# "IN MEMORY"

*(Through Messages and Tributes, Celebrating Christ's Resurrection, and Anticipating Our Heavenly Home After Death)*

**By**

**RON CHRISTIAN**

## *ACKNOWLEDGEMENT*

***As author of this book, I wish to express my deep appreciation to Shirley Ruiz, who dedicated her great skills, abounding energy, and many hours of her time in typing the entire manuscript as well as adding illustrations in this book. I feel certain that her committed hands will bring great blessings to many persons.***

# *IN MEMORY*

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***Our end may be nearer than we realize. When it comes, let us not cringe before death as a tyrant. If He Who conquered death and all its powers is resident within the heart, then death is only a departing to be with the Lord, which is far better. No fear will be ours. "How strange this fear of death is!" George Macdonald once exclaimed to a friend, "Yet we are never frightened at a sunset". And what is death to the Christian, but a glorious sunset and the dawning of a more blessed day in a Summerland where eyes are never wet with the tears of separation.***

***"All The Last Words of Saints and Sinners";***
***By Herbert Lockyer***

***What sort of a place shall heaven be? Heaven shall be a place of perfect rest and peace. They that dwell there have no more conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil; their warfare is accomplished, and their fight is fought; at length they may lay aside the armor of God, at last they may say to the sword of the Spirit, "Rest and be still." They watch no longer, for they have no spiritual enemies to fear; they fast and mortify the flesh no longer, for they have no vile earthy body to keep under; they pray no more, for they have no evil to pray against. There the wicked must cease from troubling; there sin and temptation are forever shut out; the gates are better barred than those of Eden, and the devil shall enter in no more. O Christian brethren, rouse and take comfort; surely, this shall be indeed a blessed rest. There shall be no need of means of grace, for we shall have the end to which they are meant to lead; there shall be no need of sacraments, we shall have the substance they are appointed to keep in mind; there faith shall be swallowed up in sight, and hope in certainty, and prayer in praise, and sorrow in joy. Now is the school time, the season of the lesson and the rod, then will be the eternal holiday. Now we must endure hardness and press on faint yet pursuing, then we shall sit down at ease, for the Canaanite shall be expelled forever from the land. Now we are tossed upon a stormy sea, then we shall be safe in harbor. Now we have to plow and sow, there we shall reap the harvest; now we have the labor, but then the wages; now we have the battle, but then the victory and reward. Now we must bear the cross, but then we shall receive the crown. Now we are journeying through the wilderness, but then we shall be at home. O Christian brethren, well may the Bible tell you, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labor". Surely, you must feel that witness is true.***

***"Classic Sermons on Heaven and Hell";***
***Sermon by John Charles Ryle; pgs. 37-38.***

***So much about my mother was uneventful and ordinary. There was no spectacular drama, no newspaper headline, and no high adventure. She lived an ordinary life and died an ordinary death.***

***But she did both well. She loved my father well, and she loved us kids well. She lived through the drab terrain of the ordinary with grace and gentleness. She accepted her slowly deteriorating condition with a noble faith. She received death as she had life and disability; with patience and courage. My mother understood that sanctity of the ordinary.***

***"Prayer, Finding the Heart's True Home";***
***By Richard Foster; pg. 170***

***If there be hope for us, hope which is not a lie, then it must be hope not of our own creation, mortal, as we are, not the result of wishful thinking or human potential. It must be something outside of us and our finitude, some stunning intrusion, some act of God reversing our shuffle toward the grave and overcoming the final enemy, something which in power defeats death and gives life, some dawn not of our devising, something which shakes our death – dealing world to its foundations, some descent to us, some divine rolling back of the great stone under which we all labor, some light in the dark of death.***

***"As the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone…His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow…The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised…"***

***"The Library of Distinctive Sermons';***
***Quotation by Dr. William H. Willimon; pg. 18***

***Death is nothing at all; I have only slipped away into the next room.***

***I am I and you are you, whatever we were to each other we are still.***

***Call me by my old familiar name; speak to me in the easy way which we always used.***

***Put no difference in your tone; wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.***

***Laugh as we always laughed at little jokes together.***

***Pray, smile, think of me, pray for me.***

***Let my name be ever the household word that it always was, let it be spoken without the effort, without the trace of a shadow in it.***

***Life means all that it ever meant, it is the same as it ever was; there is absolutely unbroken continuity.***

***What is death but a negligible accident? Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight?***

***I am but waiting for you, for an interval somewhere very near, just around the corner. All is well.***

***Nothing is past; nothing is lost. One brief moment and all will be as before.***

***Henry Scott Holland,***
***1847-1918***

***If it is really God behind all the masks of death, what happens when a person dies?***

***Exactly the opposite of what seems to happen. The eye does not grow dim but bright. Death does not approach; death recedes forever. Life does not ebb but flows over our old container, overcomes it, and kills it. It is not a defeat of life but an excess of life that kills us. Death seems to catch up with us from behind, from our past, from the aging process built into our material bodies. But it is life that catches up with us from ahead and kills this body of death. We think the opposite because we look from the past. From the past, we see what was, that is, the body of death and its process of aging and dying. God sees from ahead, from what to us is future. What to us will be, to Him is. From God's point of view – the true point of view – It is His eternal life in the form of our heavenly body, our spiritual body, meeting our body of death at the point of death that slays and conquers this body. Our own new body kills our old body. Our new body is the sword in God's hand by which He executes judgment upon our old body. And the ultimate meaning of this execution, the ultimate meaning of death, is love.***

***"Love Is Stronger Than Death";***
***By Peter Kreeft; pg. 109***

***O Lord of all worlds, we bless your name for all those who have entered into their rest, and reached the promised land where you are seen face to face. Give us grace to follow in their footsteps, as they followed in the footsteps of your holy Son. Keep alive in us the memory of those dear to ourselves whom you have called to yourself; and grant that every remembrance which turns our hearts from things seen to things unseen may lead us always upwards to you, until we come to our eternal rest; through Jesus Christ our Lord.***

***F.J.A. Hort, 1828-92***

***It matters not whether we die young or old, naturally or tragically, unexpectedly or otherwise, if ours is the glorious hope that death is but the opening of a gate into a larger life. To all such, death has no terrors. It comes as a welcome friend, bidding us enter the eternal home of peace and bliss. Gerhardt has taught us to sing –***

***"Let us in life, in death,***
***Thy steadfast truth declare,***
***And publish with our latest breath***
***Thy love and guardian care."***

***"All The Last Words of Saints and Sinners";***
***By Herbert Lockyer; pg. 37***

***"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1st Corinthians 15:57)***

***When I look back and read of the early Christians, I am charmed to find how they always felt about dying. They had such a sense of dying in Jesus, such a sense of the reality of the Heavenly Home, such a sense of the glory of the future state, that they could take their children, and put them, as it were, into the hands of God, and rejoice and sing hymns of gradulation that they were about to go; and they could meet together over their dead as men meet to celebrate a great victory. This feeling is lost out of the Church; it is largely lost out of men's apprehension; and it seems to me that it will be one of the beneficent features in the development of Christianity in our age, and in the future ages, to bring back again in the experience of men, the beauty of death, the triumph of death and the overhanging light and glory that ought to destroy that darkness which to us, for the most part, envelopes the door of the grave.***

***When we comprehend the fullness of what death will do for us, in all our outlook and in all our fore look, dying is triumphing. Not any bower of roses is so festooned in June. Not where the Jessamine and honeysuckle twine, and lovers sit, is there so fair a sight, so sweet a prospect, as where a soul in its early years is flying away, out of life and out of time, through the gate of death – the rosy gate of death, the royal gate of death, the golden gate of death, the pearly gate of death.***

***Dying, what is it? To shut out the black night and join the fireside of your Father's Home.***

***Robert E. Selle.***

***"Traveling Toward Sunrise";***
***By Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 302.***

***We give back to you, O God, those whom you gave to us. You did not lose them when you gave them to us, and we do not lose them by their return to you. Your dear Son has taught us that life is eternal and love cannot die, so death is only a horizon, and a horizon is only the limit of our sight. Open our eyes to see more clearly and draw us close to you that we may know that we are nearer to our loved ones, who are with you. You have told us that you are preparing a place for us; prepare us, that where you are we may be always, O dear Lord of life and death.***

***William Penn, 1644-1718***

***IS THERE A HEAVEN?***

***THE NEW TESTAMENT IS COMPLETELY POSITIVE UPON THE POINT.***

***We do not just go into the earth and rot. Our real selves, which survive the decay of our bodies, submit to judgment and receive their reward.***

***Yet a careful examination of what the Bible does say about heaven makes three things clear. It is a sphere of growth, work, and great happiness.***

***Heaven is not static. God means to perfect all who come and he has all eternity in which to do it.***

***Nor is heaven a place of endless Church services with the choir doing most of the work! Jesus said, "My Father works even until now, and I work." When John caught a glimpse of heaven in a vision, he said of those he saw there, "They serve him day and night.***

***As for the happiness of heaven – language fails again. The Bible says quite plainly that in heaven there is no evil, no sorrow, and no pain. What it must be to those who love God deeply to be forever in his presence none can know till they are there. To quote the Bible again, it is "above what we can ask or think".***

***"Questions People Ask About Religion";***
***By William Sangster; pgs. 130-131***

***JOHN BROOKS (1825), Governor of Massachusetts, affirmed on his deathbed;***

***"I see nothing terrible in death. I'm looking to the future; I have no fears. I know in whom I have believed. I look back upon my past life with humility. I am sensible of many imperfections that cleave to me. I now rest my soul on the mercy of my Creator, through the only Mediator, His Son, and our Lord. Oh, what a ground of hope there is in that saying of Paul that God is in Christ reconciling the guilty world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."***

***"All The Last Words of Saints and Sinners";***
***By Herbert Lockyer; pg. 96)***

***"1 For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. 2 Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, 3 because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. 4 For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. 6 Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. 7 For we live by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9 So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. (2nd Corinthians 5:1-10)***

***Paul regards the body as merely a tent, a temporary dwelling place, in which we sojourn till the day comes when it is dissolved and we enter into the real abode of our souls.***

***He is not looking for a Nirvana with the peace of extinction; he is not looking for absorption in the divine; he is not looking for the freedom of a disembodied spirit; he is waiting for the day when God will give him a new body, a spiritual body, in which he will still be able, even in the heavenly places, to serve and to adore God.***

***It is Paul's conviction that even here and now the Christian can enjoy the foretaste of the life everlasting. It is given to the Christian to be a citizen of two worlds. He has one foot in time and one in eternity. His body is on earth but his heart is in heaven. And the result is, not that he despises this world, but that even this world is clad with the sheen of glory, which is the reflection of the greater glory that shall be.***

***"The Daily Study Bible – Letters To The Corinthians:";***
***By William Barclay; pgs. 227-229)***

***Christians are even here on earth, residents of a heavenly kingdom, and since this kingdom is eternal, the astounding conclusion is that we can have eternal life in the present.***

***Consider the profound implications of the idea of eternity right now. It means that we should treat other people as immortal souls and not as perishable bodies. It means that what good we build here on earth becomes part of God's eternal kingdom. It means that heaven is now a dimension of everyday existence, and we can enjoy even in this life a foretaste of the life to come.***

***"Life After Death, The Evidence";***
***By Dinesh D'Souza; pg. 234)***

***Christian, look up and take comfort, Jesus has prepared a place for you, and they that follow Him shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of His hands. Look forward to that glorious abode He has provided; look forward in faith, for it is yours. O Christian brethren, think what a glorious meeting that shall be. There we shall see the saints of old, of whom we have so often read; there we shall see those holy ministers whose faith and patience we have admired; there we shall see one another around the throne of our common Savior, and be parted and separated no more. There we shall labor and toil no more, for the days of mourning shall be ended.***

***"Classic Sermons on Heaven and Hell";***
***Sermon by John Charles Ryle; pg. 45)***

***If this life, with all its difficulties and problems, has been so wonderfully good in the loving kindness of God, how surpassingly good it must be yonder in the sunshine of eternity! 'Eye has not seen,' declares Paul, 'nor ear heard, nor heart of man conceived what God has prepared.'***

***And you who may have had to say goodbye to someone you loved the best, will you listen to the trumpet-notes of your own faith? 'Christ is risen. He has abolished death. He has led captivity captive. As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.' This is no myth. The Greeks had a fable of a man who in old age was given back his youth. But there is nothing mythical here. For this is true. 'I have glorified My name': God did that indeed, when He first brought your loved one to your side. But listen when your heart is quiet, and you will hear the voice go on, like trumpets sounding the reveille of the resurrection – 'And I will glorify it again. I will give you the ecstasy of reunion, where there is no parting again forever.'***

***I am persuaded you can trust a God like that. I know that you can trust Him even with the dear ones whom death has snatched away.***

***And when your own hour comes, that hour of which you have sometimes wondered 'How shall I do in the swellings of Jordan?' I shall tell you how you will do. When the waves are washing your soul into glory, you will hear voices shout the praises of Jesus: and then suddenly, the incredible miracle – you will be 'like Him'. Dare to imagine it - yourself, myself, like Jesus: for we shall see Him as He is.***

***'I have glorified My name, and will glorify it again.' Therefore – expect great things from God!***

***"River of Life";***
***By James S. Stewart; pg. 141***

***Where God is, there is the heaven of the righteous; but when God is revealed everywhere, as we may suppose He is to the glorified, then in every part of the universe the righteous find their heaven.***

***Jesus designated heaven "My Father's House". This is suggestive of the great family reunion there of all the children of God. Very naturally, we think of those with whom we have lived upon earth as the friends with whom we hope to dwell hereafter, freed from all our present imperfections, and perfected in person, in character, and in love. But this gives a very limited idea of the opportunities for fellowship which heaven will afford. Not only shall we "sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven", but we shall have opportunity for converse with the noble and the true of every land and of every age.***

***Such ideas lift our thoughts beyond the common and narrow conception of a limited, local heaven, and give wider scope for the employments and enjoyments of the blessed. The service of God upon earth is not confined to acts of worship, but includes duties of every kind performed under the influence of filial love. Surely, in heaven, our employments will be far more varied, yet they will all be as much channels of joy to ourselves as offerings of praise to our Lord. As heirs of God, we come into the enjoyment of our inheritance, not by the deceased of our Father, but by our own coming of age. Hence, all the resources of Deity, however they may engage themselves in the future history of the new-created universe, will lie open for our enjoyment. All things will be ours; for God Himself in His infinite love and boundless wealth will be our portion forever. In His presence is fullness of joy, and at His right hand there are pleasures for evermore.***

***"A Popular Exposition of Methodist Theology";***
***By Charles O. Eldridge; pgs. 189-190***

***"I dreamed that I was growing old***
***(It may be it was not a dream),***
***I shivered in the frosty cold***
***And trembled in the summer beam;***
***It cost me many a bitter sigh,***
***Until I knew, it was not I.***

***The house my Maker for me made***
***Received His likeness in its form;***
***His wisdom all its parts displayed,***
***His beauty clothed its chambers warm;***
***It is not so fair as years go by;***
***What matter – for it is not I.***

***The lamps that light its rooms burn low,***
***Its music sounds more dull of late,***
***And one – it may be friend or foe,***
***Knocks loudly often at its gate;***
***I tremble then – I scarce know why,***
***My house he claims, it is not I.***

***I am indeed a dweller there,***
***A winter and a summer guest;***
***Its rust and its decay I share,***
***But cannot look therein to rest.***
***I'm sure to leave it by and by –***
***'Tis but my house – It is not I.***

***I sometimes think, when lying down.***
***For the last time I lock the door,***
***And leave the home so long my own,***
***That I shall find it yet once more***
***So changed and fair I scarce shall know***
***The house I lived in Long Ago.***

***Unknown Source and Author to Me***

***In the cloud of grief over Bob's death, I began to see the meaning of Easter in a new light. As a five-year-old on Easter Sunday, I had learned the harsh lesson of irreversibility. Ironically, now as an adult I saw that Easter actually offered an awesome promise of reversibility. Nothing – no act of childhood cruelty, no experience of shame or remorse, and, no, not even death – was final. Even that could be reversed.***

***On Friday, Jesus' closest friends had let the relentless crush of history snuff out all their dreams. Two days later, when the crazy rumors about Jesus' missing body shot through Jerusalem, they couldn't dare to believe. They were too conditioned to the irreversible. Only personal appearances by Jesus convinced them that something new, new, had broken out on earth. When that sank in, those same men who had slunk away in fear at Calvary were soon preaching to large crowds in the streets of Jerusalem.***

***At Bob McQuilkin's funeral, I rephrased Rollo May's question in the terms of our own grief. What would it mean for us if Bob rose again? We were sitting in a chapel, numbered by three days of grief and sadness, the weight of death bearing down upon us. What would it be like to walk outside to the parking lot and there, to our utter astonishment, find Bob. Bob! With his bounding walk, his crooked grin, and clear gray eyes.***

***That image gave me a hint of what Jesus' disciples felt on the first Easter. They, too, had grieved for three days. But on Sunday, they caught a glimpse of something else, a startling clue to the riddle of the universe. Easter hits a new note, a note of hope and faith that what God did once in a graveyard in Jerusalem, he can and will repeat on a grand scale, for the world. For Bob. For us. Against all odds, the irreversible can be reversed.***

***The German theologian Jűrgen Moltmann expresses in a single sentence the great span from Good Friday to Easter: It is, in fact, a summary of human history, past, present, and future: "God weeps with us so that we may someday laugh with him."***

***"Epiphanies", edited by Eugene Peterson***
***and Emile Griffin; above article excerpted***
***from a chapter by Philip Yancey; pgs. 144-145)***

***There must be, indeed, the change of progress; it is the permanence not of death but of life; and so the changes of decay, of loss, of bereavement, of the unreturning past, these are gone with the last great change, which ends the perishing and opens the eternal. There shall be no wavering of faith, no weaning of hope, no chill of love. Faith shall see, and yet go on into the unseen; hope shall enjoy, and yet look forward; love shall be perfect, and yet have increase. Here, change at every step leaves some lost good behind it; there, change shall take all its good things forward into fuller possession, and thus become a growing permanence. Many a heart has said with David, "O that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away and be at rest"; and has found it no more in the solitude than in the city; but the hand that is put out at the window of this ark of refuge will ensure to it peace always, by all means. "There remaineth a rest to the people of God." We can rely on nothing else but His promise for the fulfillment of it. Sometimes it looks so strange, so unearthly, so utterly away from all the laws of nature and life as we see them here, that it seems incredible.***

***"Classic Sermons on Heaven and Hell";***
***Sermon by John Ker; pgs. 59-60)***

***In one of his letters, Vincent van Gogh described a painting he'd seen depicting John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. A sandy path leads over the hills to a mountain, on top of which is the Heavenly City. On the road is a pilgrim who wants to go to the city. But he's tired and turns to a woman standing beside the road and asks:***

***"Does the road go uphill all the way?"***
***"Yes, to the very end."***
***"And will the journey take all day long?"***
***"Yes, from morn till night, my friend."***

***"Truly," van Gogh concluded, "it is not a picture, but an inspiration." For uphill though the way may often wind, and hard though the road may sometimes be, what lies ahead at the journey's end is home. This is the homecoming to which all restless hearts are invited. "There shall we rest and see, see and love, love and praise," Augustine wrote in The City of God. "This is what we shall be in the end without end. For what other end do we propose to ourselves than to attain to the kingdom of which there is no end?"***

***"Long Journey Home";***
***By Os Guiness; pg. 215)***

***I must die! Yes, but the old enemy shall now be my friend. He will not be my master, but my servant. He shall just be the porter, to open the door into my Father's house, into the home of unspeakable blessedness and glory. Death shall not hurt me!***

***I have seen a little child fall asleep while out in the streets of the city, and the kind nurse has taken charge of the sleeper, and when the little one awaked she was at home, and she opened her eyes upon her mother's face.***

***So shall it be with all who are alive in Christ, and who have risen from a spiritual grave. They shall just fall into a brief sweet sleep, and gentle death shall usher them into the glory of the endless day.***

***"My Daily Meditation";***
***By John Henry Jowett; pg. 79***

## *REFLECTIONS ON HEAVEN*

***"The LORD is in His holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men."***
***PSALM 11:4***

***If God has a way, then that is the only way. Every little thing in which you would have your own way has a mission for your redemption, and He will treat you as a disobedient child until you take your Father's way for yours.***

***There will be this difference, however, between the rich man who loves his riches and the poor man who hates his poverty. When they die, the heart of the one will be still crowded with things and their pleasures, while the heart of the other will be relieved of their lack. The one has had his good things, the other his evil things. But the rich man who held his things lightly nor let them nestle in his heart, who was a channel and no cistern, who was ever and always forsaking his money – starts, in the new world, side by side with the man who accepted, not hated, his poverty. Each will say, 'I am free!"***

***The only air of the soul, in which it can breathe and live, is the present God and the spirits of the just – that is our heaven, our home. Cleansed of greed, jealousy, vanity, pride, possession, and all the thousand forms of evil self, we will be God's children on the hills and in the fields of that heaven, no one desiring to be better than another.***

***"The Best of George MacDonald"; pg. 129***

***When Victor Hugo was past eighty years of age, he gave expression to his religious faith in these sublime sentences: "I feel in myself the future life. I am like a forest, which has been more than once cut down. The new shoots are livelier than ever. I am rising toward the sky. The sunshine is on my head. The earth gives me its generous sap, but Heaven lights me with its unknown worlds.***

***"You say the soul is nothing but the resultant of the bodily powers. Why then is my soul more luminous when my bodily powers begin to fail? Winter is on my head, but eternal spring is in my heart. I breathe at this hour the fragrance of the lilacs, the violets, and the roses as at twenty years. The nearer I approach the end, the plainer I hear around me the immortal symphonies of the worlds, which invite me. It is marvelous, yet simple."***

***Our hearts pant for that illustrious sunrise.***

***"Traveling Toward Sunrise";***
***By Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 199***

***Malcolm Muggeridge, one of the most brilliant thinkers of the 20th Century, was an internationally respected journalist, and a keen and long-time observer of the international conditions of our war-torn world. He became a Christian believer, later in his life, and he shared many thoughtful insights regarding his personal experience with the Christian Faith, after he personally accepted Christ as his living Redeemer. Following is an expression of his trust in God in the face of his own impending physical death!***

***"There are certain things we can never know, and the exact circumstances of dying, and what happens afterwards, are among them. I have an absolute conviction, without any qualification whatsoever, that this life that we live in time and space for three-score years is not the whole story, that it is only part of a larger story. Therefore, death cannot be for others, or for oneself, an end, any more than birth is a beginning. Death is part of a larger pattern; it fits into a larger, eternal scale, not simply a time scale. This is something I know. Whether the ego, or what we call the personality, remains intact, or remains at all, whether the separate individuality as we know it remains are questions to which I don't know the answers. No one knows, and no one ever will know. I think of my own death as something which will transform my way of living into another mode of living rather than as an end; and one thinks of others whom one has loved and who have died as equally participating in that other existence, in that larger dimension. To me this is completely satisfying. I do not want to know any more than this. I'm perfectly content with it. I can honestly say that I have never been afraid of death, and I am less afraid of it now than ever. I just look forward to it as something that will happen.***

***I think the most important sentence in the whole Christian religion, devotionally speaking, is Thy will be done. This is the essential sentence to be able to say, especially in relation to death.***

***"Seeing Through the Eye - Malcolm Muggeridge on Faith";***
***pgs. 211-212***

***SIR ISAAC PITMAN 1813-1897), phonographer and inventor of shorthand, said:***

***"To those who ask how Isaac Pitman passed away, say, 'Peacefully, and with no more concern than passing from one room to another to take up some further employment.'"***

***"All the Last Words of Saints and Sinners";***
***By Herbert Lockyer; pg. 114***

## *THE SOUL IN DEATH*

***"What kind of existence shall I then enter upon, when my spirit has launched out of the body? How shall I feel myself…when the organs of hearing are moldering into dust, in what manner shall I hear? When my brain is of no farther use, what means of thinking shall I have?" What shall I be and do after my death? What will the intermediate state between death and the final resurrection be like, when my spirit is out of my body? Here Wesley engages in broad theological and exegetical conjectures concerning the immortal soul at the time of death.***

***As a very old man, he poignantly described himself already as "strangely-connected with a little portion of earth, but this only for a while. In a short time I am to quit this tenement of clay, and remove into another state," which the living know not and the dead cannot tell. "How strange, how incomprehensible, are the means whereby I shall then take knowledge even of the material world!"***

***Admittedly, there is much of the invisible world of which we can "know nothing and indeed we need to know nothing." Most of our ideas and impressions remain conjectural, even with the most acute reasoning and widest data, lacking the promises of divine disclosure.***

***It is at least clear that we will go from one existence to another very different one. From Scripture we learn that the spirits of the righteous are to be blessed by dwelling with God face to face, while those of the wicked remain infinitely distanced from the eternal blessedness of God.***

***To those who ask: "Is heaven a state or a place?" the fitting response is:***

***"There is no opposition between these two…It is the place wherein God more immediately dwells with those saints who are in a glorified state," the essential feature of which is "to see God, to know God, to love God". We shall then know both His nature, and His works of creation, of providence, and of redemption. Even in paradise, in the intermediate state between death and the resurrection, we shall learn more concerning these in an hour than we could in an age during our stay in the body."***

