, inspired, fervent ministry. Don't allow its beauty to fade. Don't let its voice grow weak and its light become dim. It is the whole reason we are here in our pulpits and out among our people.

The call to preach, brethren—the call God gave to men in the Bible—came to us, and we joined them in obeying God! It is our obedience to that call that keeps us able and willing to preach the whole truth without fear or favor, for it is to God we answer in the last day. We are His servants. We are the shepherds of His flock. We are the voice of eternity calling. We point the way. We set proper value guides for people. We condemn sin. We proclaim righteousness. We are forever answering the call to preach. It is God's voice we listen for in commendation. We receive our recompense from Him. He walks with us and gives us strength, counsel, and peace.

Yes, the call is strong and clear even today. All through these years it has remained constant and mighty. It is divine and will last as long as our lives, and it is well that this is so.

CHURCH SCHOOLS



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2. Present the plan to and get consent of church board.
 - Elect CFL committee of at least six persons.
 - Elect CFL committee chairman.
 - Elect CFL publicity chairman.
3. Conduct a church family survey. Printed survey cards available.
4. Plan early for the Starting Point Commitment Service for Family Altar Sunday, first Sunday of January (or a dinner meeting to fit your calendar).
5. Encourage church-wide participation.

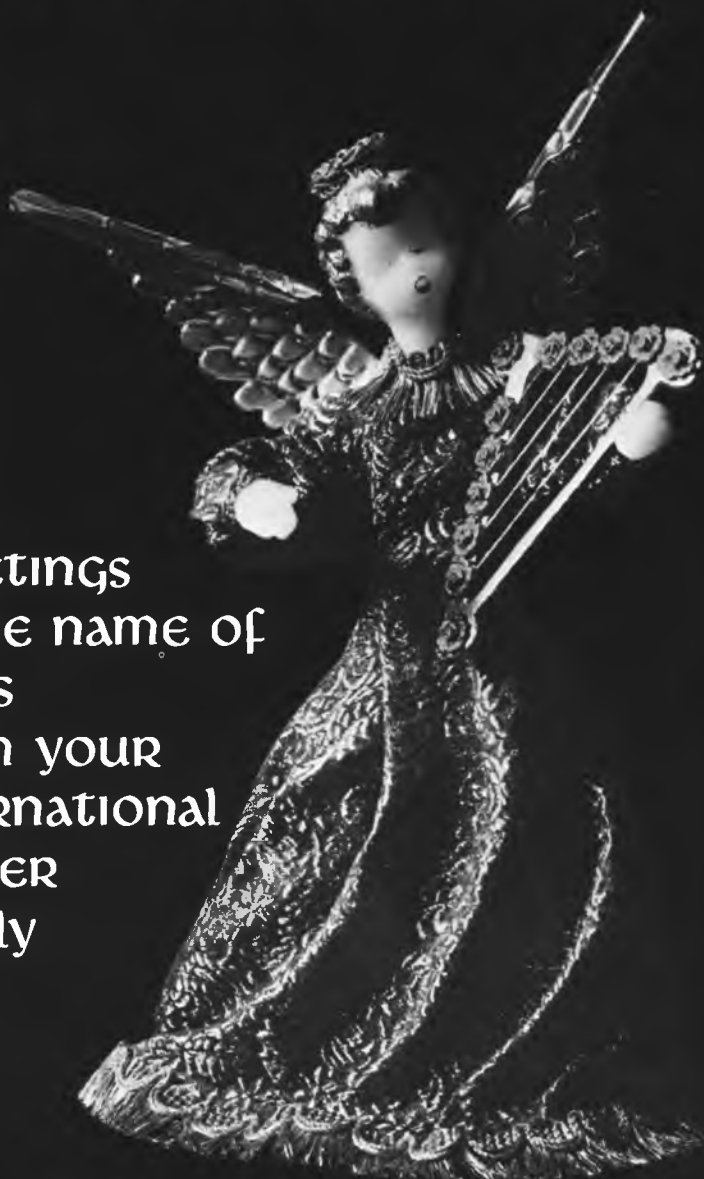
For further information write:

John B. Nielson
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General Council Member

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We now stand on the threshold of our seventh decade. May our work for missions continue to evoke PRAISE and THANKS for what GOD is doing through us.

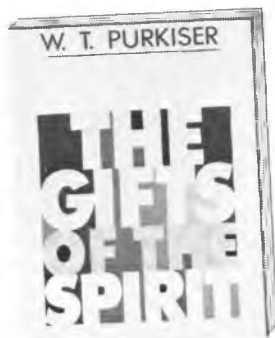
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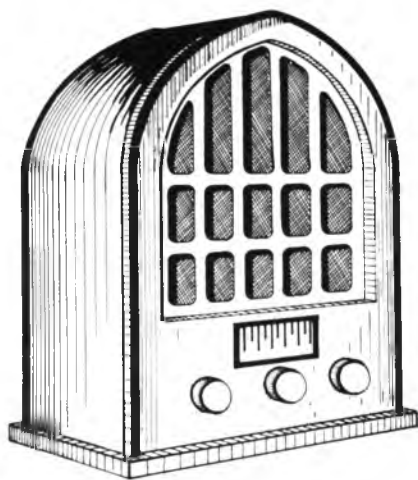
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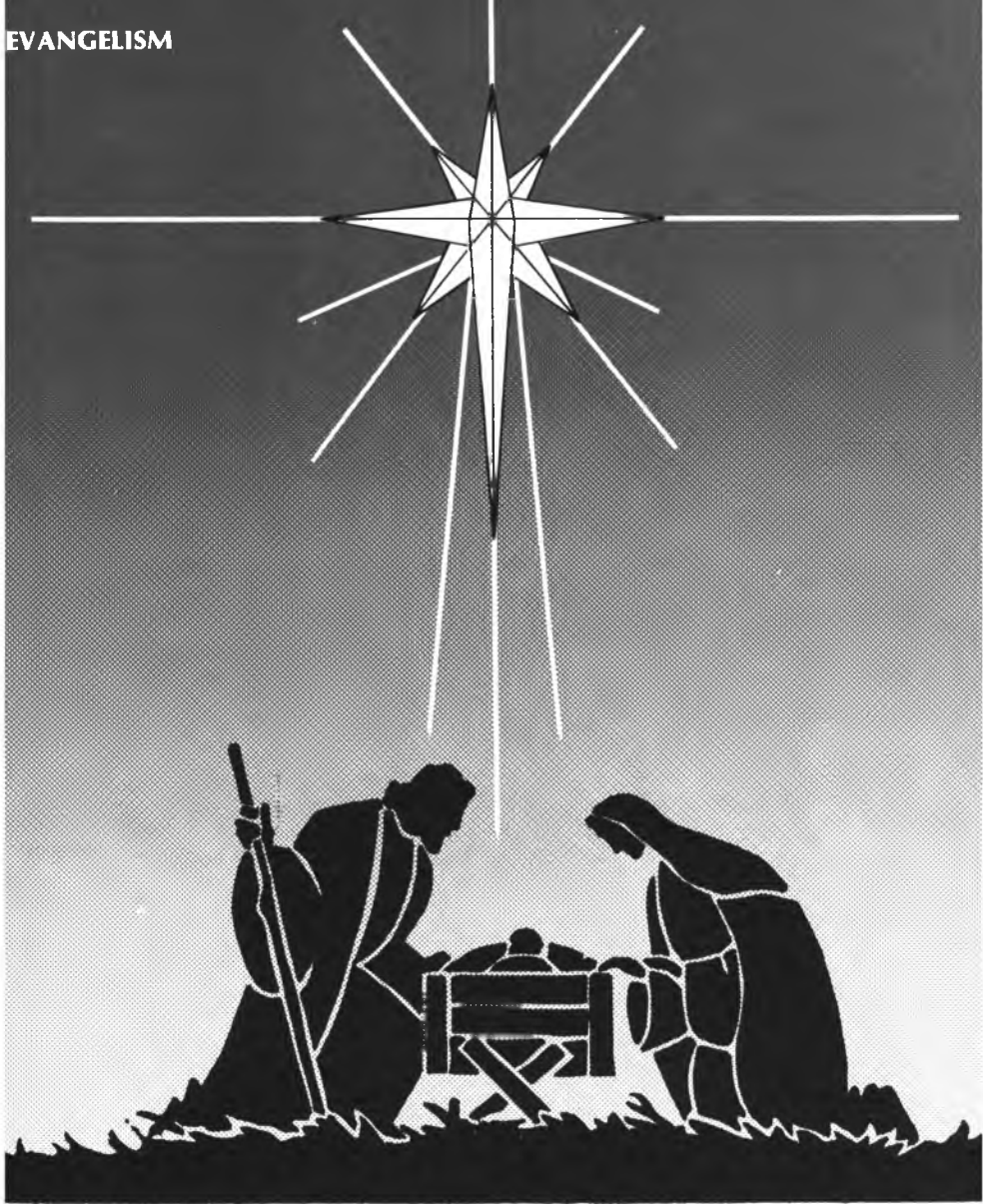
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As our thoughts turn to another Christmas season, it is our hope that every local church will remember the evangelists who served them this year. Your gifts to these who have answered the call of God to full-time evangelism will be a blessing to them and their families during this period when their income is relatively curtailed. Be sure to consult your church board about the Department's CHRISTMAS LETTER.



Perhaps your church might remember
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Dean Wessels

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DENOMINATION-WIDE STUDY

February—March, 1976



Unit 115.3a, Studies in Holiness

See Registration and Order Blank on page 16N

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WE ALL STARTED OUT to be the perfect parent. Perfect parents ought to produce perfect children. We have all the answers until Junior breaks the sound barrier, and every month we get a little quieter, a little less verbal, and much more humble.

Not only do we want to raise Junior for the Lord, but we have the basic yearning to "produce after our kind."

The old adage, "Hindsight is better than foresight," is certainly true. It takes a heap of growing not to buckle under the pressure of consciously or unconsciously trying to make Junior the model of perfection to the satisfaction and approval of our parishioners.

How do we cause the child raised in a minister's home to feel like he's in a normal home? How does he face the usual P.K. image among his peers? How does he find God for himself? Does he become a carbon copy of his parents, his church examples, or become a hero-worshipper of some Christian athlete? In search for his own identity, does he shuck it all and look "outside" where it seems to be happening?