***"John Wesley's Christianity"; Written and compiled***
***By Thomas Oden; pgs. 348-349***

***"The voice of weeping shall be no more heard."*** **Isaiah 65:19**

***-The glorified weep no more, for outward causes of grief are gone. There are no broken friendships, nor blighted prospects in heaven. Poverty, famine, peril, persecution, and slander, are unknown there. No pain distresses, no thought of death or bereavement saddens. They weep no more, for they are perfectly sanctified. No "evil heart of fault before His throne, and are fully conformed to His image. Well may they cease to mourn who have ceased to sin. They weep no more, because all fear of change is past. They know that they are eternally secure. Sin is shut out, and they are shut in. they dwell within a city which shall never be stormed; they bask in sun which shall never set; they drink of a river which shall never dry; they pluck fruit from a tree which shall never wither. Countless cycles may revolve, but eternity shall not be exhausted, and while eternity endures, their immortality and blessedness shall co-exist with it. They are forever with the Lord. They weep no more, because every desire is full filled. They cannot wish for anything which they have not in possession. Eye and ear, heart and hand, judgment, imagination, hope, desire, will, all the faculties, are completely satisfied; and imperfect as our present ideas are of the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, yet we know enough, by the revelation of the Spirit, that the saints above are supremely blessed. The joy of Christ, which is an infinite fullness of delight, is in them. They bathe themselves in the bottomless, shore less sea of infinite beatitude. That same joyful rest remains for us. it may not be far distant, ere long the weeping willow shall be exchanged for the palm-branch of victory, and sorrow's dewdrops will be transformed into the peals of everlasting bliss. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words.***

***"Morning By Morning" by***
***Charles Spurgeon; pg. 219***

***THE WINNER'S CIRCLE***

***"The Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free." Ephesians 6:8, NIV***

***For all we don't know about the next life, this much is certain. The day Christ comes will be a day of reward. Those who went unknown on earth will be known in heaven. Those who never heard the cheers of men will hear the cheers of angels. Those who missed the blessing of a father will hear the blessing of their heavenly Father. The small will be great. The forgotten will be remembered. The unnoticed will be crowned and the faithful will be honored.***

***The winner's circle isn't reserved for a handful of the elite, but for a heaven full of God's children who "will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him." (James 1:12, NIV)***

***"Grace For The Moment";***
***By Max Lucado; pg. 702***

***Now is our only time to act, to decide. Hence it becomes important to "be very careful, then how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity" (Eph. 5:15; cf. Col. 4:5)***

***Time flows. Each moment is a potentially delicious gift. None can be replaced or retracted, once gone. No moment lasts. One's loving, believing, and one's very being as a person is chosen ever anew with each moment.***

***Suppose every moral decision were forever subject to endless revision. Would not all-moral seriousness thereby be infinitely postponeable? If there were no death, it seems difficult to conclude that there could be much significance to historical life, since life's significance as decision hinges on its limitation in time. If so, oddly enough, death is what makes life meaningful, for this life is morally serious only if it ends. The equation is precise: Those who take life seriously take death seriously. Those who take death seriously take life seriously. Where death is avoided, life is avoided. Only one who has accepted the reality of death is prepared to accept life. (John 12:24; Cor. 5:14, 15)***

***God gives us only this fleeting time upon earth to make decisions, to shape our own responsive existence, to hear and respond to the divine address, to live for or against the good in each moment (Josh 24:15). When we die, the time for deciding is past (Gen. 27:2-10). The burden of freedom is lifted; the wealth of freedom spent.***

***Nature does not permit life without death. Only if a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies does it produce many seeds. (John 12:24)***

***Death ends the condition of pilgrimage through the world and inaugurates the consummation, excluding further temporal choices. "Night is coming, when no one can work" (John 9:4; cf. Matt. 26:42; 25:13). Human life is in this way analogous to the falling of a tree: "in the place where it falls, there will it lie" (Eccles. 11:3). Death means unequivocal limitation. No one can "obtain after death that which he has neglected to secure here". The view is generally rejected that those who, having wavered between belief and unbelief, die in sin will be allowed to make or reverse a final decision after death.***

***Life puts every person to the test. Life itself is the examination. Finally, life absolutely requires one to face one's finitude. From beginning to end, we are called to acknowledge our lives as creatures under limitation. It is a test that lasts not an hour but a lifetime. Death is the last event in the probation that constitutes life. "Life In The Spirit – Systematic Theology: Volume Three"; by Thomas C. Oden; pgs. 378-379***

***Nothing that defiles shall enter heaven. Nothing that is unclean, unholy, impure, unchaste, shall ever cast its black shadow athwart that world of love above. Heaven then is to be a holy place.***

***A busy place heaven is to be, without any weariness. Here we are wearied. Oh, the pressure of life's battle is such, the work to be done is such, the call is such, that the brain gets tired, the head bows with weariness, the limbs drag with burdens, and the spirit cries out its pain because of exhaustion. There shall be none of that in God's house above.***

***Oh, the children that shall be in that cloudless land! All of the blessed little fellows, who die before they can discern between right and wrong, before they can discriminate, before they can pass morally and personally on the question of the call of God to repentance and faith – all of them dying this side that line of personal accountability, everyone, shall pass through the gates into the city of God.***

***"Classic Sermons on Heaven and Hell";***
***Sermon by George W. Trutt; pgs. 75-77***

## *EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY BODIES*

***"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive."***
***I Corinthians 15:22***

***This body of ours is the means of revelation to us, the camera in which God's eternal shows are set forth. By the body, we come into contact with nature, with our fellow men, with all their revelations of God to us. Through the body, we receive all the lessons of passion, suffering, love, beauty, and science. Through the body, we are trained outward from ourselves and driven inward into our deepest selves to find God.***

***We cannot yet have learned all we are meant to learn through the body. How much of the teaching even of this world can the most diligent and most favored man have exhausted before he is called to leave it! Is all that remains to be lost?***

***We need not only a body to convey revelation to us, but also a body to reveal to us to others. The thoughts, feelings, and imaginations that arise in us must have their garments of revelation whereby the unseen world within us will be manifested to our brothers and sisters around us; otherwise, each is left in human loneliness. Now, if this be one of the uses my body served on earth, the new body must be the same body, glorified as we are glorified, with all that was distinctive of each from his fellows more visible than ever before. The accidental, nonessential unrevealing, and incomplete will have vanished. That which made the body what it was in the eyes of those who loved us will be tenfold there. Will not this be the resurrection of the body? Of the same body though not of the same dead matter? Every eye will see the beloved. Every heart will cry, "My own again – more mine because it's more himself than ever I beheld him!"***

***"The Best of George MacDonald"; pgs. 116-117***

***And, after death, what cometh? What wonder-world will open upon our astonished sight? What scene of glory will be unfolded to our view? No traveler has ever returned to tell. But we know enough of the heavenly land to make us welcome our summons thither with joy and gladness. The journey of death may be dark, but we may go forth on it fearlessly, knowing that God is with us as we walk through the gloomy valley, and therefore we need fear no evil. We shall be departing from all we have known and loved here, but we shall be going to our Father's house – to our Father's home, where Jesus is – to that royal "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." This shall be our last removal, to dwell forever with Him we love, in the midst of His people, in the presence of God. CHRISTIAN, MEDITATE MUCH ON HEAVEN, it will help thee to press on, and to forget the toil of the way. This vale of tears is but the pathway to the better country: this world of woe is but the stepping-stone to a world of bliss.***

***Morning By Morning; By Charles H. Spurgeon,***
***(1834-1892); pg. 35.***

***Now if you believe Jesus, if God cares for the individual as Jesus said He did, if the very hairs of your head are all numbered and the paths of your feet all guided, if round your life there is the besetting pressure of the everlasting mercy, do you think a love so infinite and sublime is going to be defeated at the last by an incident like death? If the great Father has loved His children enough to go into the far country after them, to climb the terrible slopes of Calvary for them, to send the urgency and passion of His Holy Spirit to revive and rescue them, to cause all the bells of heaven to ring for the salvation of one of them coming home at last out of darkness into light; if God so loved the world – do you imagine that He will consent to have His love baulked and thwarted and robbed by death at the end of the day? "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades." God's love cannot finally be frustrated. If it means breaking the bands of death to satisfy that love, then break those bands He will. For when God loves once, He loves forever. It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of this argument for the life eternal: for it is Christ's argument.***

***"The Strong Name";***
***By James S. Stewart; pg. 236***

***Surely if He be the Father, and heaven be His house, the relation of the redeemed to one another must have in it more than all the sweet familiarity and unrestrained frankness, which subsists in the families of earth. A solitary heaven would be but half a heaven, and would ill correspond with the hopes that inevitably spring from the representation of it as "my Father's house".***

***There will be a great many occupants of the mansions in heaven that Christian men here on earth will be very much surprised to see there, and thousands will find their entrance there that never found their entrance into any communities of so-called Christians here on earth.***

***Heaven is a place, full of all sweet security and home like repose, where God is made known in every heart and to every consciousness as a loving Father, and of which all the inhabitants are knit together in the frankest fraternal intercourse, conscious of the Father's love, and rejoicing in the abundant provisions of His royal House.***

***"Classic Sermons on Heaven and Hell;***
***Sermon By Alexander Maclaren; pgs. 87-89***

***"FOR HERE WE HAVE NO CONTINUING CITY, BUT WE SEEK ONE TO COME."***
***(Heb. 13:14)***

***The words often on Jesus' lips in his last days express vividly the idea, "Going to the Father". We too, who are Christ's people, have vision of something beyond the difficulties and disappointments of this life. We are journeying toward fulfillment, completion, expansion of life. We, too, are "going to the Father". Much is dim concerning our home country, but two things are clear. It is home, 'The Father's House." It is the nearer presence of the Lord. We are all wayfarers, but the believer knows it and accepts. He is a traveler, not a settler.***

***The little birds trust God, they go singing***
***From northern woods where autumn winds have blown,***
***With joyous faith their trackless pathway winging***
***To summer lands of song, afar, unknown.***

***Let us go singing, then, and not go sighing***
***Since we are sure, our times are in His hand,***
***Why should we weep, and fear, and call it dying?***
***'Tis only flitting to a Summer land.***

***"Traveling Toward Sunrise";***
***By Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 308***

***We will not only survive death, but be raised from it. We are to be given new bodies like his resurrection body, with new and undreamed–of powers. For he is called both the 'first fruits' of the harvest and 'the firstborn from the dead'. Both metaphors give the same assurance. He was the first to rise; all his people will follow. We will have a body like his. 'Just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man (Adam) so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven (Christ)?' I Corinthians 15:49)***

***It is enough for us to know that on the last day and through eternity, we shall be both with Christ and like Christ; for the fuller revelation of what we are going to be we are content to wait.***

***There is no need for us to speculate about the precise nature of heaven. We are assured on the authority of Jesus Christ that it is the house and home of his Father and ours (there are twenty-two references to the Father in John 14), that his home is a prepared place containing many rooms or resting places, and that he himself will be there. What more do we need to know? To be certain that where he is, there we shall be also should be enough to satisfy our curiosity and allay our fears.***

***I have always derived much comfort from the statement of Revelation 7:9 that the company of the redeemed in heaven will be 'a great multitude which no man could number'. I do not profess to know how this can be, since Christians have always seemed to be a rather small minority. But Scripture states it for our comfort. Although no biblical Christian can be a universalist (believing that all mankind will ultimately be saved), since Scripture teaches the awful reality and eternity of hell, yet a biblical Christian can – even must – assert that the redeemed will somehow be an international throng so immense as to be countless. For God's promise is going to be fulfilled, Abraham's seed is going to be as innumerable as the dust of the earth, and the stars of the sky, and the sand on the seashore.***

***"Authentic Christianity"***
***By John Stott; pgs. 401-404***

***The truth of the matter is, death is not going to touch me personally at all. It is not going to touch the real "me". For this reason, I am going to be exactly the same man the first minute after death as I was the last minute before death. It would work no great moral change in me to pass from one side of the Potomac River to the other, nor would it work any great change for me to pass from one side of the narrow river called Death to the other.***

***In spite of this fact, however, there is a tremendously great tendency to believe that death will work a moral change, that you can lie down one moment self-centered, sin-conquered, and godless – and by the mere act of dying, wake up the next moment holy, sinless, and Christlike. It is absolutely false. If Christ does not save you in the here and now, do not expect death to accomplish what He was unable to accomplish. If the blood of Jesus Christ cannot cleanse you from all sin, do not be so mad as to expect that cleansing at the hands of the undertaker, the shroud, and the coffin. Believe me that as death finds you, so you will be the instant after when you open your eyes in the world unseen.***

***"Classic Sermons – On Heaven and Hell";***
***Sermon by Clovis Chappell; pgs. 101-102***

***ISAAC WATTS (1674-1748), was the English theologian and hymn-writer. Known as "The Evangelical Poet", it was Watts who gave the Church one of its most precious Calvary hymns, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross." His version of Psalm 90, "O God, Our Help in Ages Past", is perhaps the finest hymn in the English language. How triumphant was his last hour as he died in the Lord! Listen to his dying testimony:***

***"It is a great mercy that I have no matter of fear or dread of death. I could, if God please, lay my head back and die without terror this afternoon"***

***WHICH HE DID!***

***"All The Last Words of Saints and Sinner";***
***By Herbert Lockyer; pg. 119***

***GOD GOES WITH US***

***"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go."***
***Genesis 28:15 NIV***

***When God calls us into the deep valley of death, he will be with us. Dare we think that he would abandon us in the moments of death?...Would the shepherd require his sheep to journey to the highlands alone? Of course not. Would God require his child to journey to eternity alone? Absolutely not! He is with you!***

***What God said to Moses, he says to you: "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." (Exodus 33:14; NIV)***

***What God said to Jacob, he says to you: "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go." (Genesis 28:15; NIV)."***

***What God said to Joshua, he says to you: "Ás I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you". (Joshua 1:5; NIV)***

***"Grace For The Moment";***
***By Max Lucado; pg. 567***

***NANCY GUTHRIE says after her baby daughter died she began to understand why so many people found such comfort in knowing their loved one was in heaven. Out of grief came a yearning for heaven. "I never had this yearning before, but I do now," she says. "A piece of me is there. I now see in a much fuller way that this life is just a shadow of our real life-of eternal life in the presence of God."***

***The truth is, it often takes the death of a loved one to turn our thoughts to the brevity of this life and the promises of the next. Many of us have a good life here, and even if we don't have much, we generally think and live as if this life is all, there is. We may believe in the promises of eternal life, but they seem very far off.***

***Nancy challenges us to consider Eugene Peterson's translation of 2nd Corinthians 5:5 in The Message: "We've been given a glimpse of the real thing, our true home, and our resurrection bodies! The Spirit of God whets our appetite by giving us a taste of what's ahead. He puts a little of heaven in our hearts so that we'll never settle for less."***

***"The One Year Book of Encouragement";***
***By Harold Myra; p g. 226***

***"THERE TALKED WITH JESUS TWO MEN…MOSES AND ELIJAH." Luke 9:30.***

***How consoling is the truth that our loved ones who departed in Christ are not mantled in a dreamless sleep but like Moses and Elijah are in full possession of their faculties with their gracious Lord who is "the God of the living". The bodies of the godly dead sleep but await a glorious resurrection. "I believe in the resurrection of the body." But the Christian dead themselves have been raised already and sit together with Christ. None can awaken what is awake or bring to life what never ceased to live. The appearance then of Moses and Elijah on the mount assures our hearts that those who leave us and whose bodies are left to lie like fallen trees, like the Lord they are with, are alive forevermore.***

***"Seasons of The Lord"; Volume II;***
***pg. 32; Herbert Lockyer***

***"FOR EVERY HOUSE IS BUILDED BY SOME MAN; BUT HE THAT BUILT ALL THINGS IS GOD. (Heb. 3:4)***

***This world is but a quarry where the living stones of the Heavenly Jerusalem are cut and molded.***

***What is anything when you think of eternity, except a means to get there-so laugh at everything and go on in His Name.***

***What matters it to us who are immortal***
***Which side of the grave we stand on, when we know?***
***That what the world calls death is but the portal***
***Leading to life again? 'Tis but to go***
***Across the gurgling river in the dark***
***Hanging on to God; and but a moment so***
***Till we are over, and we disembark***
***And either life afresh. 'Tis basely wrong***
***We should so meanly under strike the mark***
***As measures life by years; and all long***
***Busy ourselves arranging little schemes***
***That death will dash to pieces, when we might***
***Be building, far above those earthly dreams,***
***Houses that stand forever in God's sight.***

***He who would pass the latter part of his days with honor and decency must when he is young, consider that he shall one day be old; and remember when he is old that he once was young.***

***"Traveling Toward Sunrise";***
***By Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 354***

## *NO MORE STRUGGLES*

***Read Revelation21:1-4***
***"God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Revelation 21:4***

***Fay Weldon went through what she thought was a near-death experience 2006 when an allergic reaction stopped her heart. She retold her experience to Elizabeth Grice of the London Daily Telegraph. She said that a "terrible creature" tried to pull her through pearly gates, while doctors tried to pull her back. Later, she said, "If that was dying, I don't want to do it again." It's "just more of the same. More struggle."***

***Often the process of dying is a struggle. But death itself need not be feared by the believer in Christ – for it will bring us to heaven. In Revelation, John gives a wonderful description of what eternity with God will be like (21:1-4). He sees the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. The city of Jerusalem was a physical sign of the people of God and was described as the place where God dwells (Ps. 76:2). The New Jerusalem, on the other hand, will not be made by human hands. It will be a place where God lives with His people eternally, and it will be a place of "no more" – no more pain, sorrow, and sickness.***

***We don't know very much about eternity, but we do know that for the Christian, whatever our emotional and physical struggles are now, they will cease then. Life with God will be better by far.***

***Think of a land of no sorrow,***
***Think of a land of no fears,***
***Think of no death and no sickness,***
***Think of a land of no tears. – Anon.***

***"Our Daily Bread"; For January 25, 2011;***
***By Marvin Williams***

## *OUR ULTIMATE DILEMMA*

***"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies." John 11:25; NIV***

***Her words were full of despair. "if you had been here…" She stares into the Master's face with confused eyes. She'd been strong long enough now it hurt too badly. Lazarus was dead. Her brother was gone. And the one man who could have made a different didn't. He hadn't even made it for the burial. Something about death makes us accuse God of betrayal. "If God were here there would be no death!" We claim.***

***You see, if God is God anywhere, he has to be God in the face of death. Pop psychology can deal with depression. Pep talks deal with pessimism. Prosperity can handle hunger. But only God can deal with our ultimate dilemma –death. And only the God of the Bible has dared to stand on the canyon's edge and offer an answer. He has to be God in the face of death. If not, he is not God anywhere.***

***God Came Near***

***"Grace For The Moment";***
***By Max Lucado; pg. 649***

***E. M. Bounds was not only a physician but also minister and editor. He die in 1856, leaving the world this farewell message.***

***"What is victory over death? Is it not the victory over the dread of death? Is it not the victory of patience under the sufferings, which precede death? Is it not the victory of resignation in the prospect of death? Is it not the victory of faith, which looks beyond death, and trusts all to Christ?"***

***"All The Last Words of Saints and Sinners";***
***By Herbert Lockyer; pg. 123***

***Many people dread death and are distressed that they do not have "dying grace". Of course, they will never have the grace for death when they are in good health. Why should they have it while in the midst of life's duties, with death still far away? Living grace is what is needed for life's work and calling, and then dying grace when it is time to die. J. R. M.***

***"Streams In The Desert";***
***By L. B. Cowman; pg. 20***

***Missionary Jim Elliot made heaven the focus of his life. "He is no fool who loses what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose," he wrote in his journal. This philosophy released him to serve Christ even in the face of death as he lay bleeding in the Curaray River that whines through the jungles of Ecuador. Though for Jim being fully devoted to Christ here meant loss, it clearly was gain on the ledger sheet of eternity. He was home. To die is gain. And not only gain for him but also gain for a tribe that would ultimately come to know Christ as well.***

***Living for Christ is really not possible until we understand and embrace the fact that dying is gain. And that is not possible until we firmly believe that heaven is real. When we affirm that truth in the depths of our souls, then we are finally free to live for Christ, even if that requires earth-side loss.***

***Isn't that what Paul had in mind when he deemed all the gain of his life insignificant compared to living for Christ? After he looked at all his supposed accomplishments, he concluded,***

***I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith (Philippians 3:8-9; NIV).***

***When heaven is the transcendent target of our living, then we indeed have the best of both worlds; Christ here and gain there. We are assured of Christ's presence and protection here and ultimately the guarantee of paradise there, where He is the substance of our eternal gain.***

***This may be why C. S. Lewis profoundly noted in Mere Christianity, "Aim at heaven and you'll get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you'll get neither." [6]***

***"Eternity –Reclaiming A Passion For What Endures";***
***By Joseph M. Stowell; pgs. 79-80***

***In the glory of heaven, the blessed continue joyfully to fulfill God's will in relation to other men and to all creation. Already they reign with Christ; with him, "they shall reign forever and ever." [603]***

***By his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ has "opened" heaven to us. The life of the blessed consists in the full and perfect possession of the fruits of the redemption accomplished by Christ. He makes partners in his heavenly glorification those who have believed in him and remained faithful to his will. Heaven is the blessed community of all who are perfectly incorporated into Christ.***

***This mystery of blessed communion with God and all who are in Christ is beyond all understanding and description. Scripture speaks of it in images: life, light, peace, wedding feast, wine of the kingdom, the Father's house, the heavenly Jerusalem, paradise; "no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him."***

***"Catechism of The Catholic Church"; pg. 268***

***Believe this done; and the veil is thrown aside which separates you from the glories of heaven – the way lies clear and open before you; and light, pure and satisfying light, gives the highest evidence and splendor to the great doctrine of life and immortality. The grand mystery is resolved. The barrier, which kept the sinner at a distance from God, is leveled and put away. That barrier was sin; and Christ, by the mighty instruments of His sacrifice and His Spirit, has over thrown it. But a victory over sin is a victory over death. Where sin hath no longer any dominion, death hath no longer any claim; and that mighty Being who spoiled principalities and powers hath abolished death, because He conquered sin. True, it still reigns in these mortal bodies; and till the new system of things be established, it will scatter its desolation over the surface of the world. But the new system is preparing. A place is fitting up in Heaven, for those to whom our Saviour hath given the assurance, that, in His Father's house there are many mansions; and on earth, the Spirit is now working in the hearts of the destined occupiers, and making them meet for the inheritance. These vile bodies must be put off; and others put on, over which death shall have no power. They will persist in bloom and in vigour to eternity. Mighty change in the constitution of the species – mighty change in the material system around us – mighty change in the souls of men, as well as in the bodies, which they animate. The bodies we now wear shall moulder into dust – the earth we now tread upon shall be burnt up – the heavens we now gaze at shall pass away as a scroll – But we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; and the beings who live in it shall never die.***

***"20 Centuries of Great Preaching"; Volume 3;***
***Excerpt from Sermon By Thomas Chalmers;***
***pg. 278***

***Those who read Holy Scripture in a reflective spirit found this experience in Paul, translated into the profession of Christian hope: "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom 8:18). The center of gravity of existence has shifted as a result of this certainty: now it lies at the morning of life, which means that it takes away the oppressiveness and the pressure of the moment and dissolves the tears of evening by the power of a grace that lasts forever. This is precisely what Easter faith is designed to give us: the ability to look across from the evening to the morning, from the part of the whole, and thus to journey toward the joy of the redeemed that springs from that morning of the third day, which first heard the message: Christ is risen!***

***"Seek That Which Is Above"; By Joseph Ratziner –***
***Pope Benedict XVI; pgs. 95-96***

***CURAENS was a German physician who was upheld and sustained by the hope of a glorious resurrection:***

***"My breast burns at the sight of eternal life, the beginning of which I do really feel within me. I desire to be dissolved. I groan for that dwelling above which Thou hast revealed to me. I see the Heavens now open. Thou, Jesus Christ, art my Resurrection and my life."***

***"All The Last Words of Saints and Sinners";***
***By Herbert Lockyer; pg. 123***

***"…Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith…"(Heb. 12:1, 2).***

***The last mile of the road is perhaps the hardest bit to travel. When we reach the final lap, we are apt to be weary and spent. It is not that we are discouraged; not that, even though the way at times have been difficult. It is only that we are tired and the evening has come and we long for rest.***

***We cannot be expected to strain forward to the end of things with the same throb of excitement and suspense that we felt when we were at the road's beginning. We cannot experience the young urge that we knew at the start of the race, when it was morning, and we were newly awakened. But though we cannot feel the old delightful tumult of pulse and brain, we can still cling to the thread of melody that has been our marching song. We can still sing very softly as our laggard feet carry us toward the place called Home.***

***Home! It is the last stanza of the road song. It is the meeting with beauty - not awful, appalling beauty, but the beauty of familiar scenes glorified, and dear, smiling faces we have lost awhile. It is the fulfillment of the road's promise, and the justification of the road's agony.***

***Home! It is the last stanza of the song and the end of the road. And - paradoxically, superbly – and it is the beginning of a new song and the first step upon a road that has no ending.***