We wore James 1:5 rather threadbare, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God." The teen years were especially stimulating to our faith. If Mom and Dad can agree perfectly on the decisions made, it's a big help. We couldn't always manage to do

that. I was a stronger disciplinarian than my husband. I was more nit-picky about unimportant things. He reserved his strong judgments for moral issues. I learned through trial and error that his judgments were usually best. As the head of the home he had a more direct line in his chain of command—which I learned (very slowly) to respect. God's chain of command is for a husband to rule his house, love his wife, and for a woman to submit to this leadership. When a wife submits to it, a husband must take it. In fact, he must take it anyway. As a Christian, she'll come under, or wreck her home, her husband's self-image, and her own nerves.

The most important thing at any age is to keep the communication lines open. Our daughter thought it was in the Bible that you had to tell your mother everything. I never told her differently. By the time she found out for herself it wasn't, she had already formed the habit. Our son had a great communication with his dad, and although there were some things withheld, I was always grateful that he stretched his six-foot frame across the end of our bed every night when he came in and gave us accounts of the evening (in part).

Both of the children were saved when very young, at home. Jesus Christ was very natural at our house.

My husband kept late hours calling. He usually gave the whole family accounts of miracles—for which the children learned to rejoice with us.

We didn't have heavy, long devotional times. I kept a notebook of favorite scriptures and we learned one verse each morning at breakfast. We memorized and applied it to some situation they were having at school. Sometimes we were on one verse for three or four days. I asked them how it worked for them when they came home. They learned to depend on scripture for every occasion. When they found a new situation they asked me if I had a scripture for it.

Being saved young didn't make them saints. We spilled plenty of tears, stretched every promise, and prayed again and again that the "principle might be formed within." Our son traces his doing real business with God to his senior year.

I wish I could say it was something I had done. When I observe their devotion today, I am very humbled, and both my husband and I walk softly, giving praise to God, for to Him and Him alone do we owe this debt.

Many ministers struggle with the guilt of leaving their children so much, or are under a false sense of obligation to never leave them. I think we were the other extreme. God dealt with us when they were babies—that we were to give them back to Him and live with a sense of detachment. This evoked some criticism, but God proved His faithfulness. What He asked of us may not be what He asks of another.

Our son was teaching a class of young adults recently when someone asked, "What was it like growing up in your home?" He said, "It was a sacrifice all the way, and I'm part of the sacrifice—and I'm glad of it. I never knew it was sacrifice until I

was older. If I had seen an image of self-pity instead of joy, it would have turned me off."

I believe it's not the *quantity* of time spent with your children, but the *quality* that counts. Do they feel rushed in your presence or do they feel they're the most important person in the world at that moment?

Our visitation pastor wakes his two boys early and jogs with them. Then they go out for breakfast together. He sees very little of them until the weekend, but the times together are very special. A teacher asked his sixth-grade boy, among the others in the class, "What one thing would hurt you more than anything else in the world?" Most every child in the room said, "For my parents to split up." His son said, "For my dad to quit the ministry."

This impressed the teacher so much she called his father. Someone is making a very good imprint of Jesus Christ.

One of the common sins of parents is to withhold approval when the child fails to come through properly. Withholding approval from a child because he isn't satisfying you is like refusing to shine a light into a dark room because it's too dark. To withhold approval is to short-circuit the flow of love into a child's life and deprive him of the opportunity to be inspired and restored to the fold of love and acceptance once more. Approval is like unleashing an atom.

In a session one day, a mother complained that her boy was impossible. After listening for some time, the counselor finally said, "Does he do anything well?"

"Oh, yes, he can make boats."

"Then start with boats," she was admonished.

Willing to give it a try, she waded through the disaster area called his room to the beginning of a new boat creation. She watched for a while and

began to tell him he must be a genius. Day after day she waded to the boat tinkerer to see the genius at work. One day he hung up his shirt. She said, "Thanks, Son, that's nice of you."

In a short while the boy was sitting beside her in church.

Take care that you don't try to make your child a carbon copy of yourself. He may know God a lot better if he has your element of trust in his decisions even though they may conflict with things which are considered "convictions" to you.

Last year 1,000 ministers dropped from the rolls of one denomination. One major cause was children gone astray. Mothers' nerves couldn't cope with the stress of a wayward child. No human being has all the answers, but there's always some place to start. You can find something to approve of in your child to close that communication gap. Maybe you can start with "boats."

Approval is the shot that brings the full power of love to bear upon any life. There is no stronger weapon than love. Don't withhold approval.

faith in **ACTION**

Some of the Pastor's Mail at Christmastime—

By Edwin Alexander*

THE WRITER of the following letter is a young mother of two small children. She began attending First Church when her husband was sent to Korea. Upon her husband's return, he abruptly asked for a divorce. With her husband in Florida, no resources, two small children to care for, she learned to look up. The church helped. She prayed for a house to rent. The miracle occurred. She prayed for a job. The miracle occurred. She helps in Sunday school, and is a real booster of bus evangelism.

DEAR PASTOR:

The Lord has led me into the radiant company of His people. Praise the Lord.

The Lord has given me the fellowship of others on the selfsame journey to find Him.

He has given me a spiritual family. He

has given me sisters in the dearest sense of the word. He has given me brothers.

We worship together, work together, pray together, and are as richly rewarded in the praying as those we pray for.