***Margaret Elizabeth Sangster***

***"Traveling Toward Sunrise; pg. 231;***
***By Mrs. Charles Cowman***

***WHO CAN FATHOM ETERNITY? GOD HAS PLANTED ETERNITY IN THE HEARTS OF MEN.***

***Ecclesiastes 3:10; TLB***

***It doesn't take a wise person to know that people long for more than earth. When we see pain, we yearn. When we see hunger, we question why. Senseless deaths. Endless tears, needless loss.***

***We have our moments. The newborn on our breast, the bride on our arm, the sunshine on our back. But even those moments are simply slivers of light breaking through heaven's window. God flirts with us. He tantalizes us. He romances us. Those moments are appetizers for the dish that is to come.***

***"No one has ever imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." (I Cor. 2:9)***

***What a breathtaking verse! Do you see what it says? Heaven is beyond our imagination…At our most creative moment, at our deepest thoughts, at our highest level, we still cannot fathom eternity.***

***When God Whispers Your Name.***

***"Grace For The Moment";***
***By Max Lucado; pg. 532***

***Many have puzzled themselves as to whether they will know their friends in heaven. Well, now, if the bodies are to rise from the dead I see no reason why we should not know them. I think I should know some of my brethren, even by their spirits, for I know their character so well, having talked with them of the things of Jesus, and being well acquainted with the most prominent parts of their character. But I shall see their bodies too. I always thought that a quietus to the question, which the wife of old John Ryland asked: "Do you think," she said, "you will know me in heaven?" "Why," said he, "I know you here; and do you think I shall be a bigger fool in heaven than I am on earth?" The question is beyond dispute. We shall live in heaven with bodies, and that decides the matter. We shall know each other in heaven; you may take that for a positive fact, and not mere fancy.***

***"Spurgeon's Sermons":***
***By Charles Spurgeon; vols. 1-2;***
***pg. 272***

***"…I GO TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU." (John 14:2).***

***An old man who was very ill, wrote the following of Heaven: "I am interested in Heaven because I have held a clear title to a bit of property there for over fifty-five years. I did not buy it. It was given to me without money and without price. But the donor purchased it for me at a tremendous sacrifice. I am not holding it for speculation since the title is not transferable. It is not a vacant lot. For more than half a century I have been sending materials out of which the greatest architect and builder of the universe has been building a home for me which will never need to be repaired because it will suit me perfectly, individually, and will never grow old. Termites can never undermine its foundations, for they rest upon the Rock of Ages. Fire cannot destroy it. Floods cannot wash it away. No locks nor bolts will ever be placed upon its doors, for no vicious person can ever enter that land where my dwelling stands now almost completed and almost ready for me to enter in and abide in peace eternally without fear of being ejected.***

***"There is a valley of deep shadows between the place where I live and that to which I shall journey in a very short time. I cannot reach my home in that City of Gold without passing through this deep valley of shadows, but I am not afraid, because the best Friend I ever had went through the same valley long ago and drove away all of its gloom. He has stuck by me through thick and thin ever since we first became acquainted fifty-five years ago and I hold His promise in printed form, never to forsake nor leave me alone. He will be with me as I walk through the valley of shadows and I shall not lose my way when He is with me."***

***'Traveling Toward Sunrise';***
***By Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 237***

***William Ceiller was the eminent British physician and medical lecturer who said as he died:***

***"I wish I had the power of writing; I would describe how pleasant it is to die."***

***"All The Last Words of Saints and Sinners";***
***By Herbert Lockyer; pg. 123***

***"The voice of weeping shall be no more heard." Isaiah 65:19***

***-The glorified weep no more, for outward causes of grief are gone. There are no broken friendships, nor blighted prospects in heaven. Poverty, famine, peril, persecution, and slander, are unknown there. No pain distresses, no thought of death or bereavement saddens. They weep no more, for they are perfectly sanctified. No "evil heart of fault before His throne, and are fully conformed to His image. Well may they cease to mourn who have ceased to sin. They weep no more, because all fear of change is past. They know that they are eternally secure. Sin is shut out, and they are shut in. they dwell within a city which shall never be stormed; they bask in sun which shall never set; they drink of a river which shall never dry; they pluck fruit from a tree which shall never wither. Countless cycles may revolve, but eternity shall not be exhausted, and while eternity endures, their immortality and blessedness shall co-exist with it. They are forever with the Lord. They weep no more, because every desire is full filled. They cannot wish for anything which they have not in possession. Eye and ear, heart and hand, judgment, imagination, hope, desire, will, all the faculties, are completely satisfied; and imperfect as our present ideas are of the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, yet we know enough, by the revelation of the Spirit, that the saints above are supremely blessed. The joy of Christ, which is an infinite fullness of delight, is in them. They bathe themselves in the bottomless, shore less sea of infinite beatitude. That same joyful rest remains for us. it may not be far distant, ere long the weeping willow shall be exchanged for the palm-branch of victory, and sorrow's dewdrops will be transformed into the peals of everlasting bliss. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words.***

***"Morning By Morning" by***
***Charles Spurgeon; pg. 219***

***This is what the Saviour has done with death. He has plucked it of its sting. He has taken a full survey of the corruption, and met it in every one quarter where its malignity operates. It was sin, which constituted the virulence in the disease, and he hath extracted it. He hath put it away. He hath expiated the sentence; and the believer, rejoicing in the assurance that all is clear with God, serves Him without fear in righteousness and in holiness all the days of his life. The sentence is no longer in force, against us who believe. The Saviour took the sentence upon Himself. He bore our iniquity. He became sin for us, though He knew no sin that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. The sentence is no longer in force against us. The Saviour has cancelled it; and he has done more than this. He has not only cancelled the guilt of sin, he has extinguished its power. He reigns in the heart of the believer. He sweeps it of all its corruptions. He takes it such as it is – He makes it such as it should be. He brings the whole man under a thorough process of sanctification – so that while he lives he adds one degree of grace unto another – when he dies he rejoices in hope of the coming glory – when he stands at the bar of judgment, he is presented holy and unreprovable in the sight of God and of His Saviour. In the whole of this treatment, I see the skill and intelligence and superior management of a physician who is up to the disease; and knows where the main force of its malignity lies – who has a thorough insight into the principle of the mischief, and has reached forward an appropriate remedy to confront it – who, to abolish death, has directed the strength of His attack against sin which is its origin – who has averted the condemnation of sin, by an expiatory sacrifice – and who is destroying its power and its existence, by the operation of that mighty Spirit, whereby He can break down the corruption of the human heart and subject unto all righteousness.***

***"20 Centuries of Great Preaching – Vol. 3; Excerpts from Sermon By Thomas Chalmers; pgs. 277-278***

***AUGUSTUS MONTAGUE TOPLADY (1710-1778), will ever be famous as the author of one of the most evangelical hymns of the Eighteenth Century, "Rock of Ages", which was first published in 1776. During the final illness, Toplady was greatly supported by the consolations of the Gospel:***

***"The consolations of God, to so unworthy a wretch are so abundant; that He leaves me nothing to pray for but their continuance."***

***Near his last, awaking from a sleep, he said:***

***"Oh, what delights! Who can fathom the joy of the third heaven? The sky is clear, there is no cloud; come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"***

***He died saying:***

***"No mortal man can live after the glories which God has manifested to my soul."***

***"All The Last Words of Saints and Sinners";***
***By Herbert Lockyer; pg. 121***

***BUT IF WE HOPE FOR THAT WE SEE NOT, THEN DO WE WITH PATIENCE WAIT FOR IT. (Romans 8:25).***

***Sometimes when the horizon is all cloud-banked and the lightnings are leaping and the dismal thunder growls, I say, "Never mind, soon the storm will be over and I shall see God's city". Sometimes when every joy seems to die and every staff breaks under my head, I say, "Never mind, a few more sunsets and I shall see God's city, the city that hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God".***

***It will be a wonderful place. No one ever sheds a tear there, no one is sick, the hands never shake, the feet never drag, the eyelid never droops, for they are healthy forever in that city. They do not need stars at night because they have no night; and they do not need a sun by day, because they have no days, but the smile on the face of God is the Eternal, never-dimmed light in which the glorified walk and exult in the city of God.***

***I am bound for the beautiful City!***

***Lord Jesus Thou didst still the angry sea,***
***This trembling hand thou canst, oh, still for me.***
***I know Thou wilt, if I believe in Thee,***
***Someday make still this trembling hand for me.***

***"Traveling Toward Sunrise";***
***by Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 292***

***The Forerunner is for us entered, passed through the heavens, and entered into the holiest of all. We are too closely knit to Him, if we love Him and trust Him, to make it possible that we shall be where He is not, or that He shall be where we are not. Where He has gone we shall go – in Heaven, blessed be His Name! He will still be the leader of our progress and the captain at the head of our march. For He crowns all His other work by this, that having broken the prison house of our sins, and opened for us the way to God, and been the leader and the captain of our march through all the pilgrimage of life, and the opener of the gate of the grace, for our joyful resurrection, and the opener of the gate of Heaven for our triumphal entrance, He will still, as the Lamb that is in the midst of the Throne, go before us, and lead us into green pastures and by the still waters. This shall be the description of the growing blessedness and power of the saints' life above, "These are they which follow the Lamb withersoever He goeth" (Rev. 14:4).***

***"Music For The Soul",***
***by Alexander Maclaren; pg. 126***

***Edith Louisa Cavell (1865-1915), was the British nurse who was martyred by the Germans on a charge of harboring British refugees. Miss Cavell loved all mankind, even her enemies. Her religious upbringing and personal experience of God enabled her to face the firing squad triumphantly. About to die, she said:***

***"Standing, as I do, in view of God and eternity…I realize that patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness against anyone."***

***"All The Last Words of Saints and Sinners";***
***By Herbert Lockyer; pg. 124***

***The shuddering fear of death is a very real fact in many a life. Some are in bondage all their earthly lifetime, through fear of death. Maeterlinck confesses in his autobiography: "I am a frightened child in the presence of death." It is not to be wondered at that the thought of death casts its oppressive shadows about us, because death is an experience utterly strange to every one of us. "It is a bourne whence no traveler returns." "The black camel kneels at every gate." "With equal pace, impartial fate knocks at the palace and the cottage gate." It is not surprising that numbers of people have a strange fascination for prying into the secrets of death. This gruesome curiosity sometimes leads its possessor into strange quests and still stranger claims. What shall be said of these uncanny efforts to pry into the secrets of the dead? Such efforts are both profitless and presumptuous. Jesus has told us all that we need to know about death. He knows all about the grave, for he has explored its every chamber, and he has met this Waterloo of death and won. He is not now in the grave. He is alive, he is the Living One who is now bringing to bear the resources of his wisdom, mercy, power, and love upon our needy world, and his will is bound to prevail. We are told that "Ideas rule the world." Very well, compare the ideas proclaimed by Jesus, with all others, and at once, we see how preeminent his ideas are. The hands on his clock never turn backward. "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Someday, thank God! War will be under his feet forever. And so will be all forms of intemperance, and selfishness, and sin. And so will be death itself, because it is divinely decreed that "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." "O death, where is thy string? O grave, where is thy victory? …But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."***

***"20 Centuries of Great Preaching" – Vol. 8; Excerpt from a Sermon***
***By George W. Truett, pg. 162***

***The following are excerpts from the first sermon that A.J. Gossip (1873-1954) preached after his wife's dramatically sudden death.***

***Further, one becomes certain about immortality. You think that you believe in that. But wait till you have lowered your dearest into an open grave, and you will know what believing it means. I have always gazed up at Paul in staggered admiration when he burst out at the grave's mouth into his scornful challenge, his exultant ridicule of it, "O death, where is thy sting". O grave, where is thy victory?" But now it does not seem to me such a tremendous feat: for I have felt that very same. True, I can tell him where death's sting lies. Ah! It is the constant missing of what used to be always here; the bitter grudging every second of the dear body to the senseless earth, the terrible insecurity, for one is never safe-anything, nothing, and the old overwhelming pain comes rushing back. Yet when the other day I took up a magazine, it was with amazement, I discovered they are still chattering about whether we people are immortal or not. I am past that. I know. "I believe in the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."***

***"20 Centuries of Great Preaching";***
***Sermon; By A..J. Gossip; pgs. 236, 237***

***The old man is on his bed; the sun is going down, and he has no more light. "Throw up the windows, let me look for the last time into the open sky", says the old man. The sun has gone down; I cannot see the mountains yonder; they are all a mass of mist; my eyes are dim, and the world is dim too. Suddenly a light shoots across his face, and he cries, "O daughter! Daughter, here! I can see another sun rising. Did you not tell me that the sun went down just now? Lo, I see another; and where those hills used to be in the landscape, those hills that were lost in the darkness, daughter, I can see hills that seem like burning brass; and methinks upon that summit I can see a city bright as jasper. Yes, and I see a gate opening, and a spirit coming forth. What is that they say? O they sing! they sing! Is this death?" And here he has asked the question, he hath gone where he needs not to answer it, for death is all unknown. Yes, he has passed the gates of pearl; his feet are on the streets of gold; his head is bedecked with a crown of immortality; the palm – branch of eternal victory is in his hand. God hath accepted him in the beloved.***

***"Far from the world of grief and sin,***
***With God eternally shut in,"***

***He is numbered with the saints in light, and the promise is fulfilled, "At evening time it shall be light".***

***"Spurgeon's Sermons"; By Charles Spurgeon;***
***vols. 3, 4; pgs. 287-288***

***WHAT HEAVEN HOLDS***

***There is joy in the presence of the angels of God when one sinner changes his heart and life.***
***Luke 15:10***

***Why do Jesus and his angels rejoice over one repenting sinner? Can they see something we can't? Do they know something we don't absolutely. They know what heaven holds…***

***Heaven is populated by those who let God change them. Arguments will cease, for jealousy won't exist. Suspicions won't surface, for there will be no secrets. Every sin is gone. Every insecurity is forgotten. Every fear is past. Pure wheat. No weeds. Pure gold. No alloy. Pure love. No lust. Pure hope. No fear. No wonder the angels rejoice when one sinner repents; they know another work of art will soon grace the gallery of God. They know what heaven holds.***

***JUST LIKE JESUS!***

***"Grace For The Moment";***
***By Max Lucado; pg. 622***

***I believe the Christian hope makes sense of our innate hunger for justice; the day is coming when all evil will be rectified and all injustice put right.***

***I believe it makes sense of human freedom; we are at liberty to use our God-given freedom as we wish, but we will be held accountable for what we have done.***

***I believe it makes sense of human nature: at the end, we will not be assessed by one who is alien to us, but by the embodiment of human nature as it was meant to be. Human nature, in the Christian view, is not destined to be scrapped. God has set the highest value on it – so much so that he came to share it. The Ideal has lived and loved as one of us. By that man, we can be saved, and by him, we will be judged. We are neither judged nor saved by someone who does not understand us, but by someone who has stood in our shoes. He will be there at the end of all things. That is another way of saying that self–sacrificial love is the most enduring entity in the universe.***

***I believe it makes sense of our quest for purpose. Many today wonder if life is going anywhere. Most Greeks saw time as a circle imprisoning the soul until death releases it into the undifferentiated Beyond. History is therefore meaningless, this world unimportant, the body insignificant. To the Hebrew and Christian mind, however, time is not a circle from which you escape at death, but a line: a line of past, present, and future, the line of God's redemption. The world is moving on, not to chaos but to Christ and his return, to the final manifestation of him whose first coming forever settled the world's destiny. That is what the doctrine of the Second Advent means. At the end of the road (and the road has an end – it is not a ring road), God steps in. The God who has already been along this road, and is even now in charge of its traffic, will one day rip aside the veil which hides him from our sight and show himself to be what by faith the Christian knows him to be - ever present. That is the Christian hope. It is anchored in the historic life and death of Jesus Christ. It is grounded in the fact of the resurrection, the ultimate assurance that God's will shall prevail on earth as it does in heaven. It is not demonstrable, this Christian hope, but it makes sense.***

***"Adventure of Faith" By Michael Green;***
***pgs. 382-383***

***Oh, what a short-lived victory. In the most ironic twist of all history, what Satan meant for evil, God meant for good. Jesus' death on the cross-bridged the gap between a perfect God and a fatally flawed humanity. On the day, we call Good Friday, God defeated sin, routed death, triumphed over Satan, and got his family back. In that act of transformation, God took the worst deed of history and turned it into the greatest victory. No wonder the symbol never went away; no wonder Jesus commanded that we never forget.***

***Because of the cross, I have hope. It is through the Servant's wounds that we are healed, said Isaiah – not his miracles. If God can wrest such triumph out of apparent defeat, can draw strength from a moment of ultimate weakness, what might God do with the apparent failures and hardships of my own life?***

***Nothing - not even the murder of God's own Son – can end the relationship between God and human beings. In the alchemy of redemption, that most villainous crime becomes our healing strength.***

***The fatally wounded healer came back on Easter, the day that gives a sneak preview of how all history will look from the vantage point of eternity, when every scar, every hurt, every disappointment will be seen in a different light. Our faith begins where it might have seemed to end. Between the cross and the empty tomb hovers the promise of history: hope for the world, and hope for each one of us who lives in it.***

***The German theologian Jűrgen Moltmann expresses in a single sentence the great span from Good Friday to Easter. It is, in fact, a summary of human history, past, present, and future: "God weeps with us so that we may someday laugh with him."***

***"The Jesus I Never Knew:***
***By Philip Yancey; pgs. 273, 274***

***God, who is the just Judge, the Judge who rewards good and punishes evil, is none other than the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Moses, and also of Christ, who is His Son. This God is above all, Love. Not just Mercy, but Love. Not only the Father of the prodigal son, but the Father who "gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life" (Cf. John 3:16).***

***Eschatological event was His redemptive Death and His Resurrection. This is the beginning of "a new heaven and a new earth" (cf. Rev. 21:1). For everyone, life beyond death is connected with the affirmation: "I believe in the resurrection of the body", and then: "I believe in the forgiveness of sins and in life everlasting." This is Christocentric eschatology.***

***"Crossing The Threshold of Hope"; by John Paul II –***
***Pope of Catholic Church; pgs. 184-185)***

***Zuniger was a Professor of Medicine at Basel who, although renowned for his skill, was a simple-hearted believer who lived in the light of eternity. His last words were:***

***"I rejoice, yea, my spirit leaps within me for joy, that now the time at last is come when I shall see the glorious God face to face; whom I have by faith longed after, and after whom my soul has panted."***

***"All the Last Words of Saints and Sinners";***
***by Herbert Lockyer; pg. 124)***

***When death arrays himself as the king of terrors, and with bony fingers grasps his javelin and shakes it at us, we point him to the vacant tomb of Jesus. For the victory of Jesus Christ over the last enemy is our triumph. His resurrection assures ours: "I am the resurrection and the life." When Satan challenges us, we will cheerfully accept, with the hint to Apollyon that he will find our substitute, his old Conqueror, on the field. Ah! It is the power of the living Jesus to identify Himself with every believer that carries terror and defeat to our foes.***

***"Milestone Papers"; pg. 150;***
***By Daniel Steele***

***What it all boils down to is: Do we believe that the significance of our being is exhausted by this experience of living? I say it cannot be. I am convinced that the evidence against this is overwhelming. Plenty of people have said that I say this because I have a big ego. I don't think it is only that, but even if it were, all right, then, we have been born into this world as little, tiny creatures with big egos, and the fact that we have big egos must in itself have some significance. But, if these people we love were gone forever, we wouldn't wish to love them any less, we wouldn't part from them in any different way, and we wouldn't think of them any differently. I believe that we must trust in God, which I do. I believe that in being here, we are fulfilling some purpose of his; whatever that purpose is, it is the best purpose that we can have. If that purpose involves meeting again after death, as we have known one another here, then we shall meet again; if it is not God's purpose, then we shan't. In eternity, we shall have no worries about it. I think that is all there is really to say about it. I have seen people dead in war. I think it's a dreadful thing that we in our wickedness should kill those who are young, those whose lives are not fulfilled, but the actual fact of death is not a terrifying thing at all.***

***"Seeing Through The Eye"***
***By Malcolm Muggeridge on Faith":***
***pgs. 213-214***

***So, beginning with simple faith in Him, partially receiving the beauty of His transforming Spirit, seeking here on earth by assimilation to the Master in some humble measure to adorn the doctrine and to glorify the Christ, we may hope that each blackness shall be all changed into brightness; our limitations done away with, our weakness lifted into rejoicing strength; and that we shall be like Him, seeing Him as He is, and glorified in Him, shall glorify Him before the universe.***

***"Music for the Soul";***
***By Alexander Maclaren; pg. 224***

***Thou, O my God, art ever new, though Thou art the most ancient; – Thou alone art the food for eternity. I am to live forever, not for a time-and I have no power over my being; I cannot destroy myself, even though I were so wicked as to wish to do so. I must live on, with intellect and consciousness forever, in spite of myself. Without Thee, eternity would be another name for eternal misery. In Thee alone have I that which can stay me up forever: Thou alone art the food of my soul. Thou alone art inexhaustible, and ever offerest to me something new to know, something new to love. At the end of millions of years, I shall know Thee so little, that I shall seem to myself only beginning. At the end of millions of years, I shall find in "Thee the same", or rather, greater sweetness than at first, and shall seem then only to be beginning to enjoy Thee: and so on for eternity I shall ever be a little child beginning to be taught the rudiments of Thy infinite Divine nature. For Thou art Thyself the seat and centre of all good, and the only substance in this universe of shadows, and the heaven in which blessed spirits live and rejoice.***

***"Meditations and Devotions:;***
***By Cardinal John Henry Newman;***
***pgs. 100-101***

***Much as true believers admire the perfections of the Redeemer of mankind, and much as they wonder at his amazing condescension in becoming man, and dying for the sins of the world; all their present amazement and wonder will be as nothing when compared with what they shall feel when they come to see him in all his glory, the glory that he had with the Father before the world was. In reference to this we may apply those words of St. John: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (I John, chap. iii. 2)***

***Adam Clarke's Commentary,***
***vol. 6; pg. 564***

## *NO WORRIES IN HEAVEN*

> ***God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death, sadness, crying, or pain. Revelation 21:4***

***What have you done today to avoid death? Likely a lot, You've popped pills, pumped pecks, passed on the pie, and pursued the polyunsaturates… Why? Why the effort? Because you are worried about staying alive. That won't be a worry in heaven.***

***In fact, you won't be worrying at all. Some of you moms worry about your kids getting hurt. You won't worry in heaven. In heaven, we'll feel no pain. Some of you fellows worry about getting old. You won't in heaven. We'll all be ceaselessly strong…***

***We are not made of steel, we are made of dust. And this life is not crowned with life, it is crowned with death.***

***The next life, however, is different. Jesus urged the Christians in Smyrna to "be faithful, even if you have to die, and I will give you the crown of life". (Rev. 2:10)***

***"Grace For The Moment";***
***By Max Lucado; pg. 714***

***Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great, and thine offspring as the grass of the earth. (Job 5:25)***

***When the sun goes below the horizon, it is not set; the heavens glow for a full hour after its departure. And when a great and good man "sets", the sky of this world is luminous long after he is out of sight. Such a man cannot die out of this world. When he goes, he leaves behind him much of himself.***

***This should be at once the crown of all our hopes for the future, and the one great lesson taught us by the vicissitudes of life. The joys and sorrows, the journeying and the rest, the temporary repose and the frequent struggles; all these should make us sure that there is an end which will interpret them all, to which they all point, for which they all prepare.***

***Winging my way***
***Into the sun-flecked dawn,***
***If I should not return,***
***Say not, I'm gone.***

***If what I lived for***
***Still lives on***
***In younger hearts,***
***It still is Dawn.***

***Dr. B. H. Pearson***

***"Traveling Toward Sunrise";***
***By Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 315***

## *HARD TO IMAGINE*

***I am hard-pressed between the two having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. (Phil.1:23)***

***Whenever my wife, Martie, and I get ready to go on vacation, we like to read about our destination, study the maps, and anticipate the joy of finally arriving at the place we've dreamed about for so long.***

***For those of us who know Jesus Christ, we have an incredible destination ahead of us – heaven. But I find it interesting that a lot of us don't seem to be very excited about getting there. Why is that? Maybe it's because we don't understand heaven. We talk about streets of gold and gates of pearl, but what is it really like? What is there to look forward to?***

***I think the most profound description of heaven is found in Paul's to "depart and be with Christ" is "far better" (Phil 1:23). It is what I told my 8-year-old grandson when he asked what heaven is like. I started by asking him, "What is the most exciting thing in your life?" He told me about his computer game and other fun things he likes to do, and then I told him that heaven is far better. He thought for a minute, and then said, "Papa, that's hard to imagine".***

***What is that you look forward to in life? What really excites you? Whatever it is, although it's hard to imagine, heaven will be far better! - Joe Stowell***

***"To be in His presence! A glorious thought***
***So awesome I cannot conceive;***
***I'll bow down and worship the Lord on His throne***
***And add to the praise He'll receive. – Sper***

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***The more you look forward to heaven, the less you'll desire on earth.***

***"Our Daily Bread"; April 2011***

***MICHAELANGELO (1474-1564), the Italian artist and sculptor, was probably one of the greatest sculptors the world has ever known. His remarkable paintings in the Sistine Chapel at Rome made him justly famous. God-fearing, his brief will contained the paragraph:***

***"I commit my soul to God, my body to the earth, my possessions to my nearest relatives. I die in the faith of Jesus Christ and in the firm hope of a better life."***

***His last word was in the form of an exhortation to those at his bedside:***

***"Through life remember the sufferings of Jesus."***

***"All the Last Words of Saints and Sinners";***
***By Herbert Lockyer; pg. 125***

***E'en for the dead I will not bind my soul to grief;***
***Death cannot long divide.***
***For is it not as though the rose that climbed my garden wall***
***Has blossomed on the other side?***
***Death does hide,***
***But not divide;***

***You are but Christ's other side!***
***You are with Christ and Christ with me;***
***In Christ united still are we.***

***"Streams In The Desert";***
***By L. B. Cowman; pg. 450***

***Heaven is the region where the spirits of just men made perfect live, thrive, and eternally expand their powers in the service and to the glory of Him from whom they have derived their being.***

***By these perpetual fountains, we are to understand endless sources of comfort and happiness, which Jesus Christ will open out of his own infinite plenitude to all glorified souls. These eternal living fountains will make an infinite variety in the enjoyments of the blessed. There will be no sameness, and consequently no cloying with the perpetual enjoyment of the same things; every moment will open a new source of pleasure, instruction, and improvement; they shall make an eternal progression into the fullness of God. And as God is infinite, so his attributes are infinite; and throughout infinity more and more of those attributes will be discovered; and the discovery of each will be a new fountain or source of pleasure and enjoyment.***

***"Christian Theology";***
***By Adam Clarke; pg. 379***

***But still, what about life after death? When we live in communion with God, when we belong to God's own household, there is no longer any "before" or "after". Death is no longer the dividing line. Death has lost its power over those who belong to God, because God is the God of the living, not of the dead. Once we have tasted the joy and peace that come from being embraced by God's love, we know that all is well and will be well. "Don't be afraid," Jesus says, "I have overcome the power of death…come and dwell with me and know that where I am your God is".***

***When eternal life is our clear goal, it is not a distant goal. It is a goal that can be reached in the present moment. When our heart understands this divine truth, we are living the spiritual.***

***The great spiritual challenge is to discover, over time, that the limited, conditional, and temporal love we receive from parents, husbands, wives, children, teachers, colleagues, and friends is a reflection of the unlimited, unconditional, and everlasting love of God. Whenever we can make that huge leap of faith, we will know that death is no longer the end but the gateway to the fullness of the Divine Love.***

***--Here and Now-***

***"The Only Necessary Thing":***
***By Henri J.M. Nouwen; pgs. 185-18.)***

***Popular Christian devotion has perhaps concentrated too much on the negative joys of heaven, that is, on the promises of the Revelation that there will be no more hunger or thirst, no more scorching heat or sunstroke, no more tears or pain, no more night, no more curse, no more death. Thank God for these absences. But thank God even more for their cause, namely the presence – the central, dominating presence – of the throne of God!***

***"Authentic Christianity";***
***By John Stott; pg. 403***

***If your mind is independent, enough to create changes in your body and your brain, it seems reasonable enough to suppose that it can survive the dissolution of your body and your brain.***

***If there is life after death, it is presumably consciousness that survives, either all by itself or somehow reunited with a new kind of body.***

***But consciousness is not part of the body. Nor is consciousness "in" the body in the same way that nerves or neurons are. Consciousness merely comes with the body and operates through the body. The body serves as a kind of receiver and transmitter for consciousness, not its author or manufacturer.***

***Moreover, consciousness and free will are the defining features of the human soul, which requires awareness and choice in order to discriminate between right and wrong. The implication is that whatever happens to our bodies and brains after death, our souls live on.***

***"Life After Death, The Evidence"***
***by Dinesh D'Souza;***
***pgs. 131,132,133,136, 14)***

***Some years ago, a news cartoonist , in his days of syndicated newspaper articles, drew a magnificent pyramidal picture of "Heaven". With this artist's conception of "Heaven" taken from the 21st chapter of The Revelation, plus an extensive description of our condition after death, he gave each man the hope that we should have approximately eight cubic feet of space in which to live in this city. This city, which measures six thousand miles around, would dwarf every known city in the world today and yet would provide for each of us only the portion of space allotted by our "deep freezers" in this modern age.***

***Let me give pause to your minds in relation to the actual facts of this chapter of the Bible, Revelation 4, verse 10, "And be carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me "THE GREAT CITY, THE HOLY JERUSALEM, DESCENDING OUT OF HEAVEN FROM GOD." I believe that every scrupulous Bible student will admit that this holy Jerusalem, as magnificent as it shall be, and as real as I do believe it is, shall be only a sample city prepared for those who love HIM.***

***By Merv Rosell; No. 236***

***"Shoe Leather Faith" – Book of Illustrations,***
***Compiled by Garth and Merv Rosell***

***Faith is the settled, unwavering trust in the one true God whom "we have come to know in Jesus Christ." When we see him face to face, we shall not abandon that trust, but deepen it. Hope is the settled unwavering confidence that this God will not leave us or forsake us, but will always have more in store for us than we could ask or think. I do not imagine for a minute that in the coming age we shall arrive at a point where we shall have experienced everything the new world has to offer, and will become bored (as is imagined by some scornful contemporary visions of "heaven"). In contrast, because I believe that the God we know in Jesus is the God of utterly generous, out flowing love, I believe that there will be no end to the new creation of this God, and that within the new age itself there will always be more to hope for, more to work for, more to celebrate.***

***"After You Believe:'***
***By N. T. Wright; pg. 203***

***QUESTION: DOES THE SOUL OF THE CHRISTIAN GO DIRECTLY TO HEAVEN?***

***Answer: To the penitent and believing thief, Jesus said: "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise". Paul says: "Having a desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better". To be with Christ is my heaven. Again, Paul says: "Willing rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord." "If any man," says Christ", serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be." This is a very comforting doctrine.***

***"The Original Steele's Answers",***
***By Daniel Steele; pg. 50***

***For a life, any life, once united with God by faith, and thus joined to the immortality of God, is a life over which death has no power. This stands in Scripture with the immeasurable authority of Christ behind it. And you and I may well ask, What are all our unanswered questions compared with Christ's unanswerable certainty? We may well, with Martin Luther, turn the familiar lament, 'In the midst of life we are in death', into the glorious affirmation, 'In the midst of death we are in life'. In God we live eternally."***

***In other words, by union with Christ, our resurrection life has already begun; and our mortality is daily being overlaid by and transfigured into the eternal life of Christ. And this points forward to the day when at last we shall be like Him, seeing Him as He is, and rejoicing in His presence forever."***

***"River of Life" ;***
***By James S. Stewart; pgs. 68, 69***

***In our day, at least in the West, nobody exemplifies the widespread angst, and especially the fear of death, more dramatically than the tragic-comedian Woody Allen. He regards death and dissolution with terror. It has become an obsession with him. True, he is still able to joke about it. "It's not that I'm afraid to die", he famously quips. "I just don't want to be there when it happens." He calls death "absolutely stupefying".***

***Jesus Christ, however, rescues his disciples from this horror. Consider one of his great "I am" sayings: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." (John 11:25-26) These verses contain a double promise of Jesus to his followers. The believer who lives will never die, because Christ is his life, and death will seem to him only a trivial episode. The believer who dies, however, will live again, because Christ is his resurrection. Thus, Christ is both the life of those who live and the resurrection of those who die. Christ transforms both life and death.***

***It is said of Henry Venn, the eighteenth–century evangelical Anglican vicar, that when he was told he was dying, his joy at dying kept him alive another fortnight! Such a fearless, joyful attitude to the onset of death is possible only because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and his conquest of death.***

***"Through The Bible – Through The Year";***
***By John Stott; pg. 283***

***DR. WILLIAM HUNTER, English painter, remarked:***

***"If I had strength to hold a pen, I would write down how easy and pleasant a thing it is to die."***

***"All The Last Words of Saints and Sinners",***
***By Herbert Lockyer; pg. 126***

***"We fade as a leaf. Thank God, if in such glory as this we make our exodus. For the leaf fades gloriously – and in its fading it reveals God and it will reappear in resurrection vigor and fairness next Spring."***

***"Traveling Toward Sunrise"; pg. 266;***
***By Mrs. Charles Cowman***

## *IN THE ARMS OF GOD*

***"Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die."***
***John 11:26***

***We don't like to say good–bye to those whom we love. Whether it be at a school or a cemetery, separation is tough. It is right for us to weep, but there is no need for us to despair. They had pain here. They have no pain there. They struggled here. They have no struggles there. You and I might wonder why God took them home. But they don't. They understand. They are, at this very moment, at peace in the presence of God…***

***When it is cold on earth, we can take comfort in knowing that our loved ones are in the warm arms of God. And when Christ comes, we will hold them, too.***

***When Christ Comes***

***"Grace For The Moment";***
***By Max Lucado; pg. 560***

***"Life is to mean for you one long struggle. You are to do right with the same powers with which you might do wrong. Never a holy deed that might not, if you chose that it should be so, be unholy. Your will is to be trained and strengthened by choosing to be good where it is perfectly possible for you to be bad. This is to go on year after year, year after year, till it has done in you a work which this, and nothing except this, can do, and then, not until then, shall come another condition, which then, and not until then, shall be possible, in which struggle shall be over, and without a danger of wickedness you shall go on ripening in holiness in the unhindered sunshine of God forever. That is the harvest."***

***"New Starts In Life";***
***By Phillips Brooks; pgs. 34-35***

***(Note: "Every decision, of a moral quality, that we humans make each day, is either making us more fit for either a 'good eternity' or a 'bad eternity'. It is both a 'beautiful' thing and a 'frightening' thing for a creature to have the capacity to choose between heaven or hell as his/her eternal destiny! The fact of 'Free Will' is what best describes the unique feature of human beings! Heavenly creatures probably will have 'Free Choice', but NOT a choice between good and evil!" - editorial comment by Ron Christian)***

***Saints sometimes have some conflicts at the hour of death. The enemy thrusts at them some. Like the Savior, they may exclaim, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" but these are the exceptions. Usually a godly life closes with a happy death. Said John Knox just before his departure: "I praise God for that heavenly sound." A little later, he said: "Now it is come", and breathed his last.***

***Said William Kendall as he was crossing over: "I have been swimming in the waters of death for two days, and they are like sweet incense all over me". And later he repeated:***

***"Bright angels are from glory come,***
***They're round my bed, they're in my room,***
***They wait to waft my spirit home.***
***All is well."***

***"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."***

***By B. T. Roberts***

***"Living Truths – Vital Selections From the Writings of B. T. Roberts",***
***compiled By E. D. Riggs; No. 55***

***Think of it: We will be with God forever! And because we will be with Him, we will be absolutely safe from all evil. Sorrow and suffering will never again touch us – never. One of the most moving passages in all the Bible is found in its next to last chapter:***

***"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.' (Revelation 21:3-4)***

***Home is a place of peace and joy – and so is heaven. Home is a place of love and security - and so is heaven. Home is a place of welcome and rest – and so is heaven. The Bible says, "Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death". (Isaiah 57:2) When we die in Christ, we are at home with Him forever.***

***As a footnote, sometimes people say to me, "Well, I'm not sure I want to go to heaven. It sounds so boring!" But we won't be bored in heaven, for we will have all eternity to explore God's riches. The Bible also says God will have work for us to do, for we will serve Him and reign with Him – but without the weariness of our work here. (Revelation 22:3, 5)***

***It also means our whole nature will be transformed. Someday we will be like Christ! Now we love imperfectly – but not then. Now our joy and peace are tempered by sorrow and turmoil – but not then. The Bible says, "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (I John 3:2) What a glorious promise!***

***"The Journey";***
***By Rev. Billy Graham; pgs. 302-304***

***When we meditate upon this amazing love, and behold the all glorious Kinsman of the Church endowing her with all His ancient wealth, our souls may well faint for joy. Who is he that can endure such a weight of love? That partial sense of it, which the Holy Spirit is sometimes pleased to afford, is more than the soul can contain; how transporting must be a complete view of it! When the soul shall have understanding to discern all the Saviour's gifts, wisdom wherewith to estimate them, and time in which to meditate upon them, such as the world to come will afford us, we shall then commune with Jesus in a nearer manner than at present. But who can imagine the sweetness of such fellowship? It must be one of the things which have not entered into the heart of man, but which God hath prepared for then that love Him. This will overwhelm us with love. By faith, we see, as in a glass darkly, the reflected image of His unbounded treasures, but when we shall actually see them heavenly things themselves, without our own physical eyes, how deep will be the stream of fellowship in which our soul shall bathe itself!***

***"Morning by Morning"***
***By Charles H. Spurgeon; pg. 145***

***Henry Havelock, the eminent British General, in the last moments of his earthly pilgrimage said to his son:***

***"Come, my son, and see how a Christian can die."***

***"All The Last Words of Saints and Sinners"***
***By Herbert Lockyer; pg. 127***

***The person is a mysterious reality, which goes beyond existence at both ends, transcending both birth and death. Between these two, it remains always to some extent veiled by its earthly limitations. Death is but the end of the earthly adventure, and we know that no adventure lasts forever. It must die before it starts again beyond its limits. To accept death is to accept this law of transcendence of limits, to fix one's gaze on what lies beyond.***

***Jean Lescure remarks: 'The anxiety of death is not about going to sleep; it is rather about not waking up again.' On this point, the gospel is clear and categorical. Our resurrection is promised, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the pledge of it. St. Paul made no mistake about it when he exclaimed in the face of his contradictors: 'If Christ has not been raised then our preaching is useless and your believing it is useless'. (I Cor. 15:14)***

***"Learn To Grow Old";***
***By Paul Tournier; pgs. 233, 234***

***HOMESICK FOR HEAVEN***

***"Our homeland is in heaven."***
***Philippians 3:20***

***This home we're in won't last forever. Birthdays remind us of that.***

***Not long ago I turned fifty; I'm closer to ninety than I am to infancy. All those things they say about aging are coming true. I'm patting myself less on the back and more under the chin. I have everything I had twenty years ago, except now it's all lower. The other day I tried to straighten out the wrinkles in my socks and found out I wasn't wearing any.***

***Aging. It's no fun. The way we try to avoid it, you'd think we could. We paint the body, preserve the body, and protect the body. And well we should. These bodies are God's gifts. We should be responsible. But we should also be realistic. This body must die so the new body can live. "Flesh and blood cannot have a part in the kingdom of God. Something that will ruin cannot have a part in something that never ruins". (I Cor. 15:50)***

***"Grace For The Moment";***
***by Max Lucado; pg. 75)***

***What does it mean when the Apostle says, "to depart…to be with Christ…is far better" (Phil. 1:23)? Surely he that thus spoke conceived that these two things were contemporaneous, "the departing and the being with Him". And surely, he who thus spoke could not have conceived that a millennium–long parenthesis of slumberous unconsciousness was to intervene between the moment of his decease and the moment of his fellowship with Jesus. How could a man prefer that dormant state to the state here, of working for and living with the Lord? Surely, being with Him must mean that we know where we are and who our companion is.***

***And what does that text mean, "Ye are come…to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. 12:22, 23), unless it means that one of these two classes of persons who are thus regarded as brought into living fellowship, each is aware of the other? Does perfecting of the spirit mean the smiting of the spirit into unconsciousness? Surely not, and surely in the face of such words as these we must recognize the fact that, however limited and imperfect may be the present connection with the disembodied dead, who sleep in Christ, with external things – they know themselves, they know their home and their companions, and they know the blessedness in which they are lapped.***

***"Music For The Soul";***
***By Alexander Maclaren; pg. 10)***

***"…There hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant." (I Kings 8:56)***

***A late lark twitters from the quiet skies,***
***And from the west,***
***Where the sun, his day's work ended***
***Lingers as in content,***
***There falls on the old gray city***
***An influence luminous and serene,***
***A shining peace.***

***The smoke ascends***
***In a rosy-and-golden haze. The spires***
***Shine and are changed. In the valley***
***Shadows rise. The lark sings on. The sun,***
***Closing his benediction,***
***Sinks and the darkening air***
***Thrills with a sense of the triumphing night –***
***Night with her train of stars***
***And her great gift of sleep.***

***So be my passing!***
***My task accomplished and the long day done,***
***My wages taken and in my heart***
***Some late lark singing,***
***Let me be gathered to the quiet west***
***The sundown splendid and serene.***

***My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage; and my courage and skill to him that can get it; my marks and scars I carry with me to be a witness that I have fought his battles, Who now will be my rewarder. John Bunyan.***

***"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever." (Heb. 13:20, 21)***

***"Traveling Toward Sunrise";***
***By Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 373***

***In one sense, death has already been destroyed. Surely, its sting is gone for those who know in their hearts that Jesus Christ is "the resurrection and the life".***

***Some disagree, but I believe quite simply that I will not even lose consciousness when I die. The essential "me" will go on at once, uninhibited by my body, and my mind, into the presence of the One who has given me eternal life.***

***This is part of my joy in Christ. I believe it for myself and I am prepared to lose my loved ones, sustained by the same certainty that they too, will step at once into His presence. I am not arguing with you if you don't believe this. But the Lord Himself reassures me that "whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." I believe that. And yet, whatever He does will be right. If I have a wrong conception of eternal life, then I have an inferior conception. He will handle it all perfectly. And one day dying will be all over. More than the sting of death will be gone. Death itself will be destroyed.***

***I am he that liveth, and was dead, and…am alive for evermore…We shall be like him.***

***"Share My Pleasant Stones";***
***By Eugenia Price; pg. 378***

***BISHOP PAUL N. ELLIS shared the following testimony when he was 89 years old.***

***Bishop Ellis officiated when I (Ron Christian) was ordained as Elder in the Free Methodist Church (Denomination), 1972, at Littleton, Colorado.***

***When I think of my own faith, I think first of Christ's words to his disciples and to the thief who died with him on the cross.***

***The Gospel of John, if I may paraphrase in my own words, says to me: "Don't be troubled as you face the future. You can't doubt the reality of the Eternal Creator. Trust me, his Son, who comes from Him as Savior and Lord. In heaven, there is limitless room, room for all. Don't you think I would have told you if it weren't true?"***

***The dying thief cried to Christ from his cross. "Remember me when you enter your kingdom!" And Christ assured him: "This day you will be with me in paradise".***

***There's much more in Christian teaching to convince us of everlasting life, but this is enough for me to live and die by. The light of life shines from the empty tomb. I trust Christ. I rest in the love of God.***

***In my youth, when life offered many promises, I chose to walk in the light that shone so brightly, upon those who went before. Today, as the shadows of evening fall, I hope to share the light that never fails with those who follow after. The light still shines brightly.***

***"When Evening Comes There Will Be Light";***
***By Paul N. Ellis; pg. 175***

***This is Eternal BLESSEDNESSS: the term, which Christian theology uses to express the utmost bliss of which the created spirit is capable in the vision and enjoyment of God, and in the pure, undimmed reflection of His image. Perfectly reflecting the image of the Eternal Image of the Father, we shall have reached our truest and fullest personal consummation: eita to telos, the spirit of man finds it's rest in Him who is the principle and beginning of its life, being now the glorified realization of what Adam was in Paradise, with such a superadded union with the Son of God as Adam had not. Here is the final issue of the Redeemer's work of God in the soul of man; His own purity, the vision of God in Him, and perfect blessedness. Once more, this is but the consummation of what is begun on earth. In the spiritual vision of Himself, He enables us to purify our souls, even as He is pure, for we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory. And all who are thus transformed by grace shall be translated into the glory beyond. In our glorified bodies, our glorified spirits will see God, and in that vision enjoy the eternal benediction of the pure in heart: we shall know that absolute blessedness to bestow which was the final end of the whole work of the Redeemer on earth: God, having raised up His Son (Jesus), sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.***

***TO GOD ONLY WISE, BE GLORY THROUGH ETERNITY***
***JESUS CHRIST FOREVER. AMEN.***
***(Pope)***

***"Profiles In Wesleyan Theology";***
***pgs. 403, 404***

***ENTERING HIS PRESENCE***

***"For to me, to live in Christ and to die is gain."***
***Philippians 1:21, NIV***

***Just as a parent needs to know that his or her child is safe at school, we long to know that our loved ones are safe in death. We long for the reassurance that the soul goes immediately to be with God. But dare we believe it? Can we believe it? According to the Bible, we can.***

***Scripture is surprisingly quiet about this phase of our lives. When speaking about the period between the death of the body and the resurrection of the body, the Bible doesn't shout; it just whispers. But at the confluence of these whispers, a firm voice is heard. This authoritative voice assures us that, at death, the Christian immediately enters into the presence of God and enjoys conscious fellowship with the Father and with those who have gone before.***

***When Christ Comes***

***"Grace For The Moment";***
***By Max Lucado; pg. 58)***

***Surrounded by this spiritual life and yet seeing it only here and there through broken gaps of this enveloping mortality, what will it be for us to die? Only to cast this mortality away and stand face to face with the realities that have been close to us all the while. All that has mocked us with half glimpses, all that has flashed before our eyes and darkened again so suddenly that we have hardly dared to remember that we saw it, all that has haunted our hopes and clung to us in spite of the cold Sadducee contemptuousness of the world – all this real to us, the only reality, permanent and real forever. All spiritual companionship, all unknown spiritual protection that has been blessing us in the darkness opened suddenly into the light so that we see it all and enter on the new life that begins with death. Death, then, is the enlightener. It opens the eyes to see the things that are. It is not the carrying of the soul away to some island - planet or some unfound place beyond the sun. Whatever be its mystery of the place (and that we cannot know till we know something of what place means to the disembodied spirit), the essential thing concerning death must be that it opens the closed eyes, draws down the veil of blinding mortality and lets the man see spiritual things. This seems to me to change the question that we ask about dying, and make it so much deeper and truer. It is no longer where shall I go when I am dead? But, what shall I be? And so character and the power of higher vision and higher education instead of circumstances, condition, and locality become our study for this life and our ambition for the life to come.***

***"New Starts In Life";***
***By Phillips Brooks; pgs. 67-68***

***But it is also true that all men naturally fear death; even those that have the fullest persuasion and certainty of a future state dread it: genuine Christians, who know that, if the earthly house of their tabernacle were dissolved, they have a house not made with hands, a building framed of God, eternal in the heavens, only they fear it not. In the assurance they have of God's love, the fear of death is removed; and by the purification of their hearts through faith, the sting of death is extracted.***

***"Adam Clarke's Commentary"; vol. 6; pg. 700***

*"There is a Stream which issues forth*
*From God's eternal throne*
*And from the Lamb a living Stream,*
*Clear as the crystal stone.*
*The Stream doth water Paradise,*
*It makes the angels sing:*
*One cordial drop revives my heart;*
*Hence all my joys do spring."*

***John Mason, who wrote this verse two centuries ago, teaches what I have long believed to be true, that the bliss of heaven is of the same kind as the joy of love divine, shed abroad in the believer's heart, only it is more abundant.***

***"The river of the water of life, clear as crystal proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb: is only a poetical description of the Comforter whom the glorified Jesus sends from the Father. The saints below and the saints above all fill their brimming goblets from the same Stream, the personal Paraclete. Compare John vii. 37-39, xv 26, and Rev. xxii. 1.***

*"Milestone Papers"; pg. 230;*
*By Daniel Steele*

***And deliver those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Heb. 2:15)***

***John Wesley said, "Brethren, farewell. The greatest thing is that God still lives. Brethren, farewell".***

***John Wesley stepped into his chariot and he rode on. That is the Christian way. When Moody was leaving this world for the other, he said to his wife, "Do you hear that singing?" then he said, "Earth is receding, Heaven is opening", and he was gone.***

***That is beautiful! That is the Christian way to go. That is the glory of the earth moment. Still we live foolishly our whole life afraid of death.***

***As sings the mountain stream***
***Past rock and verdure wild.***
***So let me sing my way to Thee,***
***Thy pure and happy child.***

***"Traveling Toward Sunrise";***
***By Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 316.***

***"For those who die in Christ, life is not taken captive by death, but rather buried and raised anew to glory. Death when naturally viewed appears as our "last enemy". Viewed under grace it has lost its sting (I Cor. 15:26). The believer has "crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24). In death the life of faith changes from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18).***

***The terror of death is overcome by grace through faith active in love. Though death is a penalty for sin, death for Christian believers is transformed into a penalty whose sting is dissipated (I Cor. 15:56).***

***"If we die with him, we will also live with him" (2nd Tim. 2:11).***

***"Life In The Spirit – Systematic Theology: Vol. Three"; By Thomas C. Oden; pg. 384.***

***The Bible's candor about death enhances the value of life. The Bible's candor about death reminds us that life is a gift from God. Because life is limited in duration, it is of great value. Every day that we are given, each year of our life that passes, is a precious gift from our Creator. We should be able to say with the psalmist each morning.***

***This is the day the Lord has made;***
***Let us rejoice and be glad in it (Psalm 118:24)***

***The message of the Bible in regard to death is one of consolation. The Bible speaks with assurance that there is eternal life beyond the brief ellipsis of this life. Some of the most resonant and triumphant passages in the Bible have to do with the victory over death that is ours when we trust in Christ, passages such as Romans 8:38-39: "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height not depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us for the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."***

***The Bible is filled with images of eternity that speak to the longings of our hearts. It describes a new heaven and a new earth, where "an eternal house…not built by human hands" awaits God's people (2 Cor. 5:1). In that new home, those who are faithful will be given a crown of life (Rev. 2:10). There will be no night there; and no tears of sorrow. Heaven will be place of reunion. There we will come face to face with Christ, with faithful friends, and with loved ones.***