I can worship the Lord alone. I can pray alone. I can know Him fully and completely in total solitude. And this is good. For most of our lives we are alone. Despite the presence of many people, we are alone.

But to pray and worship the Lord with others who earnestly, honestly, seek Him is to add new dimensions of strength and joy.

Praise the Lord for His gift of fellowship and friendship, for the miracles of work and happiness and healing that burst like stars and change the course of lives when people come together who truly love the Lord.

Thank you,
CONNIE

*Pastor, First Wesleyan Church, Topeka, Kans.

The Baby Nobody Wanted

By William J. Turner*

THERE IT WAS! Front page news! "Baby Found in Dryer in Laundromat"; and right on the heels of another similar article which stated, "Body of newborn baby found in plastic bag." The one was found in the laundromat of a small college town in southeastern Pennsylvania, the other in the great city of brotherly love—Philadelphia.

Every day there are similar articles of deserted children, abortions, of children put up for adoption before they are born. All of them say the same thing: "The baby nobody wanted."

But this is not new. Long ago there was another Baby nobody wanted. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." His mother was appointed by God the Father, the news was announced by an angel from heaven, but when He was born, nobody wanted Him.

I was in the lobby of the local hospital when the baby was found in the laundromat, and there was a clamor for that little one. Nurses were saying that one of the staff doctors was going to claim him, a receptionist at the desk said, "I'd take him," and an aged cleaning lady working in the lobby remarked, "Well, he'll have a home if I have to take him." Many pitied that little child.

But how sad for the Baby born in the lowly stall. There were no doctors to receive him, no nurses, no pretty

blue nursery, no booties for His little feet. He came to His own, but his own received Him not.

Matthew records that Joseph, "being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily." We exclaim in horror, What a father who would not accept his child! But there are many fathers today who do not want this Child either. Perhaps Joseph did not understand. He and Mary were only engaged; he did not understand the miracle workings of God. We could find excuse for Joseph, but what of those fathers today with no time for Jesus, no day for worship, no moments of prayer, and no watching with the Master. Jesus still seeks for those fathers today who will receive Him.

Matthew records another who did not want this Baby. "And being warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way" (2:12). He was unwanted by the government. We may condemn Herod for wanting to destroy this Child of God, but what have we done with Him today? One songwriter put it so well when he said, "He is more than just a swear word." It seems so peculiar that on His birthday we have parties where liquor flows, where His name is reviled, where He is not remembered at all. Our courts of justice give freedom, liberty, and justice for all, we say, but we cannot use our public office buildings to proclaim the gospel. Schools cannot be used

*Evangelist, Newville, Pa.

for revival services. We cannot offer His name above every name. How sad that the government does not want this Baby.

Still another group rejected this Baby. Matthew writes, "Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared" (2:7). These wise men had asked, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" They did not know.

Wise men today do not know Jesus. We build mighty computers, send men to the moon, launch mighty rockets and propel them miles away, yet we know so little of Jesus, the Son of God. Even so-called religious leaders often know little of Him. We pray His prayer, but do not know Him as Saviour. We pray "lead us not into temptation," and rush headlong into our selfish ways.

The Baby nobody wants is not found in a plastic bag, nor in a laundromat, but in churches, rituals, ceremonies.

He came unto His own, but His own did not receive Him! How sad for Him? No, how sad for them, and for us.

PASTOR'S CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Lord, we open our treasures and our gifts. Some of it is gold, and some is frankincense, and some is myrrh. For some has come from plenty; some from joy; and some from deepest sorrow of the soul. But Thou, O God, dost know the gift of love, our pledge of peace, our promise of goodwill. Accept the gift and all the life we bring. Help us to have home, children, parents, husband, wife centered around the Christ of peace. Help us not to stray from the meaning of this season, nor from Your will for us throughout our life. Amen.

—DERL KEEFER



First Church of the Nazarene,
East Liverpool, Ohio

Living Christmas Tree

DEAR DR. MCGRAW:

Last year as we were searching for our Christmas program, Rev. Oval Stone, our pastor, showed me the *Preacher's Magazine* with the Christmas Tree Choir from Thomas Road Baptist Church.*

The men of our church started immediately to make one. The local newspaper heard about it and sent a photographer and gave us front-page coverage. Enclosed is a picture.

With the tree we used a program written by Flora Hunton and one of our local women.

DORIS SANFORD

*December issue, 1973

THE STARTING POINT



By C. NEIL STRAIT

Pastor, Taylor Avenue Church of the Nazarene, Racine, Wis.

The Spies' Case

In Num. 13:27-33 we have the account of the spies after their visit to the land of giants. I share this outline from the account in *The Living Bible*.¹

1. ATTESTING TO GOD'S POSSIBILITIES. "We arrived in the land you sent us to see, and it is indeed a magnificent country—a land 'flowing with milk and honey.'" Here is some fruit we have brought as proof. . . . But Caleb reassured the people as they stood before Moses. 'Let us go up at once and possess it,' he said, 'for we are well able to conquer it!'" (vv. 27, 30). See also verses 23-24 as support verses.

2. A TEST OF MAN'S FAITH. "'But the people living there are powerful, and their cities are fortified and very large; and what's more, we saw Anakim giants there!'" (v. 28). Also see verses 31-33.