***"The Library of Distinctive Sermons"; Quotation from***
***Dr. Michael P. Halcomb; pgs. 114, 117***

***Your soul has a curious shape because it is a hollow made to fit a particular swelling in the infinite contours of the Divine substance, or a key to unlock one of the doors in the house with many mansions. For it is not humanity in the abstract that is to be saved, but you – you, the individual reader, John Stubbs or Janet Smith. Blessed and fortunate creature, your eyes shall behold Him and not another's. All that you are, sins apart, is destined, if you will let God have His good way, to utter satisfaction. Your place in heaven will seem to be made for you and you alone, because you were made for it – made for it stitch by stitch as a glove is made for a hand.***

***"Make For Heaven" by C. S. Lewis;***
***pgs. 21-23***

***One group that will have a grace-filled postmortem encounter with Christ consists of those who sought God during their earthly lives and loved him, though they had not heard of Jesus. Premessianic believers, accepted by God already on the basis of their response to the light they had received, will meet their Savior in fullness and clarity after death. Then they will be able at last to confess Jesus and put their trust in his righteousness. Job, for example will meet Jesus after death and receive salvation from his outstretched hand. Before dying, Job had responded to God; therefore, after death Job will seal his faith by responding to Jesus. He will hear the word and believe on Jesus as Lord and Savior.***

***The same would be true of those Jewish souls who believed before Christ came. They trusted in God on earth and died before knowing about Jesus. Their response to God on the basis of premessianic revelation will be confirmed in the presence of Jesus after death. An informationally premessianic faith response made in this life will be improved and fulfilled when the person enters into the presence of the triune God. Even those who have known Jesus on this side of death will have their knowledge of God improved on the other side, since their knowledge too is partial.***

***The exegetical evidence may not be plentiful, but the theological argument is strong that those who have been seeking God in this life will have their knowledge of God updated when they enter into his presence. They want to know God better, and God wants to know them better. A postmortem encounter applied to this class of human souls means the completing of a faith decision already made on the basis of premessianic revelation and does not in any way diminish in importance the choices made in this life. It would in fact confirm those choices, since these are the ones who decided to move toward God in this life. Now they will meet the God they love in the fullness of his grace after death. For them a postmortem opportunity is firmly established.***

***"A Wideness In God's Mercy";***
***By Clark H. Pinnock; pgs. 170-171***

***Our temporary homes may be palaces or hovels, but our eternal heavenly home will be bright and beautiful. How could it be any other way? The great Architect and Builder of the universe designed a permanent dwelling place for His children. Earth has its beauty, but man has spoiled so much of it. In heaven, there will be no need for environmentalists to work for better air and water quality, or to decry the destruction of our land for housing developments.***

***In heaven, there will be no more sorrowful separations. For many people, life on earth has lost its meaning because a dear one or close friends who were a vital part of life on earth are no longer here. In heaven, we will be together in Christ. We will see the mother or father, the children, brothers, and sisters who have preceded us. we will have a family reunion like no other!***

***"Facing Death And The Life After";***
***By Billy Graham; pgs. 246-247.***

***"For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; then shall I know even as also I am known." (I Cor. 13:12)***

***Death is called the key that opens the palace of eternity. Tennyson, thinking of Hallam, his friend, who had been drowned at sea, calls him "That friend of mine who lives in God". Drummond suggests that death is not so much "sunset" as "sunrise"; not so much "departure" as "arrival". Dying Frances Willard exclaimed, "How beautiful it is to be with God!"***

***For the Christian, one declares, "To be death-called is to be God-called, to be God–called is to be Christ–found, and to be Christ-found is hope, home and heaven."***

***Morn shall break and I will stand at daybreak in my Fatherland. The Western gates close to let the Eastern gates open.***

***From the dust of the weary highway,***
***From the smart of sorrow's rod,***
***Into the royal Presence,***
***They are bidden as guests of God.***
***The veil from their eyes is taken,***
***Sweet mysteries they are shown,***
***Their doubts and fears are over,***
***For they know as they are known.***

***For them there should be rejoicing***
***For them the festal array,***
***As for the bride in her beauty,***
***Whom love hath taken away;***
***Sweet hours of peaceful waiting***
***Till the path that we have trod,***
***Shall end at the Father's gateway,***
***And we are the guests of God.***

***In his dying hour Charles Kingsley was heard to whisper, "How beautiful God is."***

***"Traveling Toward Sunrise";***
***By Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 277.***

***CHANGED TO HIS LIKENESS***

***"By his power to rule all things, he will change our simple bodies and make them like his own glorious body."***
***Philippians 3:21***

***What do we know about our resurrected bodies? They will be unlike any we have ever imagined.***

***Will we look so different that we aren't instantly recognized? Perhaps. (We may need nametags.) Will we be walking through walls? Chances are we'll be doing much more.***

***Will we still bear the scars from the pain of life? The marks of war. The disfigurements of disease. The wounds of violence. Will these remain on our bodies? That is a very good question. Jesus, at least for forty days, kept his. Will we keep ours? On this issue, we have only opinions, but my opinion is that we won't. Peter tells us that "by his wounds you have been healed." (I Peter 2:24, NIV) In heaven's accounting, only one wound is worthy to be remembered, and that is the wound of Jesus. Our wounds will be no more.***

***"Grace For The Moment";***
***By Max Lucado; pg. 506***

***16 "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." 2nd Corinthians 5***

***1 "For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. 2 Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, 3 because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. 4 For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.***

***6 "Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. 7 For we live by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9 So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."***

***2nd Corinthians 4:16 – 5:10; NIV***

***"For we know tht if our earthly tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, on house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2nd Cor. 5:1)***

***The owner of the tenement, which I have occupied for many years, has given notice that he will furnish but little or nothing more for repairs. I am advised to be ready to move.***

***At first, this was not a very welcome notice. The surroundings here are in many respects very pleasant, and were it not for the evidence of decay, I should consider the house good enough. But even a light wind causes it to tremble and totter, and all the braces are not sufficient to make it secure. So, I am getting ready to move.***

***It is strange how quickly one's interest is transferred to the prospective home. I have been consulting maps of the new country and reading descriptions of its inhabitants. One who visited it has returned and from him I learn that it is beautiful beyond description; language breaks down in attempting to tell of what he heard while there. He says that in order to make an investment there, he has suffered the loss of all things that he owned here, and even rejoices in what others would call making a sacrifice. Another, whose love to me has been proven by the greatest possible test, is now there. He has sent me several clusters of the most delicious fruits. After tasting them, all food here seems insipid.***

***Two or three times I have been down by the border of the river that forms the boundary, and have wished myself among the company of those who were singing praises to the King on the other side. Many of my friends have moved there. Before leaving, they spoke of my coming later. I have seen the smile upon their faces as they passed out of sight. Often I am asked to make some new investments her, but my answer in every case is, "I am getting ready to move".***

***"Traveling Toward Sunrise"***
***By Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 347***

***It will be a world without death, disease, or sorrow. There will be no more crying. There will be no more pain. There will be no death; and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes. This does not only mean that there will be no tears shed in that happy world, but that all the tears that were ever shed will be turned into joy, that they will be more than healed and there will be no single memory or shadow of pain or grief to gall the perfect felicity of eternal years. Oh, sorrowing one, be patient. Lift up your heart. Rejoice! "Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning." (Psalm 30:5)***

***NO SIN***

***The other feature of the renovated earth will be that there will be no sin, and nothing that defiles will enter into the holy city and the happy life of the coming ages. Satan will never tempt again. There will be no more curse or cursed one. Never again will God have to cloud His face and perform the strange work of judgment which He so little loves, but the universe will settle down to everlasting love and uninterrupted joy. We will be established and will know that we will never fall again. Angels will be confirmed in their high and holy state and the very shadow of evil will at last be forgotten. Heaven will be so pure that evil will not be thought, remembered or conceived. The curse of time is to know both good and evil. In the innocence of those happy years, man will not know evil but only good. Oh, for that day to come when the crushing, defiling shadow of sin and doubt and fear will never fall again!***

***"The Christ In The Bible Commentary: - Book Four;***
***By A.B. Simpson; pgs. 522-523.***

***Each Of the redeemed shall forever know and praise some one aspect of the Divine beauty better than any other creature can. Why else were individuals created, but that God, loving all infinitely, should love each differently? And this difference, so far from impairing, floods with meaning the love of all blessed creatures for one another, the communion of the saints. If all experienced God in the same way and returned Him an identical worship, the song of the Church triumphant would have no symphony, it would be like an orchestra in which all the instruments played the same note. Aristotle has told us that a city is a unity of unlikes, and St. Paul that a body is a unity of different members. Heaven is a city, and a Body, because the blessed remain eternally different: a society, because each has something to tell all the others – fresh and ever fresh news of the 'My God' whom each finds in Him whom all praise 'Our God'. For doubtless the continually successful, yet never complete, attempt by each soul to communicate in unique vision to all others (and that by means whereof earthy art and philosophy are but clumsy imitations) is also among the ends for which the individual was created.***

***"Made For Heaven" by C. S. Lewis;***
***pgs. 28-30***

***Let me, however, remind the Christian , in order that there may be a flash of light in the thick darkness of this sermon that Death, to him, should never be a subject upon which he should loathe to meditate. To die! – to shake off my weakness and to be girded with omnipotence. To die! – to leave my pangs, and pains, and fears, and woe, my feeble heart, my unbelief, my trembling and my grief, and leap into the divine bosom. To die! What have I to lose by Death? The tumult of the people and the strife of tongues. A joyous loss indeed! To the believer Death is gain, unalloyed gain. Do we leave our friends by Death? We shall see better friends, and more numerous up yonder, in the general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. Do we leave our house and comforts? "There is a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Do we lose our life? Ah no, we gain a better far; for remember that we die to live, and then we live to die no more. Without any fraction of loss, death to the believer is a glorious gain. It is greatly wise, then, for a Christian to talk with his last hours, because those l$^{st}$ hours are the beginning of his glory. He leaves off to sin and begins to be perfect; he ceases to suffer and begins to be happy; he renounces all his poverty and shame, and begins to be rich and honored. Comfort, then, comfort, then, ye sorrowing and suffering Christians. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." Say unto them, "Your warfare is accomplished, your sin is pardoned, and you shall see your Lord's face without a veil between".***

***By Charles Spurgeon***
***"Spurgeon's Sermons";***
***volumes 7-8; pg. 133.***

***THE DEPARTURE DATE***

***"Your life is like a mist. You can see it for a short time, but then it goes away."***
***James 4:14***

***You, as all God's children, live one final breath from your own funeral.***

***Which, from God's perspective, is nothing to grieve. He responds to these grave facts with this great news: "The day you die is better than the day you are born" (Eccles. 7:1; NIV). Now there is a twist. Heaven enjoys a maternity-ward reaction to funerals. Angels watch body burials the same way grandparents monitor delivery-room doors. "He'll be coming through any minute!" They can't wait to see the new arrival. While we're driving hearses and wearing black, they're hanging pink and blue streamers and passing out cigars. We don't grieve when babies enter the world. The hosts of heaven don't weep when we leave it.***

***Come Thirsty***

***"Grace For The Moment";***
***By Max Lucado; pg. 531***

***Let us not imagine that the soul sleeps in insensibility. "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise", is the whisper of Christ to every dying saint. They "sleep in Jesus", but their souls are before the throne of God, praising Him day and night in His temple singing hallelujahs to Him who washed them from their sins in His blood. The body sleeps in its lonely bed of earth, beneath the coverlet of grass. But what is this sleep? The idea connected with sleep is "rest", and that is the thought, which the Spirit of God would convey to us. Sleep makes each night a Sabbath for the day. Sleep shuts fast the door of the soul, and bids all intruders tarry for a while, that the life within may enter its summer garden of ease. The toil-worn believer quietly sleeps, as does the weary child when it slumbers on its mother's breast. Oh! Happy they who die in the Lord; they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them, their quiet repose shall never be broken until God shall rouse them to give them their full reward. Guarded by angel watchers, curtained by eternal mysteries, they sleep on, the heritors of glory, till the fullness of time shall bring the fullness of redemption. What an awaking shall be theirs! They were laid in their last resting place, weary and worn, but such they shall not rise. They went to their rest with the furrowed brow, and the wasted features, but they wake up in beauty and glory. The shriveled seed, so destitute of form and comeliness, rises from the dust a beauteous flower. The winter of the grave gives way to the spring of redemption and the summer of glory. Blessed in death, since it, through the divine power, disrobes us of this workday garment, to clothe us with the wedding garment of incorruption. Blessed are those who "sleep in Jesus."***

***"Morning By Morning";***
***By Charles H. Spurgeon; pgs. 168-169***

***The lives that run parallel with God's will last, and when everything that has been against that will, or negligent of it, is summed up, and comes to naught, and is abolished, these lives continue. The life that is in conformity with the will of God lasts in another sense, inasmuch as it persists through all changes, even the supreme change that is wrought by death, in the same direction, and is substantially the same. For the man that was doing God's will here, down among cotton bales, and ledgers, and retorts, and dictionaries, will do God's will yonder, amid the glories; and it will be the same life, with the same guiding principles, with the same root for its activities. So it will last forever.***

***If we grasp the throne of God, we shall be co-eternal with the throne that we grasp. We cannot die, nor our work pass and be utterly abolished, as long as He lives.***

***They that have here dwelt in Christ, persistently seeking to have His truth dwelling in them and wrought out by them, will pass into the permanence of the heavenly home.***

***"Music For The Soul"***
***By Alexander Maclaren; pg. 74.***

***Note: The following is a brief excerpt from the personal journal of a Christian minister of the latter part of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century. Earle served as an evangelist for 57 years, mainly in the United States. The following is a small portion of what he wrote, on the fifty-seventh anniversary of his ministry. God used this man to lead many thousands of persons to Christ, and to encourage hundreds of persons to enter "full-time ministries". As he nears the end of his long Christ-centered ministry, he anticipates the 'glory of heaven'!***

***"But the principal joy in this work is in reserve for the beyond, when the faithful evangelist has passed within the pearly gates. Then, oh, then, when the glories of that wondrous world have fully burst upon his enraptured vision; when his feet have really pressed its gold-paved streets and the bright, beautiful banks of its flowing river; when the music of the harps of gold and of angel voices have thrilled his soul; when he has really seen, and bowed himself before the Saviour; when he begins to realize the blessedness of such a home, who shall describe the joy of his heart, as, from that white-robed throng, there come many thousands, gathering around him, grasping him by the hand in gratitude and love, and leading him to the Redeemer, saying, 'Jesus, we have believed on Thee, and been led to this beautiful world, through this one whom Thou didst appoint to do the work of an evangelist on earth! Oh, the joy of such an hour!***

***"And as the endless ages roll on, and his expanding mind ranges in wider fields of knowledge, and comprehends more and more the glories and wonders of the 'inheritance of the saints,' that joy will be ever growing deeper and sweeter, as he meets from time to time those who were brought there through his labors."***

***"Living Illustrations From A.B. Earle";***
***pgs. 119, 120.***

## *FACING THE FACTS*

***How precious also are Your thoughts to me,***
***O God! How great is the sum of them!***
***Psalm 139:17; NIV***

***Aging is a universal condition. But the way we try to hide it, you would think it was a plague!***

***There are girdles, which compact the middle age spread for both sexes. There are hair transplants, wigs, toupees, and hairpieces. Dentures bring youth to the mouth, wrinkle cream brings youth to the face, and color in a bottle brings youth to the hair.***

***All to hide what everyone already knows—we're getting older…***

***Just when the truth about life sinks in, God's truth starts to surface. He takes us by the hand and dares us not to sweep the facts under the rug but to confront them with him at our side.***

***Aging? A necessary process to pass on to a better world.***

***Death? Merely a brief passage, a tunnel.***

***Self? Designed for a purpose, purchased by God himself.***

***There, was that so bad?***

***"Grace For The Moment";***
***By Max Lucado; pg. 729***

***It is good thing for men to face the fact that they will die. We exhibit our power, we parade our learning, and we display our wealth, but these seem to mean remarkably little after a short time. We are now having our little day as millions of our predecessors have had theirs, but within a hundred years we shall be gone from the scene and very few of us will be remembered by anyone. Man may learn in his ingenuity, to postpone death a bit and to ease its pains, but he cannot overcome it. Death is the great democrat who, in the end, levels all our pretentions. We cannot, therefore, do anything about death, but that is not our province. We can for a little while, do something about life. We can use our powers to help arrange some little area in such a way that they shall sit every man under his own vine and under his own fig tree; and none shall make them afraid.***

***Life, though brief, can be glorious. There are some who have lived it magnificently as they have tried to think God's thoughts after Him and to be to the Eternal Goodness what a man's own hand is to a man. Such people have been deeply devout, but their religion has not been something apart from basic human events like loving and dying. Their religion has been the way in which common experiences like loving and dying have been glorified by being placed in the framework of divine grace. This is our great tradition and it is such a pattern, which we must now restore.***

***"The Common Ventures of Life";***
***By Elton Trueblood; pg. 124***

***"WHOSOEVER LIVETH AND BELIEVETH IN ME SHALL NEVER DIE…"***
***(John 11:26)***

***Speaking from the pulpit a year after the commencement of the disease from which he ultimately died, D. W. B. Hinson said, "I remember a year ago when a man in this city said, "You have got to go to your death." I walked out to where I live, five miles out of this city, and I looked across that mountain that I love, and I looked at the river in which I rejoice, and I looked at the stately trees that are always God's own poetry to my soul. Then in the evening I looked up into the great sky where God was lighting His lamps, and I said, 'I may not see you many more times, but mountain, I shall be alive when you are gone; and river, I shall be alive when you cease running toward the sea; and stars, I shall be alive when you have fallen from your sockets in the great down pulling of the Universe.'***

***Faith and hope must rise, plume their wings, and soar toward the sunrise clouds of gold.***

***"Traveling Toward Sunrise",***
***By Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 287***

***A Lutheran pastor friend – the Reverend Bill Vaswig – and I once were discussing Galatians 2:19 and wondering what it means to be crucified with Christ. I mean, what are we actually talking about? Bill said, "Let's pray the passage into each other". I had wanted to keep the discussion at arm's length, but I gulped and said, "All right, how do we do it?" "I don't know exactly," was Bill's response, "but you go first!" So I went over to him, placed my hand on his head, and began to pray. I have no idea what I said beyond the hope that he would experience what it means to be crucified with Christ.***

***When I finished and sat down, Bill looked at me wide-eyed and whispered, "It happened!" "What happened?" I responded blankly. He proceeded to explain that as I began praying, he saw a vivid mental picture of his Church with a funeral service going on inside. He could see everything clearly: the coffin with the lid open, the chancel, the high arching beams, but he was seeing it all from inside the coffin. It was his funeral! As the people, filled with sorrow, filed past the coffin, he tried to tell them that everything was okay, that he was fine, and that what was happening was good. They could not hear him; all they could see was a corpse, and yet he was more alive than he had ever been.***

***"Prayer – Finding The Heart's True Home";***
***By Richard J. Foster; pg. 64***

***THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH***

***"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains a single grain of wheat; but if it dies, it brings a good harvest.***
***John 12:24; Phillips***

***We do all we can to live and not die. God, however, says we must die in order to live. When you sow a seed, it must die in the ground before it can grow. What we see as the ultimate tragedy, he sees as the ultimate triumph.***

***And when a Christian dies, it's not a time to despair, but a time to trust. Just as the seed is buried and the material wrapping decomposes, so our fleshly body will be buried and will decompose. But just as the buried seed sprouts new life, so our body will blossom into a new body…***

***The seed buried in the earth will blossom in heaven. Your soul and body will reunite, and you will be like Jesus.***

***"Grace For The Moment";***
***By Max Lucado; pg. 536***

***"BETTER IS THE END OF A THING THAN THE BEGINNING THEREOF…"***
***(Eccl. 7:8)***

***Farther on, you will find no thorns, but in every step you will tread out the fragrance of the sweetest flowers. Farther on you will meet with no foe; but kindred spirits with their great thoughts, wise and loving, will cheer you on the way. Farther on no dark cloud will throw its gloomy shadows over you; you shall have the brightest stars at night, and nought but sunshine in the day. Farther on , the prospect improves, the valleys are more rich and the mountains more grand; flowers of lovlier hue and sweeter fragrance are there; trees of statelier mound deck the landscape; and rivers and lakes more transparent and more majestic refresh and beautify the scene. Take courage, it is better farther on.***

***I hear it singing, sweetly,***
***Softly in an undertone,***
***Singing as if God had taught it –***
***It is better farther on!***

***Night and day it sings the same song,***
***Sings it while I sit alone,***
***Sings it that the heart may hear it –***
***It is better farther on.***

***"Traveling Toward Sunrise";***
***By Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 320***

***Imagine Seeing God***

***"May the LORD bless you from Mount Zion,***
***he who made heaven and earth."***
***Psalm 134:3***

***The Hebrew writer gives it a National Geographic piece in heaven. Listen to how he describes the mountaintop of Zion. He says when we reach the mountain we will have come to "the city of the living God…To thousands of angels gathered together with joy…To the meeting of God's firstborn children whose names are written in heaven" (Heb. 12:22-23)***

***What a mountain! Won't it be great to see the angels? To finally know what they look like and who they are?...***

***Imagine the meeting of the firstborn. A gathering of all God's children. No jealousy. No competition. No division…we will be perfect…sinless…***

***And imagine seeing God. Finally to gaze in the face of your Father. To feel the Father's gaze upon you. Neither will ever cease.***

***When God Whispers Your Name***

***"Grace For The Moment";***
***By Max Lucado; pg. 550***

***"…Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever." (Rev. 1:5, 6)***

***Who are those that dwell in Heaven forever and ever? Sinners saved by grace! There is not a man or woman there who was not a sinner.***

***I stand upon the golden streets, I walk amid the brightness of the city; I hear a man singing, and I say to him, "And what were you on earth?" He answers, "I am the thief who died by the side of Christ. I said, 'Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom,' and He said, 'This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise,' and I have been here ever since."***

***I pass on and I say to another, "Who are you with the light upon your brow?" She answers: "I am the one who broke the alabaster box of ointment over the Saviour's feet; I washed his feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of my head; and now He has wiped all my tears and I am happy in His presence".***

***And who are you so radiant with happiness? To which I receive the reply, "I am the man who had ten legions of devils; Jesus cast them out and healed me; and now I am praising Him forever.***

***Yes, these are the inhabitants of this glorious city. It may be that when we get to glory and stand amid the redeemed, worshipping, we shall hear one saying, pointing to Jesus, "Do you see those marks upon His blessed brow? Those scars? It was I who plaited the crown of thorns and pressed it on His brow."***

***But why should not these sinners be in glory? The Blood of Christ availed as much for them as for you and me. I should not be surprised, such is the amazing love of God, at seeing any of these in glory.***

***They will come from all parts – from north, south, east, and west. The dark faces and the pale faces are alike now. We shall go in with uplifted foreheads, to wear the crown, with eager feet to tread those golden streets, with longing eyes to gaze upon the face of Christ, to worship God and the Lamb.***

***"Traveling Toward Sunrise";***
***By Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 324***

## *IMAGINE*

***Read John 14:1-6***
***"Let not your heart be troubled." John 14:1***

***Our Church's young people did what they could to "construct heaven". It was time for the spring banquet, and the creative teens used lights, Styrofoam, and other materials to turn the auditorium into their best idea of heaven.***

***The theme of the banquet was "I Can Only Imagine", from the song by Mercy Me. Our daughter Melissa helped transform the Church. When I visited to see how the kids were doing, she was in the rafters hanging stars. The night of the banquet, my wife and I were able to hear one of Melissa's friends sing the theme song as we all thought about this faraway place called heaven.***

***Of course, we never could have imagined that Melissa would be entering the real heaven just 6 weeks later. The imaginary would become reality.***

***Jesus told us about heaven as a way of untroubling our hearts. He said, "Let not your heart be troubled; …in My Father's house are many mansions…I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:1-2).***

***Heaven is a prepared place for prepared heart's - place of unimaginable beauty, splendor, and majesty. It's where God is caring for our believing loved ones, and someday for us. Imagine heaven, and rejoice! – Dave Branon***

***The Lord has promised to prepare***
***A place in heaven above-***
***A home where we will always be***
***With Him and those, we love. – Sper***

***Jesus is preparing a place for us and preparing us for that place.***

***"Our Daily Bread" Devotional Booklet;***
***October 2010***

***THE LARGER WATERS***

***I Thessalonians iv. 13-18***

***Death is not an end; it is only a new beginning. Death is not the master of the house; he is only the porter at the King's lodge, appointed to open the gate, and let in the King's guests into the realms of eternal day. "And so shall we be ever with the Lord."***

***And so the range of three score years and ten is not the limit of our life. Our life is not a land-locked lake enclosed within the shorelines of seventy years. It is an arm of the sea, and where the shorelines seem to meet an old age they open out into the infinite. And so we must build for those larger waters. We must lay our life plans on the scale of the infinite, not as though we were only pilgrims of time, but as children of eternity! We are immortal! How, then, shall we live to-day in prospect of the eternal morrow?***