Some interesting phrases stand out in the *New American Standard Bible*. "'We saw . . . we are not able to go up against the people . . . they are too strong for us . . . all the people whom we saw in it are men of great size . . . we became like grasshoppers in our own sight.'"²

How revealing the results—and faith—when men calculate on the basis of themselves and their power.

3. A TESTIMONY REMEMBERED. Caleb's testimony (v. 30) to be sure, but more: "'It is a wonderful country ahead, and the Lord loves us. He will bring us safely into the land and give it to us. It is very fertile, a land 'flowing with milk and honey'! Oh, do not rebel against the

Lord, and do not fear the people of the land. For they are but bread for us to eat! The Lord is with us and he has removed his protection from them! Don't be afraid of them!'" (14:7-9, *The Living Bible*).

And this story moves ahead on the possibilities of God—when they are explored and experienced.

The Word—for the Lord

Our Lord's use of, and reliance on, the Scriptures is most gratifying. We cannot miss the lesson: If the Son of God needed the Word, how much more do we!

In the temptation experience we see how Jesus used the Word in the hour of severe test.

1. The Word—*strengthening*. "It is written in the Scriptures, 'Other things in life are much more important than bread'" (Luke 4:4, TLB).

2. The Word—*speaking*. In verse 4 it was speaking to Jesus about mission, a cause, a purpose. Verse 8 speaks of service and worship: "'We must worship God, and him alone. So it is written in the Scriptures'" (TLB).

3. The Word—*shepherding*. The phrase, "It is written in the Scriptures," conveys this thought. And verse 12 alludes to it: "'Do not put the Lord your God to a foolish test'" (TLB).

Psalm 23:1, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," and Paul's thoughts in 1 Cor. 10:13 would add support.

Inner Simplicity

Here's a "starting point" from Charles Lindbergh: "It was not the grandeur of the Romans, but the inner simplicity of the Christians that lived through the ages."

1. *The Living Bible*, copyright © 1971, Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Ill. Used by permission.

2. From the *New American Standard Bible*, copyright © The Lockman Foundation, 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971.

And it was the inner strength and simplicity of the Early Christians that persuaded their fellowmen of the deep reality in the Christ-cause.

A Final Word

Here's a closing word for this month. It's from Ian Maclaren, the great Scottish pastor. He said: "Remember, pastors,

there are burdened hearts in every congregation."

And R. Earl Allen has added this potent thought to Maclaren's words: "Many hearts share their burdens, but often heavier griefs are hidden. There are secret troubles, and tears are shed where no eye but God's sees them fall" (R. Earl Allen, *Divine Dividends*, Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1974, p. 37).

IN THE STUDY

Looking at Our Lord in Luke

December 7

THE DEEP DEVOTION OF WOMEN (23:55-56)

SCRIPTURE: Luke 23:27-29, 49, 55-56; 24:1-10

INTRODUCTION: One of the earliest pictures in Luke's Gospel is of a young woman who was willing to accept the shame and reproach of being the virgin mother of the Messiah. Throughout the Gospel, women play a significant role in Jesus' public ministry, watching out for His material needs. We read of Mary Magdalene "and Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance" (8:2-3). It appears that these women were the last at the Cross and the first at the garden tomb on Sunday morning.

The deep devotion of women to Christ has always been a striking feature of church life. In thousands of instances they have outshone the men in their dedication and their sacrificial service. This has been especially true on the mission fields, where women have often far outnumbered the men. But it has also been true in many local churches. Thank God for the women!

I. FOLLOWING HIM TO CALVARY (23:27-29)

In the King James Version of verse 27 the "which" might seem to refer back to "the great company of people." But in the Greek the "which" is feminine, indicating unmistakably that it refers only to the women. They were the ones who "bewailed and lamented him."

These two verbs are strong terms in the original. "Bewailed" is literally "were beating the breast" in agonizing sorrow. "Lamented" suggests that they were wailing aloud as they followed to the cross. A woman's deep love can evoke strong emotions.

II. WATCHING FROM A DISTANCE (v. 49)

The women didn't dare to mingle with the men at the foot of the cross. That would not be allowed in the culture of the day. They had to stand at a distance. But they stayed and watched the agonizing



By Ralph Earle

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scene of suffering being enacted on the Cross. Love held them there and they couldn't leave.

III. OBSERVING HIS BURIAL (vv. 55-56)

The disciples fade out of the picture after Jesus' death, and we do not meet them again until the women looked them up on Sunday morning and reported to them (24:9). In striking contrast to this, the women stayed by and sought to show their love and devotion.

First we are told that the women who had followed Jesus from Galilee watched where and how He was buried. The men disciples evidently assumed that when He died it was all over, and so they left. Not so the women. Love held them there.

As soon as the burial was ended, the women hurried off to the market to purchase "spices and ointments" with which they might anoint the body of Jesus as a last act of devotion.

But soon the sun set and so they "rested the sabbath day according to the commandment" (v. 56). The Jewish sabbath lasted from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday.

Mark 16:1 tells us that "when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices that they might come and anoint him." Evidently they had not had sufficient time late Friday afternoon before the sabbath began, so that they had to complete their purchases Saturday evening after the sabbath ended at sunset. But the approaching darkness prevented their getting to the tomb until the next morning.