***By Max Lucado; pg. 536***

***I WAS called to see a young lady die who was all ready to go, and what a privilege it was to witness such a scene! She had disposed of the various articles that she called her own, and with a clear, bright evidence that she was Christ's child, she waited the time of her departure.***

***As I entered the room, she looked up, her face radiant with the love of God, and said:***

***"If anyone had told me a month ago I would be as happy as this in death, I could not have believed it. I would not change places with a king."***

***As the supreme moment arrived (her father, a physician, bending over her), she asked:***

***"How long before I can go?"***

***"About three minutes, my daughter, and you will be gone", was the answer.***

***She extended her limbs, placed her hands across her breast, as she wished them to remain when cold and stiff; a heavenly smile covered her face, as if, like Stephen, she saw heaven open, and the bright ones waiting to welcome her. In this way, she passed away. We all could say, as never before:***

***"Ah, lovely appearance of death, No sight upon earth is so fair."***

***"Living Illustrations";***
***By A. B. Earle; pg. 106***

***Here in the present human life we are permitted to know something of beauty, truth, and goodness, to read something of the ultimate plan and meaning of the universe, to see something of the splendor of the majesty of God. Yet the very best that we can see and know on earth is but a poor fraction of what must be waiting yonder to be revealed.***

***We can find a parable of this in modern science. There are whole ranges of colour, the scientist tells us, which our physical eyes cannot perceive. True, we can see all the colours of the rainbow, ranging from red at the one end of the spectrum to violet at the other. But now we are assured that this is only a comparatively small fraction of the colours which really exist; that beyond the red rays at one end of the spectrum there are the infra red, beyond the violet at the other the ultra-violet, and out beyond these again whole unimaginable reaches of colour which we never see at all, because our eyes as at present constituted cannot get hold of them. In short, what we do see is only a tiny segment of the whole. If this is true of our physical eyes, is it not likely to be true of the inner eye of our soul? Here on earth we do apprehend something of the eternal spiritual realities; we do see, even if through a glass darkly , something of the marvel of the kingdom and the beauty of the King. But our present mortal spectrum - how poor a fraction of the whole! And beyond the best insights, we can ever hope to have in this dark, shadowed existence of time and sin and limitation, what reaches of glory must be waiting for us yonder in the morning! We are going to find the answers to all questions unanswered here. We are to see the dearest faces we have loved and lost. We are to gaze upon that one Face which has haunted the dreams of humanity since the day when God walked with men in Galilee, the Head that once was crowned with thorns and is crowned with glory now.***

***"The Strong Name";***
***By James S. Stewart; pg. 249***

***"BUT NOW THEY DESIRE A BETTER COUNTRY…"***
***(Hebrews 11:16)***

***Shortly before his death, the Rev. Robert J. Burdette wrote a personal letter to the editor of a paper in which he said; "I watch the sunset as I look out over the rim of the blue Pacific, and there is no mystery beyond the horizon line, because I know what there is over there. I have been here. I have journeyed in those lands. Over there where the sun is, just sinking is Japan. That star is rising over China. In that direction lie the Philippines. I know all that.***

***Well, there is another land that I look toward as I watch the sunset. I have never seen it. I have never seen anyone who has been there. But it has a more abiding reality than any of those lands, which I do know.***

***This land is beyond the sunset - this land of immortality, this fair and blessed country of the soul – why, this heaven of ours is the one thing in the world, which I know with absolute, unshaken, unchangeable certainty. This I know with a knowledge that is never shadowed by a passing cloud of doubt. I may not always be certain about this world; my geographical locations may sometimes become confused, but the other world – that I know.***

***And as the afternoon sun sinks lower, faith shines more clearly and hope, lifting her voice in a higher key, sings the songs of fruition. My work is about ended, I think. The best of it I have done poorly; any of it I might have done better, but I have done it. And in the fairer land, with finer materials and a better working light, I will do better work."***

***"Traveling Toward Sunrise";***
***By Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 349***

***Jesus himself is the quiet resting place of those redeemed by his precious blood, and in him they are safe and sheltered forever, none and nothing can destroy him who is our shelter: "My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation." (Isaiah 32:18)***

***Paul called the body of the believer "the earthly house of this tabernacle" (2 Corinthians 5:1), which is the soul's brief and fragile house and which Jesus chooses as his peaceable home until the earthly house perishes. The grace, the body's long and gloomy habitation, was to Job "mine house; I have made my bed in the darkness" (Job 17:13). But this is by no means a peaceable habitation. Its silence is that of death.***

***There is, however, a sure dwelling place for the soul and the body of the child of God, namely, the blessed and perpetual resting place which Jesus called "My Father's house". No plague can come nigh this dwelling. Within it, there is room for the great multitude no one can number of the redeemed, for this peaceable habitation has many mansions. The reality of this eternal sanctuary of rest is confirmed by the affirmation of Jesus, "If it were not so, I would have told you." (John 14:2)***

***Having lived with the Father through the eternal past, Jesus knew all about its peace. John Bunyan described his longing for heaven thus: "Now, just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them, and behold, the city shone like the sun, which, when I had seen, I wished myself among them". Praise God, someday – it may be sooner than we expect – we shall hear a voice for our eternal happiness say, "Come up hither!" Then shall we be at home with the lord.***

***"Seasons of The Lord –Silence and Remembrance",***
***Volume IV; By Herbert Lockyer; pg. 14***

***"The Lamb is the light thereof." (Revelation 21:23)***

***Quietly contemplate the Lamb as the light of heaven. Light in Scripture is the emblem of joy. The joy of the saints in heaven is comprised in this; Jesus chose us, loved us, bought us, cleansed us, robed us, kept us, and glorified us: we are here entirely through the Lord Jesus. Light is also the cause of beauty. Naught of beauty is left when – light is gone. Without light no radiance flashes from the sapphire, no peaceful ray proceedeth from the pearl; and thus all the beauty of the saints above comes from Jesus. As planets, they reflect the light of the Sun of Righteousness; they live as beams proceeding from the central orb. If He withdrew, they must die; if His glory were veiled, their glory must expire. Light is also the emblem of knowledge. In heaven, our knowledge will be perfect, but the Lord Jesus Himself will be the fountain of it. Dark providence, never understood before, will then be clearly seen, and all that puzzles us now will become plain to us in the light of the Lamb. Oh! What unfoldings there will be and what glorifying of the God of love! Light also means manifestation. Light manifests. In this world, it doth not yet appear what we shall be. God's people are a hidden people, but when Christ receives His people into heaven, He will touch them with the wand of His own love, and change them into the image of His manifested glory. They were poor and wretched, but what a transformation! They were stained with sin, but one touch of His finger, and they are bright as the sun, and clear as crystal. Oh! What a manifestation! All this proceeds from the exalted Lamb. Whatever there may be of effulgent splendor, Jesus shall be the centre and soul of it all. Oh! To be present and to see Him in His own light, the King of kings, and Lord of lords!***

***"Morning By Morning" by***
***Charles Spurgeon; Pg. 201***

***Then came the first Easter Day and the stone was rolled away! That stone! Mark says it was 'exceeding heavy'. And now it is rolled away, for one Traveler returned. Death is an abysmal cavern no more, but a tunnel with a golden light at the farther end. It is no more a blind alley, but a thoroughfare; no more a cul-de-sac, but a highway. The mystery is a mystery no more. 'Tis Death is dead, not He.' 'And', says Paul, 'if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies by His spirit that dwelleth in you.'***

***"Westminster Sermons, Volume Two";***
***By William Sangster; pg. 76.***

***But we have "expectations" beyond this life. We shall die soon; and then our "expectation is from Him". Do we not expect that when we lie upon the bed of sickness He will send angels to carry us to His bosom? We believe that when the pulse is faint, and the heart heaves heavily, some angelic messenger shall stand and look with loving eyes upon us, and whisper, "Sister spirit, come away!" As we approach the heavenly gate, we expect to hear the welcome invitation, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." We are expecting harps of gold and crowns of glory; we are hoping soon to be amongst the multitude of shining ones before the throne; we are looking forward and longing for the time when we shall be like our glorious Lord –for "We shall see Him as He is." Then if these be thine "expectations," O my soul, live for God; live with the desire and resolve to glorify Him from whom cometh all thy supplies, and of whose grace in thy election, redemption, and calling, it is that thou hast any "expectation" of coming glory.***

***"Morning By Morning";***
***By Charles H. Spurgeon, pgs. 53-54.***

***Death is not a cessation of conscious existence, but a transition from one stage of being to another. Here man consists of an immaterial spirit tenanting a material body; and the two are so united as to form one living person. The spirit is the conscious self: the body is its earthly tabernacle, and its life depends upon the continued indwelling of the spirit. At death this union is dissolved.***

***We gather from our Lord's promise to the dying thief, and from Paul's desire to depart and to be with Christ, that this stage of existence (following physical death) is not one of profound sleep or unconsciousness. To the righteous, it is evidently one of great, though not of final, blessedness.***

***Not only shall we "sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven", but we shall have opportunity for converse with the noble and the true of every land and of every age.***

***The service of God upon earth is not confined to acts of worship, but includes duties of every kind performed under the influence of filial love. Surely, in heaven, our employments will be far more varied, yet they will all be as much channels of joy to ourselves as offerings of praise to our Lord.***

***All things will be ours; for God Himself in His infinite love and boundless wealth will be our portion forever. In His presence is fullness of joy, and at His right hand there are pleasures for evermore.***

***"A Popular Exposition of Methodist Theology";***
***By Charles O. Eldridge; pgs. 184. 185, 189, 190***

***O child of God, death hath lost its sting, because the devil's power over it is destroyed. Then cease to fear dying. Ask grace from God the Holy Ghost, that by an intimate knowledge and a firm belief of thy Redeemer's death, thou mayst be strengthened for that dread hour. Living near the cross of Calvary, thou mayst think of death with pleasure, and welcome it when it comes with intense delight. It is sweet to die in the Lord: it is a covenant blessing to sleep in Jesus. Death is no longer banishment, it is a return from exile, a going home to the many mansions where the loved ones already dwell. The distance between glorified spirits in heaven and militant saints on earth seems great; but it is not so. We are not far from home - a moment will bring us there. The sail is spread; the soul is launched upon the deep. How long will be its voyage? How many wearying winds must beat upon the sail ere it shall be reefed in the port of peace? How long shall that soul be tossed upon the waves before it comes to that sea which knows no storm? Listen to the answer, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord". Yon ship has just departed, but it is already at its haven. It did but spread its sail and it was there. Like that ship of old, upon the Lake of Galilee, a storm had tossed it, but Jesus said, "Peace, be still", and immediately it came to land. Think not that a long period intervenes between the instant of death and the eternity of glory. When the eyes close on earth, they open in heaven. The horses of fire are not an instant on the road. Then, O child of God, what is there for thee to fear in death, seeing that through the death of thy Lord its curse and sting are destroyed? And now it is but a Jacob's ladder whose foot is in the dark grave, but its top reaches to glory everlasting.***

***"Morning By Morning":***
***By Charles Spurgeon, pgs. 104, 105***

***We don't know what's coming the next hour, day, or year. We might well be amazed at how different life will be from our expectations. It's the same with life after death. When you pray with authentic hope, Nouwen says, "no longer do you want to know what it will be like after you die, what heaven exactly will mean, how you will be eternal, or how the risen Lord will show himself. When you pray with hope, you turn yourself toward a God who will bring forth his promises; it is enough to know he is a faithful God."***

***"Encouragement"; pg. 219;***
***By Harold Myra***

***Who would not wish and earnestly desire and fervently prepare to live in that land of which the prophets wrote. Edward Denny wrote: "I rejoice in the thought that every setting sun is bringing us nearer to a world where suns will never set; where we shall walk together in an atmosphere of light and glory; where all the desires, longings, and hopes of our hearts, will be fully met! How blessed to feel that we have such a hope!"***

***"Stones With Fair Colors";***
***By Gary Bowell; pg. 256***

***Sometimes I find myself musing in this way: Dear old body, for the past nine decades we've walked the dusty roads together, we've flown across continents, and you've been uncomplaining even when I've put impossible loads upon you. Thank you for your faithful service, and now you say you'll be faithful till death us do part. When that parting comes, I'll look back at you and salute you and thank you, and I'll say to you, "When I get my immortal body, I hope there will be a lot of you there incorporated." Thank you again, for everything.***

***I have often said that when the people stand around and say, "Well, Brother Stanley is gone", I want to be able to wink at them, and if I have enough strength, I would like to laugh and say, "Jesus is Lord." Because this will not be death. It will be a fuller life. I say this as a half joke, but I believe it will turn out to be reality. Because any person who is in Jesus is deathless, for he is under the principle and power of resurrection.***

***"The Divine Yes";***
***By E. Stanley Jones;***
***pgs. 144-150***

***This is why I believe our Lord describes our presence with him in heaven as knowing him, even as we are known (See I$^{st}$ Corinthians 13:12). God knows us in our weaknesses; we will know him in his transcendent majesty. He has always known us for who we really are; yet he calls us his children and his friends. And finally, when all is said and done, he calls us home to be with him. We will be at home with God! That's my destiny (see Revelation 21:3).***

***The cemetery, new or old, is not our ultimate destination; it is merely a place in which to remember the symbols of a farewell. The person is not there; only the last memory is there. The respect shown in a cemetery comes not because it is home, but because it is where we bid believing loved ones a temporary good–bye. Jesus came from the Father and returned to the Father to prepare a place for you and for me. That's home. That is our eternal dwelling. We cherish the tender metaphor of home because there we will unpack our suitcases for the last time.***

***The destiny God has for us does away with these things that we deem so important now - shelters, tombs, and gravestones. In the end, our identities will be with God, and our personalities will be sublimely consummated to the purpose designed for each one of us. Our move from earth to heaven will serve as the thread that ties our memories together with reality and will enable us to see the temporal in the light of the eternal.***

***"Grand Weaver"***
***By Ravi Zacharias;***
***pgs. 157, 159, 167***

***Fear not the mystery of death! – Jesus has died, and shown us that it is the gateway into another life, more fair and blessed than this - a life in which human words are understood, and human faces smile, and human affections linger still. The forty days of His resurrection life have solved many of the problems, and illumined most of the mystery. To die is to go at once to be with Him. No chasm, no interval, no weary delay in purgatory. Absent from the body, present with the Lord. One moment here in conditions of mortality; the next beyond the stars.***

***Fear not the loneliness of death! The soul in the dark valley becomes aware of another at its side, "Thou art with me". Death cannot separate us, even for a moment, from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. In the hour of death Jesus fulfills His own promise, "I will come again and take you unto Myself". And on the other side, we step into a vast circle of loving spirits, who welcome the newcomer with festal songs. (2nd Peter 1:11).***

***Death! How shall they die who have already died in Christ? That which others call death, we call sleep. We dread it no more than sleep. Our bodies lie down exhausted with the long working day, to awake in the fresh energy of the eternal morning; but in the meanwhile, the spirit is presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.***

***The Way Into The Holiest;***
***F. B. Meyer; pgs. 39-40***

***The light ahead was growing stronger. Lucy saw that a great series of many-colored cliffs led up in front of them like a giant's staircase. And then she forgot everything else, because Aslan himself was coming, leaping down from cliff to cliff like a living cataract of power and beauty.***

***…Aslan turned to them and said:***

***"You do not yet look as happy as I mean you to be."***

***Lucy said, "We're so afraid of being sent away, Aslan. And you have sent us back into our own world so often."***

***No fear of that," said Aslan. "Have you not guessed?"***

***Their hearts leaped and a wild hope rose within them.***

***"There was a real railway accident," said Aslan softly. "Your father and mother and all of you are -as you call it in the Shadow –Lands - dead. The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is the morning."***

***And as He spoke, He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page; now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever; in which every chapter is better than the one before."***

***Taken From Ending of "The Last Battle";***
***(The final of the seven books of the***
***"Chronicles of Narnia" –***
***One of C. S. Lewis's greatest books).***

***"The city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon,***
***To shine in it." Revelations 21:23***

***Yonder in the better world, the inhabitants are independent of all creatures' comforts. They have no need of raiment; their white robes never wear out, neither shall they ever be defiled. They need no medicine to heal diseases, "for the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." They need no sleep to recruit their frames – they rest not day nor night, but unweariedly praise Him in His temple. They need no social relationship to minister comfort, and whatever happiness they may derive from association with their fellows is not essential to their bliss, for their Lord's society is enough for their largest desires. They need no teachers there; they doubtless commune with one another concerning the things of God, but they do not require this by way of instruction; they shall all be taught of the Lord. Ours are the alms at the king's gate, but they feast at the table itself. Here we lean upon the friendly arm, but there they lean upon their Beloved and upon Him alone. Here we must have the help of our companions, but there they find all they want in Christ Jesus. Here we look to the meat, which perisheth, and to the raiment, which decays before the moth, but there they find everything in God. We use the bucket to fetch us water from the well, but there they drink from the fountainhead, and put their lips down to the living water. Here the angels bring us blessings, but we shall want no messengers from heaven then. They shall need no Gabriel's there to bring their love-notes from God, for there they shall see Him face to face. Oh! What a blessed time shall that be when we shall have mounted above every second cause and shall rest upon the bare arm of God! What a glorious hour when God, and not His creatures; the Lord, and not His works, shall be our daily joy! Our souls shall then have attained the perfection of bliss.***

***"Morning By Morning" by***
***Charles H. Spurgeon; pgs. 206, 207.***

***We are the children of God now, and if we are children now, we shall be grown up some time. Childhood leads to maturity. The infant becomes a man.***

***That is to say, he that here, in an infantile way, is stammering with his poor unskilled lips the name "Abba!" "Father!" will one day come to speak it fully. He that dimly trusts, he that partial loves, he that can lift up his heart in some more or less unworthy prayer and aspiration after god, in all these emotions and exercises, has the great proof in himself that such emotions, such relationship, can never be put an end to. The roots have gone down through the temporal, and have laid hold of the eternal! Anything seems to me to be more credible than that a man who can look up and say, "My Father!~" shall be crushed by what befalls the mere outside of him; anything seems to me to be more believable than to suppose that the nature which is capable of these elevating emotions and aspirations of confidence and hope, which can know god and yearn after Him, and can love Him, is going to be wiped out like a microscopic insect by the finger of Death.; the material has nothing to do with these feelings, and if I know myself, in however feeble and imperfect a degree, to be the son of god, I carry in the conviction the very pledge and seal of immortality. "That is a thought whose very sweetness yieldeth proof that it was born for immortality.' "We are the sons of God" (I John 3:2), therefore we shall always be so, in all worlds, and whatsoever ay become of this poor wrappage in which my soul dwells.***

***Music For The Soul" by***
***Alexander Maclaren; pg. 365***

## *WHEN WE ALL GET TO HEAVEN*
### *By Eliza E. Hewitt*

*Sing The Wondrous Love Of Jesus;*
*Sing His Mercy And His Grace.*
*In The Mansions Bright And Blessed*
*He'll Prepare For Us A Place.*

*While We Walk The Pilgrim Pathway*
*Clouds Will Overspread The Sky,*
*But When Traveling Days Are Over*
*Not A Shadow Not A Sigh.*

*Onward To The Prize Before Us!*
*Soon His Beauty We'll Behold;*
*Soon The Pearly Gates Will Open;*
*We Shall Tread The Streets Of Gold*

*Chorus:*

*When We All Get To Heaven,*
*What A Day Of Rejoicing That Will Be!*
*When We All See Jesus,*
*We'll Sing And Shout The Victory.*

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# IN MEMORY: INTRODUCTION

By

**RON CHRISTIAN**

## *POINTERS AT THE CROSSROADS OF LIFE*

***He stood at the crossroads all alone, with the sunrise in his face;***
***He had no fear for the path unknown,***
***He was set for a manly race.***
***But the road stretched east, and the road stretched west;***
***There was no one to tell him which way was the best;***
***So my chum turned wrong and went down, down, down,***
***Till he lost the race and the victor's crown,***
***Because no one stood at the crossroads there.***
***Another chum on another day,***
***At the selfsame crossroads stood;***
***He paused a moment to choose the way***
***That would lead to the greater good.***
***And the road stretched east, and the road stretched west;***
***But I was there to show him the best;***
***Soy chum turned right and went on and on,***
***Till he won the race and the victor's crown;***
***He came at last to the mansion fair,***
***Because I stood at the crossroads there.***
***Since then I have raised a daily prayer,***
***That I be kept faithfully standing there,***
***To warn the runners as they come,***
***And save my own or another's chum.***

***(Author Unknown)***

***(Note: Most of the persons, whose lives and memories we celebrate in this Book, were faithful 'pointers at the Crossroads of Life', encouraging countless numbers of persons – seekers – to take the* 'road of Christ' that leads to eternal life! Their noble lives are sacred to our memories. "They, being dead, yet speak to us!")**

# *INTRODUCTION TO BOOK*

***For probably a few years I have 'secretly' entertained the rather 'crazy' idea of compiling several of my past funeral messages, to form a new book. I have already written/compiled more than 40 books (on a wide variety of subjects) during the last three decades, so why consider another (rather 'crazy') book. Probably few (and perhaps no other) pastor has thought it worthy of their time or energy to compile the sermons which were delivered on the occasion of the death of persons (mostly who were members of their congregation). So why should I enter into this project of writing on the Christian view of death and the Christian hope of the Resurrection (giving special recognition to several persons whose life and death I personally found significant)? I thought of at least four reasons (which may, or may not, make 'sense' to you – my dear reader).***

***Before reviewing those four reasons, let me share with you the first sentence that I wrote when I seriously considered this 'strange project'. This is what I wrote on the large envelope that contains the past written messages that I plan to include in this new volume, hopefully a volume that will 'bless' you, in some ways.***

***Here is the simple 'aim' that I penned: "These are carefully and thoughtfully written – not only describing the honored deceased persons, but containing considerable thoughts on the Christian viewpoint of Death and Resurrection".***

***This, in summary, is what I hope to accomplish in this 'unique-type book' of tributes to important persons in my life (during the last 40 years, most of whom, with me, were involved in pastoral ministry).***

***Now to review the four specific (simple) reasons why I think this 'material' is worthy to be placed in a 'book format'.***

***FIRST, to honor the memory of a few precious persons whom I knew during my long pastoral ministry (most of whom I knew rather well, and some of whom I knew only casually). I want never to ignore or to forget or to trivialize my past, because my past is most significant, not for the countless events I was involved***

***in, but because of the hundreds of persons with whom I shared my life in very significant ways (including great sorrows and great joys). I want to take out of my 'dusty files' the several written sermons and tributes that I recorded at the time of many funeral services, written words that I used to share my love for persons who were precious to God and also who were precious to me. Most of one's life is lived in the 'shadows of others', and most (if not all) of us are 'imitators' of other persons. Consciously and unconsciously, I imitated the behavior, attitudes, and perspectives of many of the persons whose lives I have sought to honor in these messages and tributes in this book. Of course, most readers of this book will not have known any of the persons featured in this book (and there is, of course, some 'disadvantage' to this reality, but I do believe that it is possible to 'enjoy' and even to 'imitate' the lives of other persons (to some degree), even if the reader was not privileged to personally know the person that he is reading about. I have read biographies of great persons (who, of course, I did not know personally) and I have found myself saying (to myself) "there are certain characteristics about that person (love, joy, compassion, wisdom, courage, etc.) that I would like to have in my life!" Not only is it true of children that they mainly learn 'by imitation' (by following a mentor), but throughout adult life persons learn from mentors. Several of the persons whom I honor in this book, were mentors to me. I could share many examples, but one example will suffice. As a young pastor (age 22 when I started to pastor in a very small Church of about 35 persons, in 1967), there was a group of about 10 'older ladies' – all saintly and loving and up-to-date in viewpoints and good-natured and even humorous – who 'took me under their wing' in support and in prayer. I picked up several of them (in my old car) so that all of us could enjoy our weekly 'cottage prayer meeting' in the home of the oldest lady in the small prayer group. For about ten years, I had this delightful experience (of visiting, of laughing, of praying, of reading, and of course having light food together)! These older ladies – mostly widows – (all of whom, of course, eventually died, with me giving their funeral message) greatly influenced my developing Christian life. The burdens were sometimes very heavy, but they always helped me (as a young pastor) to stay encouraged and to stay 'close' to God! Even though they all were 'spiritual giants' in the faith of Christ and in the Christian***