IV. COMING TO THE EMPTY TOMB (24:1-10)

Last at the Cross, the women were first at the tomb. This shows their depth of devotion. What were the men doing? Where was Peter, who had expressed such deathless devotion to his Master? We don't know just where they were. But we know where they weren't; they were not at the empty tomb. It was only after the women called them that the men came (v. 12).

It is still true today that women are often willing to sacrifice more than men in showing their love for Christ. Who has not observed this?

We should honor our devoted women

and appreciate them. And as men we should not shirk our part of the task nor fail to show our devotion to our Lord.

December 14

BLIND TO HIS PRESENCE (24:15-16)

SCRIPTURE: Luke 24:13-35

INTRODUCTION: It was a dark hour for the disciples of Jesus. They had seen Him die on the Cross. And with that, all their hopes and dreams were dashed into the ground, buried with the dead body of Jesus.

But He was alive! The sad thing was that they failed to recognize Him at first when He joined them. But isn't that sometimes true of us?

I. SAD HEARTS (v. 17)

Two disciples were walking that Sunday afternoon from Jerusalem to Emmaus, a distance of about seven miles. As they talked together about what had happened in Jerusalem that weekend, their hearts were heavy and their faces sad. It hardly seemed possible. The previous Sunday they had joined the Triumphal Entry, following in that procession of believers who shouted "Hosanna!"

But now it was all over. The one they had thought was the Messiah, who would deliver them from Roman rule, was now in the grave, executed by the Roman governor. The whole sky had fallen! Their hope was all gone. No wonder they were sad.

II. SLOW HEARTS (v. 25)

Jesus had joined them on the road, but they did not recognize Him. Their hearts were so heavy, their eyes so downcast, that they did not really see who He was.

When He asked them why they were so sad, they told Him the whole sorrowful tale. They even reported the empty tomb, but saw no significance in it.

Jesus chided them for being "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (v. 25). He reminded them that the Messiah was supposed to suffer (v. 26). Then He began with "Moses" (the first five books of the Bible) and went on through all the prophets, pointing out and expounding the messianic passages (v. 27). What a treat it would

have been to have heard that conversation! But the Holy Spirit can help us to understand these very Scriptures today.

III. SEEING HEARTS (v. 31)

As they neared Emmaus, where the two disciples lived, "Jesus acted as if he were going farther" (v. 28, NIV).^{*} But they urged Him strongly to spend the night with them, as it was getting late, and He agreed to stay.

Then it happened! At the table, as He blessed the bread, broke it, and began to give them some of it, suddenly their eyes were opened and they recognized Him. Then He disappeared. They recalled how their hearts had burned within as He talked with them on the road and opened the Scriptures to them.

IV. SHARING HEARTS (v. 33)

There was only one thing to do now. They must hurry back to Jerusalem and tell the sorrowing disciples that Jesus had indeed risen. The news was too good to keep. So, in spite of their weariness from the long walk, they hurried the seven miles back to the city and shared the good news with the others. And we, too, have the Good News about the Risen Redeemer that we must share.

December 21

THE REALITY OF HIS PRESENCE (24:36)

SCRIPTURE: Luke 24:36-48

INTRODUCTION: The presence of Christ may at times be somewhat hidden to us. But He wants to make himself real to every one of His own. His presence can become more real to us than even that of our closest loved ones. Not that it is always so in consciousness, but it can be at times.

I. HIS PRESENCE MEANS PEACE (v. 36)

The Emmaus disciples found "the eleven" (v. 33)—with Judas Iscariot gone—meeting in an upper room in Jerusalem. Before they could say a word about what happened on the road, the apostles exclaimed to them: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon" (v.

^{*}From the *New International Version*, copyright © 1973 by the New York Bible Society International. Used by permission.

34). With loving thoughtfulness Jesus had appeared on Resurrection Day to Peter, to comfort His heartbroken disciple.

Suddenly Jesus stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be unto you" (v. 36). It was the old, familiar greeting, in the familiar tone of voice.

II. HIS PRESENCE MEANS COMFORT (v. 38)

In spite of the testimony of Peter and the Emmaus pair, the disciples were startled and frightened; they thought they were looking at a ghost. But Jesus said, "Why are ye troubled?" Then He showed them His nail-pierced hands and feet (v. 39; cf. John 20:25). Though they could still hardly believe, they were overjoyed at the reality of His presence.

III. HIS PRESENCE MEANS ASSURANCE (v. 43)

To prove beyond doubt that He was not a ghost, but real flesh and bones, Jesus asked for something to eat. When they saw Him devouring the food, they could no longer doubt His bodily resurrection. The assurance was complete.

Then Jesus did for them what He had done for the two on the road to Emmaus. He first said: "Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms" (v. 44, NIV)—the three Jewish divisions of our Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures. "Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures" (v. 45). He showed them, too, that their Scriptures taught a suffering, resurrected Messiah.

December 28

THE ASCENDED CHRIST (24:51)

SCRIPTURE: Luke 24:49-53

INTRODUCTION: One of the most interesting religious sects in the United States is the Amana community, living in seven communal villages in Iowa. One of the distinctive features of this group is that the most important day of the year is not Christmas or Easter, but Ascension Day. The people all gather in their churches on that day for a prolonged celebration—all in German.

What does the ascension of Christ mean to us? We want to suggest a three-fold answer to that question.

I. AN ACCOMPANYING PRESENCE (v. 49)

Just before Jesus ascended to heaven He said to His disciples: "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." The night before His crucifixion He had said to His disciples in the upper room: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7). We sometimes are tempted to wish that we could have been on earth when Jesus was here 19 centuries ago. But we are really better off now. In His human body Jesus could be in only one place at one time. But now the Holy Spirit can make His presence real to every child of God everywhere all the time! That is the glory we have in Christ.

In His body He left the earth. But *He* is not gone. He is here!

II. A CONSTANT ADVOCATE

In 1 John 2:1 the aged apostle wrote to his fellow Christians that they should not sin. Then he added: "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Hebrews 7: 25 declares: "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." The risen, ascended Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father in glory, making constant intercession for us.

III. A COMING KING (Acts 1:9-11)

The ascension of Jesus is described in the New Testament only at the end of Luke and the beginning of Acts. There we are told that as He went up into heaven two angels appeared with the thrilling announcement: "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven" (NIV). This is the believer's "blessed hope." But He had to go away before He could come again. And just as surely as He went, so surely will He return!

God's Gift: Too Wonderful for Words

TEXT: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15).

INTRODUCTION: If used at Christmastime, talk about the practice of giving gifts to those you love. Any other time, the background of Paul admonishing the church at Corinth on the love gift they had collected for the church in Macedonia would be appropriate. At the end of his message Paul got so blessed that he said, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift" (NIV), or "too wonderful for words" (TLB).

This gift was

I. THE GIFT OF LOVE THAT CAME DOWN CHRISTMAS

- A. The Giver of the Gift—God (John 3:16)
- B. The reason for the Gift—His love
- C. The object of the Gift—mankind
- D. The Gift—Jesus Christ, His only Son.

This Gift became

II. THE GIVER OF LIFE WHO AROSE AT EASTER—making possible:

- A. Abundant life—now (John 10:10)
- B. Eternal Life—forever (Rom. 6:23)

CONCLUSION: God gave sacrificially by giving us His Son, who in turn sacrificed His life so that you and I could have this Gift, Jesus Christ, alive in us. Truly we can exclaim with Paul, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

GENE MYERS

* * * * *

Idea

CHRISTMAS CARD POST OFFICE

Our teens are sponsoring a very worthy project again this Christmas. In order to have money for their missionary Christmas offering, they are delivering Christmas cards personally for you to your friends who attend our church. If you wish to save even more money, you may send just one card to all the members and friends of the church. The teens will place it on the bulletin board in the

foyer where everyone can see it. The teens will be in the foyer beginning December 3 to receive your cards and donations.

BULLETIN



BARREL

O LORD, HELP ME

in silence
to find peace—not just emptiness
in suffering
to find meaning—not just agony
in knowledge
to find wisdom—not just information
in routine
to find order—not just boredom
in order
to find purpose—not just conformity
in daily life
to find surprises—not just the expected
in prayer
to find You—not just my own desires
in change
to find promises—not just threats
in opportunities
to find possibilities—not just problems
in sin
to find forgiveness—not just guilt
in problems
to find hope—not just despair
in leadership
to find direction—not just power
in challenges
to find trust in You—not just personal insecurity. Amen.

—BETTY REBER

“When Christmas is over,” said a merchant to a minister, “it’s over, and it’s our job to rid this store completely of Christmas in a day.”

“Well,” said the minister, “I’ve a bigger job—to keep Christmas in the hearts of my people for all year.”

—Selected

* * *

He who has not Christmas in his heart will never find it under a tree.

—ROY L. SMITH

DID YOU MYTH CHRISTMAS?

The red-suited myth stole away to his mythical home at the Pole. It was a quiet departure—no crowd such as his welcoming party three months ago. Perhaps he is now despised for the debts he caused. Maybe it is because his promises were as false as his beard.

While he was here, he was heralded as *Somebody*. He even had his picture (instead of Christ’s) on my bank calendar for December 25. He was the center of attraction in most shopping centers. Children had their pictures taken with him.

I suppose it wasn’t strange to most that to force belief in an imposter was so much easier than just accepting the Fact.

Well, he is gone—and if for you that was the spirit of Christmas, you *mythed* the whole thing!

Selected

Good News

A little boy in a Christmas program had but one sentence to say: “Behold, I bring you good tidings.” After the rehearsal he asked his mother what tidings meant, and she told him it meant news.

When the program was put on, he was stagestruck and forgot his line. Finally the idea came back to him and he cried out, “Hey, I got news for you!”

* * *

Parents are people who bear infants, bore teen-agers, and board newlyweds.

Do not criticize unless you have made an effort to do the job better—and succeeded.

Persons hardest to convince they are of retirement age are children at bedtime.

The troops were being taught to jump from a plane.

“What if my parachute doesn’t open?” asked one rookie.

“That,” said the instructor, “is known as jumping to a conclusion.”

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HERE AND THERE AMONG BOOKS

Conducted by the Editor

All books reviewed may be ordered from
your Publishing House

Aging, the Fulfillment of Life

By *Henri J. M. Nouwen and Walter J. Gaffney*, photographs by Ron P. Van Den Bosch. (Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1974. \$6.95.)