***Walk, they were never intimidating or belittling to me, and they were not 'legalistic'. They were open to 'new ideas'. They greatly respected me as the pastor of our Church, and as the one who carried a great load of responsibility. They expressed great love and admiration for me and felt great empathy when I was personally suffering for myself or for the Church we loved together. Very choice 'saints' and unusual ladies, to say the least. Among my very closest friends, during the earlier years of my pastorate (as a young man enjoying fellowship with elderly 'citizens of the Kingdom'). I loved them deeply, in spite of the fact that we greatly differed in many ways, including our great age difference. They remain, after all these years since their death (and some have been 'gone' for decades), as some of my 'main mentors' in the Faith. I still want to 'imitate' many of their godly qualities, by God's grace. I want to know the blessed Christ like they knew Him. But I know that they 'paid a big price' to become so mature in the Christian Faith. Am I willing to go though the 'fire of adversity' to have my character refined – similar to what they experienced? These are some of my thoughts, regarding the subject of 'Mentoring'. I know that every human being will 'mentor' certain persons (for good or bad). I have been God-blessed to be shaped and molded by literally scores of 'beautiful and godly persons'! As the apostle Paul said, I too feel that I am a 'debtor to all men'! So many have profoundly influenced my life – for good and for godly living, and I can never repay them (including the 10 little elderly ladies with whom I enjoyed so much for so long – including the 'weekly cottage prayer meetings'). My memory of them is so sacred and precious. I will not be worthy, but (by God's grace) I hope that God shall allow me to live on the same 'block' in heaven, as neighbors to those dear elderly ladies (who will no longer in heaven be 'old'). And I want to live close to so many others also! Coming back now, briefly to those 'elderly ladies' – members of that weekly 'cottage prayer meeting'. Let me say that they rejoiced with me when I reported new people that I led to Christ, and they started praying for those 'little lambs' in Christ's world–wide flock (the Church). They were among the most refreshing and joyous and alive persons whom I ever knew. Even though I missed them when they (one-by-one) died, I found it quite 'easy' to preach their funeral message, for I had so many wonderful 'things' to say about them. This is but one (of many)***

***examples that I can share, regarding persons (saintly individuals) who greatly influenced my life – positively! (Of course, as any pastor would have to admit, there were opposite-type persons – quite negative persons – of whom I found myself thinking – "I hope God will protect me from ever becoming that 'negative and sour'!" I call some critical-type Christians 'sandpaper Christians' for they apparently are assigned by the sovereign God to 'knock off my rough edges' in my life – which is quite painful at times! They seem to have the 'skill' of focusing on my faults more than on any virtues and strengths that I might have. Ha!)***

***Paul the Apostle in the New Testament was so humble that he said that he was "a debtor to all men". He felt that there were countless persons to whom he owed a 'debt' of gratitude, because God used so many to help 'shape and mold' his own life - to become daily more like Christ his Master! And certainly, I am indebted to countless persons who have done the same favor for me – too many to name, but a few of them including my parents and siblings and godly wife and dear children and loving grandchildren and many pastors and godly older persons (like I noted in the above illustration), and on and on and on. As Paul said, "I am a debtor to all men."***

***I have had many mentors, including several whom I write about in this 'unique book'. I want to recall (and record in a book) what I said about them, soon after they died (at their memorial service).***

***SECOND, to exalt Christ, whose promises in the messages, give hope to all believers, in light of death, which everyone will experience. Most, if not all, the enclosed messages (and tributes) mention, if not focus on, the glorious resurrection of Christ and how that most important event in history is the foundation for our own future bodily resurrection. As important as it is (for the sake of 'helpful imitation') to meditate on the wonderful character qualities (and personal interests) of the various individuals in this book, it is, of course, much more important to focus on the 'central message' of the New Testament which is the death and resurrection of Christ – and what significance these historic events have for our own 'little lives' (as we, too, face death). I have tried***

***to emphasize the 'central message' of the Scriptures, which is 'Christ, the first fruits of those who will rise from the dead'! What a sad (tragic) thing it would be to try to comfort loved ones at a funeral, if I believed that humans are merely 'dust' and no more!***

***It is easy to preach a message for a Christian who really believed during his long lifetime, the words of Jesus: "Because I live, you too will live!" "In my Father's house are many mansions, I go to prepare a place for you!" So, the second reason I am compiling these messages (delivered over many years) is to encourage the 'people of God' (and even, hopefully, unbelievers) to strongly affirm that fact that Christ's 'finished work' on the Cross and the Empty Tomb is the 'solid hope' for a glorious future in heaven forever!***

***THIRD, I wish in this 'unique book' to provide brief biographical sketches OF the lives of everyday Christians, whose trials and tests and troubles (as well as successes and victories) are typical of most persons, with the possibility of the readers drawing some encouragement and some insights on how better to live life at its best, through Christ.***

***FOURTH, I wish in this 'unique book' to share some materials with pastors to help them in the preparation of their own sermons for funeral services. It will be quickly noticed that I have used several times some of my 'favorite quotes' (especially from William Barclay on the subject of 'loyalty' and 'faithfulness'), and several of my own 'favorite' statements and phrases which long ago I feel that 'God gave me'. If these quotes from others (as well as some of my own written paragraphs) have 'served' me well in one tribute or message (let's say on faithfulness, for this is the greatest virtue – manifestation of love – in the Christian Walk), then why not use the same quotes and statements in the messages of several other 'faithful believers'? But, because many of the messages I have preached now appear in a 'book format', the reader will (at times) notice some repetition in the use of these 'favorite statements'. If ministers (few or many) end up reading this 'unique book', perhaps they will find that the statements and the quotes I have most used in these messages***

***(especially messages with an emphasis on faithfulness, and messages emphasizing the using of adversity for redemptive purposes, and messages that note the brevity of life, or messages that focus on the glorious resurrection, etc.) will find that some of these same statements and quotes will be useful as content in the messages which they will be called upon to preach when some of their own parishioners die.***

***Above are the four stated reasons why I have justified using the funeral sermons (and tributes) that I have shared, in honor of several persons whom I know are most precious to our Dear and Loving Heavenly Father. Needless to say, each person is unique, although so many of these persons have some important common characteristics. So many of them, as witnessed by what I wrote (and spoke) about them, were known as very faithful, steadfast, and loyal followers of Christ. "Unmovable and always abounding in the work of Christ." Great examples for all to follow! All with faults (of course) and all 'very human', and all given at times to 'swings in moods' – even among the most saintly and godly! But so many (who are remembered in this book) were 'charming', 'appealing', 'winsome', 'attractive', 'balanced', 'Biblical', 'visionary', 'unselfish', 'generous', 'courteous', 'joyful', 'good humored', 'hospitable', 'gifted and talented', 'hard-working', 'conservative', 'industrious', 'frugal', 'committed', 'faithful', 'loyal', 'forgiving', 'prayerful', 'cooperative', 'positive-minded', 'earthy' but also, at same time, 'heavenly-minded' (living for 'two worlds'), 'calm' and 'deliberate'.***

***Of course, I would be idealistic (and untrue) if I declared that the life of every person, honored in this book, possessed all of these qualities at all times and in largest measure and capacity. Some of these persons, obviously, were not only older than others when they died, but it is also true, from my limited perspective (but only God fully knows 'accurately'), that some persons when they died were much more mature in the Christian Faith than was true of other persons when they died. The variety, of course, of persons honored in this book, is considerable: some very old, some middle–age, some young (including a 9 year old child), most deaths expected but some deaths sudden and unexpected (a***

***suicide, my 16 year old niece on a roller coaster, my dear 39 year old friend whose husband murdered her on their 17th wedding anniversary).***

***As is true of any other human being (including other Christians and even ministers), there were some funeral services that I found myself greatly 'celebrating' (the departure to heaven of an old saint of God), and other funeral services where I found myself (inwardly, if not outwardly) weeping! When I was asked to preach the funeral service for an outstanding young man (with whom I had studied the Bible) – a young man who chose tragically to kill himself – I was both greatly shocked and grieved, of course. When my brother's daughter (an amazing Christian young lady, age 15) died from a seizure on a roller coaster (August 14, 1981), I was totally shocked and grieved to get the news from my brother on that sad Friday night. But God gave me grace to preach her funeral message (which is, of course, included in this book).***

***When Valerie Miller (a most beautiful and godly and highly talented lady) was shot on our Church parking lot by her jealous-ridden and 'insane' (although brilliant) husband in my presence and in the presence of about 10 other adults – this death brought untold sorrow to her three children, to her parents and to all our congregation (of which Valerie had been a long-time attender with her 'affected' – but responsible – husband). He was killed while he exchanged gunfire with an officer who "happened" to be on the parking lot when Valerie was killed. Valerie's husband and the officer exchanged 'fire', and the officer took many weeks in the hospital to 'recover'. Valerie's husband was killed by the police officer. A most 'horrible' day for everyone involved – but God brought us through that experience. But, admittedly, I had a 'hard time' delivering a message at Valerie's funeral. Of course, I was a part of a large company of 'grieving family and friends'. I have included that message in this 'unique book'.***

***From a most interesting book entitled "The Divine Conspiracy" (authored by well-known author Dallas Willard), I read some very comforting comments regarding physical death and dying – and also about heaven. These insights were so helpful to me that I feel 'led' to share some of them with you. Please***

***allow me (at some length) to share these encouraging Biblical and devotional truths with you.***

***"Once we have grasped our situation in God's full world, the startling disregard Jesus and the New Testament writers had for 'physical death' suddenly makes sense. Paul bluntly states that Jesus abolished death – simply did away with it. Nothing like what is usually understood as death will happen to those who have entered his life.***

***"To one group of his day, who believed that 'physical death' was the cessation of the individual's existence, Jesus said, 'God is not the God of the dead but the living', (Luke 20:38). His meaning was that those who love and are loved by God are not allowed to cease to exist, because they are God's treasures. He delights in them and intends to hold onto them. He has even prepared for them an individualized eternal work in his vast universe.***

***"At this present time the eternally creative Christ is preparing places for his human sisters and brothers to join him. Some are already there – no doubt busy with him in his great works. We can hardly think that they are mere watchers. On the day he died, he covenanted with another man being killed along with him to meet that very day in a place he called Paradise. This term carries the suggestion of a lovely gardenlike area…And there God will preserve every one of his treasured friends in the wholeness of their personal existence precisely because he treasures them in that form. Could he enjoy their fellowship, could they serve him, if they were 'dead'?***

***"In a letter to his mother to console her on the death of his father, a man by the name of Bladimer Nabokov wrote, "Three years have gone – and every trifle relating to father is still as alive as ever inside me. I am so certain, my love (mother), that we will see him (daddy) again, in an unexpected but completely natural heaven, in a realm where all is radiance and delight. He will come towards us in our shared bright eternity, slightly raising his shoulders as he used to do, and we will kiss the birthmark on his hand without surprise. You must live***

***in expectation of that tender hour, my love (mother), and never give in to the temptation of despair. Everything will return."***

***"Jesus made a special point of saying that those who rely on him and have received the kind of life that flows in him and in God will never experience death. Such persons, he said, will never 'see' death, never 'taste' death (John 8:51-52). On another occasion he says simply that 'everyone living and believing in me shall never die' (John 11:26).***

***"So as we think of our life and make plans for it, we should not be anticipating going through some terrible event called 'death', to be avoided at all costs even though it can't be avoided. That is the usual attitude for human beings, no doubt. But, immersed in Christ in action, we may be sure that our life – yes, that familiar one we are each so well acquainted with – will never stop. We should be anticipating what we will be doing three hundred, a thousand, or ten thousand years from now in this marvelous universe.***

> ***"When we've been there ten thousand years,***
> ***Bright shining as the sun,***
> ***We've no less days to sing God's praise,***
> ***Than when we first begun.***

***"Could this be the actual truth about our case? Jesus' word to us would most certainly be, 'Believe it!' We are never-ceasing spiritual beings with an eternal destiny in the full world of God.***

***"Of course something is going to happen. We will leave our present body at a certain point, and our going and what we leave behind will not seem pleasant to those who care for us. But we are at that point, as Paul also says, simply 'absent from the body and present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8)".***

***"Early Christians spoke of their condition at physical death as being 'asleep'. We are then, as we say even now of a sleeping person, 'dead to this world'. To those***

***who remain behind there is an obvious, if superficial, similarity between the body of one who sleeps and that of one who has stepped into the full world (heaven).”***

***“But there was no intention in this language to say we will be unconscious. Consciousness continues while we are asleep, and likewise when we ‘sleep in Jesus’ (I Thessalonians 4:14; Acts 7:60) the difference is simply a matter of what we are conscious of. In fact, at ‘physical’ death we ‘become’ conscious and enjoy a richness of experience we have never known before.”***

***“How then are we to think about the transition”? Failure to have a way of thinking about it is one of the things that continue to make physical death dreadful even to those who have every confidence in Jesus. The unimaginable is naturally frightening to us. But there are two pictures that I believe to be accurate as well as helpful. They can help us know what to expect ‘as’ we leave ‘our tent’, our body (2 Corinthians 5:1-6).”***

***“One was made famous by Peter Marshall (Chaplain of the U.S. Senate in the middle of the 20$^{th}$ century). It is the picture of a child playing in the evening among her toys. Gradually she grows weary and lays her head down for a moment of rest, lazily continuing to play. The next thing she experiences or ‘tastes’ is the morning light of a new day flooding the bed and the room where her mother or father took her. Interestingly, we never remember falling asleep. We do not ‘see’ it, ‘taste’ it.”***

***“Another picture is of one who walks to a doorway between rooms. While still interacting with those in the room she is leaving, she begins to see and converse with people in the room beyond, who may be totally concealed from those left behind. Before the wide spread use of heavy sedation, it was quite common for those keeping watch to observe something like this. The one making the transition (dying) often begins to speak to those who have gone before. They come to meet us while we are still in touch with those left behind. The curtains part for us briefly before we go through.”***

*"Discussing his own upcoming death with his friend, Jesus says to them, 'If you loved me, you would be happy because I go to the Father, where I am better off than here' (John 14:28). In different wording, 'I go to the Father, and my Father is greater than I.' Nothing for HIM to grieve about in that! Of course, it left his friends with much to sorrow FOR THEMSELVES, which is understandable and appropriate. But they should also rejoice for Jesus at the same time."*

*"And of course this all accords perfectly with his response to the faith of the thief dying with him: 'Today you and I will be together in a wonderful place, Paradise' (Luke 23:43). This statement could only be a falsehood if it meant anything less than that the thief would be very much himself, in fine shape, in a wonderful situation with Jesus and, no doubt, with others as well."*

*"When we pass through the stage normally called 'death', we will not lose anything but the limitations and powers that specifically correspond to our present mastery over our body, and to our availability and vulnerability to and through it. We will no longer be able to act and be acted upon by means of it. Of course, this is a heart–rending change to those left behind. But, on the other hand, loss of those abilities begins to occur, in most cases, long before death. It is a normal part of aging and sickness. The body as intermediary between the person and the physical world is losing its function as the soul prepares for a new arrangement."*

*"But along this passage we do not lose our personal sense of who we are, and all our knowledge of and relationships to other persons will remain intact – except, once again, insofar as they are mediated through the body and its physical environment."*

*"Indeed, we will then be in possession of ourselves as never before, and the limited universe that we now see will remain – though that universe will not be as interesting as what we shall then see for the first time. We will not disappear into an eternal fog bank or dead storage, or exist in a state of isolation or*

***suspended animation, as many seem to suppose. God has a much better use for us than that."***

***"Stated in other words, our experience will not be fundamentally different in character from what it is now, though it will change in significant details. The life we now have as the persons we now are will continue, and continue in the universe in which we now exist. Our experience will be much clearer, richer, and deeper, of course, because it will be unrestrained by the limitations now imposed upon us by our dependence upon our body. It will, instead, be rooted in the broader and more fundamental reality of God's kingdom and will accordingly have far greater scope and power."***

***"When we pass through 'death' into God's full world – or 'our earthy tent is torn down', as Paul elsewhere says – we are not thereby deprived of a body, any more than Jesus himself was. Rather, we are then 'clothed with a dwelling place of the heavenly sort' and 'not left naked' (2 Corinthians 5:1-8). The mortal part of us is 'swallowed up by life'. God has prepared us for this by depositing in us a 'down payment' in the form of the Spirit (v. 5). We know even now, and by experience, the reality of a life that is not of the physical body."***

***"Aging, accordingly, will become a process not of losing, but of gaining. As our physical body fades out, our glory body approaches and our spiritual, substance grows richer and deeper. As we age we should become obviously more glorious."***

***"Most notably, the person in the transition (between 'life' and 'death') begins to 'see the invisible'. Others whom they know come to meet them, often while they are still interacting with those left behind (on earth)…Poor Lazarus died, we are told by Jesus, 'and he was borne away by the angels to where God's people are gathered' (Luke 16:22). For the 'great cloud of witnesses' (Hebrews 12) come those who have been watching for us. They greet us and enfold us. And while those first few moments or hours will surely present us with one astonishing***

*view after another, we will be joyous and peaceful because of the company we are in."*

*"The old spiritual song says, 'I looked over Jordan and what did I see, comin' for to carry me home? A band of angels comin' after me, comin' for to carry me home.' And this seemingly simplistic picture, derived from scriptural stories and teachings, presents exactly what we should expect. We should expect it on the basis of our knowledge of God and the human soul, common human experience, and the teachings of scripture."*

*During our Christian race of life, "we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses." (Hebrews 12:1). Just as weary runners receive courage to continue to run because of the applause and cheers of the crowd in the grandstands, so spiritual runners on earth can gain great motivation to continue their race, because of the many heavenly witnesses in the grandstands, cheering them on.*

*Perhaps, although we cannot say with absolute certainty, the redeemed saints in heaven are looking down from their glorious abode, as spectators look down from a grandstand on the courageous runners on a track. William Barclay believes that such is the case: "It is of the very essence of life that life is lived in the gaze of the heroes of the faith who lived and suffered and died in their day and generation. How can a man avoid the struggle for greatness with an audience like that looking down upon him?"*

*There is abundant evidence that , when God deems it helpful, God allows earthly visits from these heavenly saints – all for the purpose of encouraging Christians who may be struggling under some special trial during their race of life. Allow me to share a few such incidences.*

*One person in my childhood who greatly influenced me to be a Christian was my great aunt (my grandmother's sister). She was a cripple all of her life, but she lived to be an old person. Only hours after she was born, she was stricken with polio and therefore she never knew what it was to walk without leg braces. She*

***never married and was dependent upon other family members, including my grandmother, to care for her. She was one of the kindest Christians I ever knew. She gave me my first Bible in which she wrote, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him" (Psalms 62"5). My 'Aunt Mary" was no stranger to pain and disappointment, as she hobbled along in life. But she was always sweet in her spirit and my grandmother wept when 'Aunt Mary' died. The sorrow my grandmother felt in her loneliness was great, and comfort in her loss was hard to find. One night God gave my grandmother a vision of 'Aunt Mary.' 'Aunt Mary' was dressed in garments of pure white, her face radiant with the countenance of heavenly strength and health. My grandmother knew that 'Aunt Mary' was with Jesus. Suspended in mid-air, looking upwards toward heaven, 'Aunt Mary' seemed to be saying to my grandmother, 'Come on up, Edna.***

***Writes J.B. Philips, "Many of us who believe in what is technically known as the Communion of Saints must have experienced the sense of nearness, for a fairly short time, of those whom we love soon after they have died. This has certainly happened to me several times. But the late C.S. Lewis, whom I did not know very well and had only seen in the flesh once, but with whom I had corresponded a fair amount, gave me an unusual experience. A few days after his death, while I was watching television, he 'appeared' sitting in a chair within a few feet of me, and spoke a few words, which were particularly relevant to the difficult circumstances through which I was passing. He was ruddier in complexion than ever, grinning all over his face and, as the old-fashioned saying has it, positively glowing with health. The interesting thing to me was that I had not been thinking about him at all. I was neither alarmed nor surprised. He was just there – 'large as life and twice as natural'. A week later, this time when I was in bed, reading before going to sleep, he appeared again, even more rosily radiant than before, and repeated to me the same message, which was very important to me at the time. I was a little puzzled by this, and I mentioned it to a certain saintly bishop who was then living in retirement in Dorset. His reply was, "My dear John, this sort of thing is happening all the time''."***

***What about our loved ones who have already died? Where are they right now? Is there any evidence that they are with Christ?***

***A few years ago, my wife's mother had a most wonderful experience. The following is the account of that experience: "I find it difficult to share publicly a precious experience that God gave to me quite a few years ago. I had lost my father, and my mother lived alone for a few years. Her health was not good and she finally consented to surgery. We had brought her home from the hospital and I was staying with her.***

***"One night I had checked many times to see if she was resting. I had gone to sleep, but suddenly was wide-awake. I got out of bed thinking I had heard mother. I went to the door and I saw my father standing, looking in on mother. I said, 'Don't waken her dad, she has been so sick.' He turned his head and looked at me. He said so quietly, 'I'm not going to waken her. I just wanted to see that she is all right. I want to go back.' He turned and without seeming to walk, he was across the living room and through the windows. I watched him cross the yard and, although it was very dark, I saw him as he crossed the small pasture.***

***"I was not frightened, but was filled with a beautiful peace. I don't mourn for my dad, though I still miss his gentleness and concern. I am sure that at the resurrection we will have bodies we will recognize."***

***"'If a man keep my saying he shall never see death' (John 8:51); 'whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die' (John 11:26). It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the meaning tht Christ intended to convey was that death was that death was a completely negligible experience to the man who had already begun to live life of the eternal quality…Once it dawns upon us that God (incredible as it may well sound) has actually identified Himself with man, that He has taken the initiative in effecting the necessary reconciliation of man with Himself, and has shown the way by which little human personalities can begin to embark on that immense adventure of living of which God is the center, death – the discarding of a temporary machine adapted only for a temporary***

***stage—may begin to seem negligible." (The Newborn Christian; J.B. Philips; pgs. 212-213)***

***Wrote Paul, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21, NIV) "For we know that when this tent we live in now is taken down – when we die and leave these bodies—we will have wonderful new bodies in heaven, homes that will be ours forevermore, made for us by God himself, and not by human hands." (II Corinthians 5:1, Living Bible)***

***"O Christ, because you live, I too shall live forever. Sometimes thy earthly body makes me groan and sigh, reminding me that this present body is but a temporary dwelling place for my eternal spirit, which shall someday take its flight to you. Earth's pains shall give way to heaven's pleasures and death shall be swallowed up by everlasting life! Glory!"***

***AFFIRMATION FOT THE DAY: Death for me shall be a joyful departure, not a tragic disaster, for I have a grip on the timeless life of God!***

***"And what is this? ' Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die!' We shall go to sleep, but we shall never taste the bitterness of death. In the very act of closing our material eyes we shall open our spiritual eyes, and find ourselves at home!" (My Daily Meditation; by John Henry Jowett; pg. 74)***

***As I briefly shared in the earlier portion of this Introduction to the book, my brother (Jerry Christian) on the Friday Night of August 14, 1981, experienced one of the "darkest nights of his soul" when he learned that his beloved 15 year old daughter, Sharla, died suddenly while she was riding on a roller coaster at an amusement park in Denver, Colorado! When Sharla was about 3 years old (if I recall correctly), she fell out of the backend of a pick–up truck and, because of the hard hit on her head, she became occasionally subject to seizures (for which, of course, she took medication). Whether she forgot to take her medication on that dreadful night in August, or whether her medication simply was "not working" that night, I do not know. But, regardless of the reason for the tragic***

***accident, Sharla went Home to Heaven very unexpectedly. Just thirteen days following her death, her father had a most unusual "visitation" from his daughter (who had been a heavenly citizen by that time, for almost two weeks)! Jerry shared that phenomenal experience (in writing) with some of his family members, including me. Even though I have not included all the specific details regarding the context of the evening when this happened, I have included the 'essence" of the amazing "heavenly visit" that Sharla made to her beloved father. May God minister to your own spirit, and encourage your heart, as you contemplate the "glorious mysteries" of the "heavenly realm" (that may be closer to us than we realize)!***

***That which follows is so unusual, I realize it may be a mistake to reduce it to writing…I will make no attempt to interpret or explain; I simply want to record this so that I will never lose from my memory that which happened…it was so beautiful, yet so "shaking"!***

***My mind was thinking through many things related to all the events that had taken place after Sharla died. I didn't go to sleep – but rather was lost in a million thoughts and dreams.***

***Then, at about 11:00 P.M., I remembered that I had not left the lamp on down in the living room. I was afraid that Marsha might get up to go to the bathroom and not see the steps. I then got up, went downstairs, turned on the light, came back upstairs, looked out the windows at the beautiful view to the northwest, and then went back to bed.***

***I still wasn't sleepy, so again I just lay there.***

> ***At 11:30 P.M., with no prior warning at all, Marsha got out of bed and with no hesitation what-so-ever went right out the bedroom door and turned right – to the other bedroom. I thought that perhaps she was mostly still asleep and was trying to get to the bathroom to the left. I waited about 30 seconds, and then decided that I should check on her.***

***I went into the other bedroom, and found Marsha curled up on top of my foam mattress and sleeping bag – where she and Sharla had slept several times before. I assumed Marsha had gotten tired of the waterbed, and wanted to sleep on the foam mattress. I helped her open the bag and get all curled up inside it. Almost immediately, Marsha went to sleep; she looked so comfortable.***

***I then went back to bed, and after awhile, I too fell asleep…***

***I don't know at what time the following happened, but I have never in my life had an experience like this one. (It will be humanely impossible to accurately relate this, but I want to try…)***

***I have never experienced such intensity…First, I heard Sharla's voice. Her voice was clear, but seemed to be coming from far away. She was saying in her beautiful, distinct voice, "Hello, dad. Hello, daddy. It's me – Sharla."***

***Then, I saw Sharla. Sharla was absolutely beautiful and striking. She was healthy, and so totally alive. And most striking of all was something I can only describe as an "essence" – a halo of luminous light – a "glow" – surrounding her entire body. She seemed to be "floating" – so gracefully, without any rush; just totally there, yet so distinctly different and beautiful…***