The prologue and epilogue of this enlightening text read like poetry. The comparison of life to the wagon wheel which rests, leaning against a birch tree in the white snow, tells of the fulfillment of the life cycle . . . the spokes of our lives having made their full turn.

Henri J. M. Nouwen is a Dutch priest-

psychologist who has written a number of books on ministry and is presently on the faculty of the Yale Divinity School. Walter J. Gaffney is involved in community action programs in New Haven, Conn.

The presentation is divided into two main sections: "Aging as a Way to Darkness," and "Aging as a Way to Light."

DARKNESS is realized through the experiences of rejection the author calls *segregation*—the rejection by society; *desolation*—the rejection by friends; and

loss of self—the rejection of self. In a civilization in which being is less valuable than having, many people start experiencing themselves as old when institutional arrangements such as retirement and Social Security place them outside the circle of those who primarily identify themselves with what they do, have, or can acquire.

LIGHT does not seem to be so well documented as the darkness. Light does not seem to fit in the computers and tabulation machines of the profit-makers. For the fortunate minority, the Light is formed by *hope*, *humor*, and *vision*. When hope grows, we see that we are not worth only what we achieve, but what we are, that while life might lose in use it might win in meaning. Humor is defined as knowledge with a soft smile. And vision is brought about by hope and

humor. "Whoever has learned to live in the Light is no longer worried by the problem of whether the Light will still be there tomorrow."

And so, young and old embrace each other in the realization that, after all, old age is not the last segregation. It is revealed to us that ultimately we are not divided between young and old, but all united as children of the Light (Eph. 5:8).

This very readable book is punctuated by photography illustrating picturesque concepts of aging in life. It concludes with the triumphant message that "the body of Jesus has become the sign of hope and new life for many who bear their aging lives in patience. The Son of Man grew into the fullness of the Son of God. He was the light that came into our darkness and revealed to us that the turning of the wheel is not a return to the cold ground, but one step forward in the history of salvation."

JOHN R. DAVIDSON

Preachers' Exchange



WANTED: One good set of the *Letters of John Wesley*, Epworth Edition. Gary M. Noyes, 11837 London Street, N.E., Blaine, Minn. 55434

WANTED: *Living Messages from the Canaan Journey*, by E. W. Black. Rev. R. E. Rogers, 5229 Swift Road, Sarasota, Fla. 33581.

WANTED: *Selected Sermons*, by T. DeWitt Talmadge (in volume set or just some volumes). Leon Chambers, 609 Magnolia, Ave., Gadsden, Ala. 35903.

FOR SALE: *Sermons That Search the Soul*, by E. E. Shelhamer, \$3.50; *Abraham the Jew*, by Harry Jessop (paper), \$2.00. *Cardinal Elements in Sanctification* (Studies in Holiness, Vol. 1), by S. S. White (paper), \$2.50. *Eradication, Defined, Explained, and Authenticated* (Vol. 2) by S. S. White, \$2.50. *All Out for Souls*, edited and compiled by R. V. DeLong (This contained the gist of addresses given in 1947 in Kansas City. Most are now deceased.) \$2.00. E. Ellsworth Nothstine, P.O. Box 100, Lowndesville, S.C. 29659.

COMING next month

• Fifty Golden Years

Next month we celebrate our fiftieth anniversary. It was January, 1926, when Editor James B. Chapman put together the first issue of the *Preacher's Magazine*.

• The Prayer Life of the Pastor

E. E. Wordsworth contributed an article in the first issue, and his pen still strikes the fire for Christ and holiness.

• Learning the Secret of Victory

Another early contributor, W. B. Walker, writes again for one of his favorite magazines.

• The Camp Meeting and the Mourners' Bench

A nostalgic look at early "Wesleyana" offers some interesting facts about holiness history.



AMONG OURSELVES

The sharpest mark of maturity is to recognize how much better it is to give than to receive. There are some persons who have lived several years without ever discovering this. There are many, alas, who will live out their lives and die without ever discovering it. But the Christian soon learns about it, because this is what his faith is all about. As a babe in Christ, he is quite excited about what God has "done for him" and how sweet it is to enjoy the "benefits" of salvation. Then he begins to grow in grace, and he discovers the joy of giving as only *agape* love can compel a person to give. He sees this as the heart of the Christmas spirit (p. 1), and his secret for coping with his hurts and disappointments (p. 3). His greatest thrill is in watching his parishoners discover it (p. 19) as they continue in the stream of holiness (p. 12). Those of us here in the editorial office find these thoughts tend to make our labors joyful, sending our pages your way with something of ourselves in every line. Our prayer is that you may find, in receiving these morsels, some small portion of blessing we have had in giving them. This is our way of saying, "Merry Christmas!"—and may these be good days for you and yours.

Yours for souls,

CONCEPTS



DEEPER
INSIGHTS

EXPANDED THOUGHTS

FRESH
SERMONS
for Christmas
Giving!



PROCLAIMING THE SPIRIT

Compiled by Harold Bonner. Ponteder Gilliland, W. T. Purkiser, Reuben Welch, and seven other prominent ministers express their concepts of the place of the Holy Spirit in their own lives and in their pulpit ministry. As an added feature, there are four sermon outlines from each of the 10 contributors. 150 pages. Board. **\$3.50**

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