***Sharla said, "Hi, dad. I can only stay for a while; then I have to leave again. I have come back to say how very much I love you. I want to lie between you and Marsha." Sharla then kissed, hugged, caressed, and expressed her love to Marsha and to me. She said, "Daddy, don't be sad; I love you so much, daddy. I have gone to a better place – to Heaven. I love you, daddy. I must go now. I love you, daddy…" and then Sharla, in all her perfect beauty "floated" off to Heaven.***

***At that point I awoke screaming and screaming…"Sharla! Oh, Sharla! I love you, Sharla! Oh, Sharla! I love you. Sharla, I want to go with you Sharla! Sharla" And then she was gone…***

***I was screaming out loud – over and over again – for Sharla. I was totally shaken! Even now, Sunday afternoon at my school (4:15 P.M. on August 30th) I am reliving it over and over again…***

***I don't understand what happened; it seemed so totally real. I do know that our loving God can even control dreams; but I also know that He can "lift us beyond" the ordinary. I'm sure this account will seem strange (even weird), especially to non-believers.***

***Whatever it was, I am totally grateful to God. I shall never forget how alive, how totally healthy and beautiful Sharla was. How gracefully happy she was with eternity – yet how thoughtful and kind and beautiful she was to express her love and affection to Marsha and to me.***

***We serve a perfect and loving God! How I love you, Jesus. THANK YOU for the assurance that I will see Sharla in all her glory again someday in eternity. Thank you, Sharla. I love you – and I am homesick for Heaven. Thank you…***

***Account by***
***Jerry Christian***

***After the passing (death) of her husband, Venta's grandmother (the one earlier written about) told some of her family members that "Daddy (her husband) came to see me tonight." She said this very "matter-of-factly", and she said that this supernatural visitation by her husband happened several times: "Daddy came to see me tonight." What did she mean? Was it simply a warm sense of her husband's invisible presence, or did he (in his heavenly form) actually appear visibly to his wife (Grandma Barnett)? Did he speak to her (i.e., did he enjoy a friendly conversation with his wife)? How long did he stay in the presence of his***

***wife? Why did he come in the evening? Why did he come on several different occasions? Did Venita's grandmother "see" her husband go through walls and across the pasture (as Venita's mom saw him when he left her presence)? Strangely enough, none of these interesting questions were asked by any of Grandma Barnett's family. I suppose that no one felt "comfortable" to inquire about the sacred, supernatural experiences, which were dear to Grandma B. I suppose that all her family felt that it was improper to "tread" on her "sacred territory". After all, she was still "one" in spirit with her deceased (heavenly-dwelling) husband, so her wonderful supernatural experiences with her husband, was her "sacred and private business". One certain thing: Even though the above questions regarding these multiple experiences (visions or actual appearances?) will never be answered, the reality of these encounters with her husband was never doubted or questioned by Grandma Barnett. She spoke calmly and deliberately and joyously (not hysterically) about these real experiences with her long-true husband. Some cynics, of course, will accuse her of being "crazy" and mentally "off-balance". But, even though she was elderly, she was very mentally alert and sane and balanced and always "in touch with reality". She was one of the most mature and godly, adjusted, and aware persons I have known. No senility! She was not given to illusions, fantasies, or mystic wanderings! Her "feet were on the ground"! She was very earthy and focused on "earthly reality". Fully engaged with life, even though she rightly was also heavenly-minded. A woman who lived for "two worlds".***

***Even though I don't personally understand the dynamics or the details of the heavenly encounters, I have never doubted the reality (authenticity) of these amazing experiences, which Grandma Barnett so easily and so naturally talked about. When sharing with her family, she would simply state the fact (of his appearances), but seldom would she expand or comment on the dynamics of these strange happenings.***

***Does not the writer to the Hebrews (Chapter 12) speak about "the great cloud of witnesses" that apparently are looking down on us believers, "to cheer us on" as we "run the race of life"? How comforting to know that we believers have fellow***

***Christians on this earth to encourage us. Also, it is indescribably wonderful to know that the Holy Spirit has come to indwell our lives, to do His multiple works in our lives – including comforting and guiding and helping and strengthening and encouraging us! And Jesus, the Bible says, is making intercession for us, before the Heavenly Father! Unspeakably great gift to believers! In addition (getting back to Hebrews, 12) these are the heavenly saints who are cheering for us, during our times of trouble and temptation and trials, and tests! We can't, of course, see this heavenly "cheering band" in the "bleachers of heaven", as we are running on the "track of life", but they are there, nevertheless.***

***Is it possible that occasionally, when the dear Lord deems best, some (or many) of these heavenly saints are sent to earth to comfort and to cheer and to converse with their troubled (sorrowing and grieving) loved ones – even if the visit from heaven to the earth is only for a few minutes? I think the answer to this speculation question is YES! What about Grandma Barnett? What about Jerry Christian? What about Edna Van Duson whose sister (Mary Benedict) appeared for a few moments (suspended in the doorway) to say to her sister: "Come on up, Edna"? What about Inez White who saw her father come into her room, and then go through the wall, and across the pasture back to heaven? What about the famous translator of the New Testament, John B. Phillips, who writes specifically about his two different encounters (appearances) of the famous Christian apologist C.S. Lewis? What about thousands and thousands of other Christians who have reported "real encounters with loved ones from heaven"?***

***Heaven – described as a glorious city, and likened to pure gold and clear glass. Heaven - God's dwelling place prepared for those earthlings who love and who serve Christ, a place of holiness and beauty and unity and perfection and joy. Heaven – a place where there are no tears of sorrow and grief, and no sickness or pain or death. A place where there is no sin, temptation, trials, or hard tests. Heaven – a place where there is no need for the sun or the moon, for Christ Himself is the source of all light. In heaven, there is no night. There is no aging. No separation from those we love. Heaven – a place where the focus of all is on***

***Christ alone. A place where there is no competition or comparison among jealous-ridden persons, all of whom are seeking selfish glory and praise and applause. A place where all serve each other with holy love and gladness. A place of perfect harmony and unity where 'all is for each, and each is for all'. Serving each other without the physical limitations of a human body. Heaven – a place of joyful singing and happy serving and constant learning. A place where all the saints will learn from one another and all will learn forever from the 'Master Teacher' Himself – the Lord Jesus Christ. Heaven – a place where each will become more like God forever – without, of course, ever actually becoming gods. The excitement of eternal growth in knowledge and in holy wisdom and understanding! No longer seeing reality as if peering through a hazy glass, but instead seeing reality with our spiritual eyes as a result of being given a 'spiritual body'. Heaven – a place where we will no longer walk by faith, but a place where we shall behold Christ, face to face in all His glory!***

***Death for the believer is like going from the basement of the house to the top story of the house. Death allows the Christian to reach his destination. Death for the Christian is like crossing the "finish line" after a long marathon run.***

***Death is not a loss for the believer; death is the doorway into eternal life in heaven. Paul wrote, "For me to live in Christ and to die is gain!" Christians are only pilgrims on this planet. Dying allows the believer to "go home"! John 14:1-3 reads "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."***

***In his helpful devotional book, well-known author Halford E. Luccock shred the following regarding the glory that surrounds the death of Christian believers ("365 Windows"; pg. 48).***

***At the funeral service for the poet, Robert Browning, one of those attending was Browning's great friend, the painter, Edmund Burne-Jones. Afterwards, Burne-***

***Jones said that the service was far too somber to express the glory that was in the life of Browning. He said, "I would have given something for a banner or two, and much would I have given if a chorister had come out from the triforium, and rent the air with a trumpet". That is a good phrase to think of when our minds turn to the end of life, for our friends or ourselves. It is not, as the hymn wrongly asserts, "death's cold sullen stream". The death of a Christian is a time for the blowing of trumpets, for the triumph in him who has brought life and immorality to light.***

> ***O God, we give our grateful and heartfelt thinks for our Master who could not be held by death. Take away from us, we pray, all fear of the future; knowing that whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. Amen.***

***The following poem was written by Lawrence Barnett (my wife's uncle), at a time when he was facing both the darkness of earth's trials and problems, and, by faith in God, the anticipated glories of heaven. It is evident from this poem (and his family knew this firsthand) that Lawrence was a man who deeply loved God, a man who felt deeply the pain of life's losses, and a man who (most importantly) trusted the promises of God's Word regarding Christ's victory over death – which victory would soon become his own! Lawrence was a man full of affection and sentimentality. Also, he was a man of profound thought. But he was also a man who was very practical and earthy. Also, he was a man who was fun loving. He loved to carry out (with a pure heart) a 'clever prank'! A significant characteristic of Lawrence was that he loved to observe God in nature – both when he lived for many years in his beloved Nebraska farm home, and later when he lived in the neatly laid-out cities of Colorado and Washington. Wherever he was, he couldn't help seeing God's handiwork, and he loved to see God working in his own life, as shown to him partly through Nature. The central focus of his life was the Death and the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ!***

***Lawrence Barnett, who, with his wife, lived in the state of Washington, wrote the following poem.***

***He said "This is what you see as you cross the bridge to Fox Island, the mountains to the west, Mt. Rainier to the east and the Church across the water. I think what I am trying to say is that I have moments of great joy, times of doubts and fears but through it all, the wonderful love and peace that comes from God."***

***I crossed the bridge and there so clear***
***The Olympics stood, they seemed so near.***

***I looked and on the other hand***
***A single mountain made its stand.***

***With a peak that was lit by the shining sun,***
***It seemed to sing of a Risen One.***

***And then my soul cried out to me,***
***You must believe, for can't you see?***
***There is no doubt your God is there,***
***He'll always be, He'll always care."***
***My day was through, my work was done:***
***I traveled towards the setting sun.***

***I reached the bridge and all was dark,***
***The sun was gone; twas bleak and stark.***

***And I heard my soul cry out to me***
***What do you know? You cannot see.***
***The mountain's gone, your God's not there,***
***There is no proof that He will care."***

***But then I turned and looked across***
***And there I saw a lighted cross.***

***And then I knew that He was there,***
***He'd always be, He'd always care.***

*And a small still voice said low to me,*
*Believe the cross and you'll always see."*

*When I leave my love and my island home,*
*And I must cross that bridge alone.*

*I pray that Christ will take my hand*
*And lead me to that other land.*

*And may that cross be always there,*
*To show the world that God does care.*

***Ruth Brandt (wife of Eugene Brandt) wrote the following in a letter to my wife, Venita Christian (March 8, 1999): Venita and Ruth were roommates, when they attended Central College, McPherson, Kansas (during their first two years of college).***

> ***I don't know if I ever shared with you the experience Eugene and I had in the final hours of his mother's life. We were the only ones there. As it became apparent, she was dying, we asked the Lord to take her quickly. As we sat by her bedside in the hospital, suddenly we were aware of another "presence" in the room. My first instinct was to rise as we were in the presence of the "King". In just a matter of minutes, she was gone and we had a very real assurance she was with the Lord. I'll never forget that."***

***(My wife and I rejoiced because of the following 'good news' in a letter, which we received from precious friends, Denny and Brenda Lambert – whom I had the privilege of leading to Christ many years before this letter was written):***

***March 1, 2001***

***Dear Ron & Venita:***

***Just wanted to write a quick note and fill you in on a couple of things. Denny lost his father on the 20th, it was a sudden thing. He had a massive heart attack, in fact two heart attacks within 2***

***weeks. He was 73 and had not had any health problems previously. He was the type that did not trust doctors or hospitals, so he never went in for a physical. He also was not saved. Denny and I have been praying for him for years. In fact, Denny sent him a Bible and a letter boldly stating what he needed to do over a year ago. Denny had felt an urgent need to do it then. Well, we never heard any more about the Bible or saw it around his home for that matter. Thus, when we received the call that he was critical, Denny's mission was to witness once more to him before it was too late. When we got to the hospital, he was already on a ventilator, but he could nod his head and write on a tablet. Denny emotionally witnessed to him the Salvation message in a nutshell, so to speak. By the glory of God, he accepted and understood. What a burden was lifted. That night ironically, we both had a song going through our heads so prevalently that we didn't get much sleep. More ironically was the fact that the same song was going through our heads, entitled "Glory to You". We both felt at peace that morning. Little did we know that Denny's father would be gone in a few hours. So with all the sorrow that was felt due to the suddenness of the illness, joy and peace was felt that the Lord had softened his heart. Kind of like a thief at the cross story. We've doing better, but time and prayer heals all."***

***Dear Denny and Brenda:***

***I was so thrilled to hear about your dad's 'death-bed repentance', Denny! As long as there is 'breath', there is 'hope'. God honored your prayers, and gave you assurance and peace in a marvelous way – to you and to your wife together that 'all is well'. None of us (regardless of how long we have been 'saved') deserves heaven as our home. Salvation is by 'grace', not by 'works of human righteousness'. Your dear father is safely home with Jesus, because of the infinite love of God (and because of your faithfulness and prayers and obedience in presenting the plan of salvation simply and clearly)! I rejoice with you! I am saddened, of course that you lost your dear father so unexpectantly and suddenly. You will always have a special place in your heart for your dad, Denny, and***

***you may always feel a certain 'sadness' (grief) as a result of his death, but Jesus will comfort you and the Spirit will give you strength for the days and years ahead! In 1971, when I was only 27 years old, my dear father (who also was 73 at the time) died of a heart attack (while he was sleeping). My mother found him beside her – already dead – when she awakened in the morning on Dec. 28, 1971. A real shock to my mother! Only about a week later, my mother's mother (my grandmother) also died. So mother lost both her husband and her mother in about a week's time. Even after nearly 30 years, there is hardly a day that goes by but what I think of my dear dad (who prayed to accept Christ about 4 years before he died; after his first heart attack my brother led him to pray the 'sinner's prayer' while he was in the hospital). Like you folks, I (and my godly mother and others) had for many years prayed for my dad's salvation (and God finally answered that request!).***

***Love and Prayers,***

***Ron and Venita***

***The last hours of the venerable Dr. Nott were peculiarly impressive. Visions of his childhood home floated continually before him and the name of his mother was continually upon his lips; the last words he uttered were the last words of prayer his mother taught him when a child! "Now I lay me down to sleep."***

***(Traveling Toward Sunrise; Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 148)***

## *THE TENT AND THE BUILDING*
## *2 Corinthians vs. 1-9*

***At present, we live in a tent—"the earthly house of this tabernacle." And often the tent is very rickety. There are rents through which the rain enters, and it trembles ominously in the great storm. Some tents are frail from the very beginning, half-rotten when they are put up, and they have no defense even against the breeze. But even the strongest tent becomes***

***weatherworn and threadbare, and in the long run, it "falls in a heap!" And what then?***

***We shall exchange the frail tent for the solid house! "If the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." When we are unclothed, we shall find ourselves clothed with our house, which is from heaven. The glory of this transition can only be confessed by "the saints in light". To awake, and discover that the creaking, breaking cords are left behind, that all the leakages are over, that we are no longer exposed to the cutting wind, that pain is passed, and sickness, and death—this must be a wonder of inconceivable ecstasy!***

***And "absent from the body" we shall be "present with the Lord".***

***(My Daily Meditation; by John Henry Jowett; pg. 65)***

***Placing your faith in the Deathless One – Jesus Christ – you shall never die! Of course, your body will die and return to dust, but you as a believer will never die! Said Jesus, "If a man keeps my saying he shall never see death." (John 8:5) "Whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die." (John 11:16) Notes J.B. Phillips, "It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the meaning that Christ intended to convey was that death was a completely negligible experience to the man who had already begun to live life of the eternal quality". (The Newborn Christian, pg. 212)***

***Said the great 19th century D.L. Moody, "Some day you will read in the papers that D.L. Moody of East Northfield is dead. Don't you believe a word of it! At that moment, I shall be more alive than I am now. I shall have gone up higher, that is all – out of this old clay tenement into a house that is immortal; a body that death cannot touch, that sin cannot taint, a body fashioned like unto His glorious body…That which is born of flesh may die; that which is born of the Spirit will live forever." (Quoted in "Angels" by Billy Graham; pgs. 162. 163)***

***WHAT a number of "conspicuous absences" there are to be in "the home-land!"***

***No more sea! John was in Patmos, and the sea rolled between him and his kinsmen. The sea was a minister of estrangement. But in the home country, every cause of separation is to be done away, and the family life is to be one of inconceivable intimacy. No more sea!***

***And no more pain! Its work is done, and therefore the worker is put away. When the building is completed, the scaffolding may be removed. When the patient is in good health, the medicine bottles can be dispensed with. And so shall it be with pain and all its attendants. "The inhabitant never says: 'I am sick!'"***

***And no more death! "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death." Yes, he, too, shall drop his scythe, and his lax hand shall destroy no more forever. Death himself shall die! And all things that have shared his work shall die with him. "The former things have passed away." The wedding-peal, which welcomes the Lamb's bride, will ring the funeral knell of Death and all his sable company.***

***(My Daily Meditations; by John Henry Jowett; pg. 67)***

***Concerning the 'glory' of heaven for which all true Christians 'hunger and thirst', the famous author C.S. Lewis writes:***

***"The promise of glory is the promise, almost incredible and only possible by the work of Christ, that some of us, that any of us who really chooses, shall actually survive that examination, shall find approval, shall please God. To please God...to be a real ingredient in the divine happiness...to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son—it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is.***

***"For glory means good report with God, acceptance by God, response, acknowledgement, and welcome into the heart of things. The door on which we have been knocking all our lives will open at last.***

***"Apparently, then, our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside, is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation. And to be at last summoned inside would be both glory and honour beyond all our merits, and also the healing of that old ache.***

***"We are to shine as the sun; we are to be given the morning star.***

***"We want something else which can hardly be put into words - to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it.***

***At present, we are on the outside of the world, the wrong side of the door. We discern the freshness and purity of morning, but they do not make us fresh and pure. We cannot mingle with the splendors we see. But all the leaves of the New Testament are rustling with the rumor that it will not always be so. Someday, God willing, we shall get in.***

***The whole man is to drink joy from the fountain of joy. As St. Augustine said, the rapture of the saved soul will "flow over" into the glorified body.***

***(Portions from C.S. Lewis's sermon entitled "The Weight Of Glory")***

***In his unusual devotional book entitled "My Daily Meditations, published in 1914), famous author John Henry Jowett wrote: "I must perforce pass through the gate of death. Shall I find it a castle of gloom, or is there another gate through which I shall emerge into the fair, sweet paradise of God? My Master is Lord of the road! And He tells me that death shall not be a castle of captivity, but only a thoroughfare through which I shall pass into the realm of eternal day." (pg. 32)***

***In his book entitled "Touching Incident's and Remarkable Answers to Prayer", S.B. Shaw relates a story of a dying woman, who (to her surprise) became aware of the beautiful and conscious life of her, loved ones (and others) beyond the grave.***

*"Divinely assured that she was dying, she spoke of a long, sweet sleep, and the sleep of the soul and body, until the general resurrection-for this was her belief. She called for one and another of her friends and neighbors, and exhorted them in burning words to meet her in heaven, charging them to bring their families for whom they were also responsible. "With mind clear and composed, she then lay, waiting to pass into an unconscious slumber, only to awaken at the last trump. ' Hark,' said she, listening intently 'I hear music; don't you hear it? And mother, I see a door.' 'Is it open?' asked her mother. And we held our breath as she answered. 'Yes, it is open.' 'Do you see inside?' Her face grew radiant as she answered: ' Yes, I see inside. It is a beautiful place. It is heaven. I see forms clothed in white, many, yes, a multitude of beautiful beings, their hands upraised, while they are waving something in their hands.'*

*And then in wonder and astonishment 'Why, there's Pa!' Then she very intelligently gave orders for her burial. Good-bye's were said, and in childlike pleading tones she called 'Come, dear Lord, I am ready; come now, and take my breath, it hurts me so.' An effort on her part to close the dear eyes and mouth, a few more agonizing moments, and the open door received her gentle spirit. (pgs. 16, 17)*

*Paul said that when a Christian is "absent from his body", he is immediately present with the Lord. Paul said, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain!" How is it a 'gain' for a Christian if, after he dies, he remains in an unconscious state for aeons of time, awaiting the final resurrection at the end of time? To the repentant thief on the Cross, Jesus said, "Today, you will be with me in paradise."*

*What will be the state of the believer, immediately following his physical death? Of course, no one on earth knows for sure, since the hereafter is largely clothed in mystery, but Scriptures seem to teach that believers will be "glorified" in heaven, and that they will be fully conscious and full of eternal life – identifiable, and personable, and communicable with all other heavenly citizens. However, apparently, believers in heaven (although in a wonderful 'state') must await with the final (general) resurrection to receive their final state (the resurrection body). This is not soul–sleep, but an immediate union with Christ following death.*

***Notes one great thinker (a committed Christian theologian/philosopher Dinesh D'Souza, from India): "Our immaterial minds are distinct from our material bodies, and the mortal fate of our bodies in no way implies the death of our minds. Even more than this, the death of the body becomes a kind of emancipation for the mind, because during life our minds are inextricably bound to our bodies. Think of a vapor or gas that is sealed inside a bottle. Smash the bottle and you haven't smashed the vapor; you have released it. The fate of the vapor is not tied to the fate of the bottle as long as vapors and bottles are different kind of stuff." (Life After Death; pg. 109)***

***As stated in narrative form, and as illustrated with several examples of persons from heaven who have visited their earthbound relatives and friends, the focus of this book is on the physical death of Christians whose hope for their bodily resurrection was intense and real! Why should there be a focus on the resurrection of human beings, in this book of remembrance, called "In Memory"? Simply because this is the focus of the entire New Testament (the life of Jesus and the apostolic message). "Because I live, ye shall live also" – words of assurance and comfort from the lips of the One who actually overcame the tyrant called "Death"! Over and over in this "unique book", both in the introduction and in the following tributes which seek to honor dozens of Christians, the glory of Christ's resurrection (and the participation of believers in that decisive victory over death) – that glory is reiterated time and time again! There are certain wonderful realities for believing persons – the greater of which is the reality that, when the body of a person dies, the soul of the believer shall be gloriously alive – clothed with a new and eternal "resurrection body"!***

***As we have shown from sharing several examples, there are moments in the history of this earth (in the experiences of some Christians) when the "heavenly citizens" briefly return to earth to appear and to talk to and to encourage discouraged ("battle–worn") earthly "loved ones"!***

***We have, through the revelation of the Word (Bible), and through the actual appearances of "heavenly citizens" (Hebrews 12:1), great and sure promises (John 14:1) that all believers will be gloriously (consciously) alive after they die – in heaven with the loving Trinity and with those whom believers love on earth!***

***But what about other earthly beings who are not "human"? As a grateful grandfather of four grandchildren, (all of whom own and greatly love their cats***

***and dogs), I have been asked, "Will my pets be in heaven?" This is a common question, but not a question that is easily answered! To tell my grandchildren that, when their pets die, they will never see their deeply loved pets again seems rather insensitive (maybe even cruel)!***

***Of course, not only small children have an incredible attachment to pets! Millions of adults (in our country and in many other countries) are very close to their pets. When I am running (exercising) in the early mornings, almost every time I run, I pass, on the trail, proud adults who are walking their dog or dogs. Recently, I passed one woman who was trying to 'control' her three large dogs (on leashes, pulling her along)! In front of her, a man (probably her husband) was enjoying two additional large dogs! These dogs were obviously enjoying sniffing the weeds. I assume that these five large dogs, all cherished by a man and his wife, were the center of attention in their home! (I can't imagine the monthly food bill for these five large dogs!)***

***When pet owners lose their cherished animals (usually dogs and cats, but sometimes other animals such as a pet turtle like the one that my friend enjoys as his "pride and joy") – I say when pet owners lose their pets, many times there is unbelievable grief, sorrow, tears, and almost depressions!***

***Two of my dear elderly friends (retired professional-type men, one a commercial airline pilot, and the other a highly-skilled sign-painter and wood carver) both lost their dogs, which they had owned for many years. As they shared their loss with me, they both visibly manifested deep grief and a sense of profound loss. These older "seasoned Christian men" (men who loved their Lord greatly) were grief-stricken, for their dog was an integral part of their lives. How could they get along without these dogs (dogs which are said to be "a man's best friend")? These dogs were so companionable, faithful to their master, regardless of all the "changes and chances" of human life!***

***Recently, two of my grandchildren (brother and sister) lost their beautiful Boxer! Their mother (my daughter) came outside in the early morning, and she found this beloved Boxer prostrate on the patio - limp and lifeless! A shock to her for she too felt "close" to this well trained Boxer dog which had been a "member of the family" for several years.***

***There are millions of pet owners throughout the world who wished they had assurance that their pet (dog, cat, etc.) outlived their death. At least, these grieving persons, who feel so lonely without the presence of their pets, would like to think that it is <u>possible</u> that the pet they loved so much on earth might be by their side in heaven!***

***I understand, from the Bible, that it is only humans who are created with a "never dying soul", that only humans who have the capacity to choose between "moral alternatives", that only believers who will face the living God after physical death to give an account for the quality of life that they lived on earth, that only humans (fallen as they are) who have the capacity to follow the "dictates of their conscience", that only humans who are capable of bowing before the Savior in repentance and faith to receive a wonderful spiritual transformation. The scriptures do not indicate that any animal at any time has the capacity to feel guilt or to feel conviction for wrongdoing, or to distinguish the difference between objective "right" and "wrong", or to worship and adore the Creator and Saviour, or to pray and to obey the leadership of the blessed Holy Spirit, or to contemplate the meaning of life through the study of the Bible or to make decisions regarding a lifetime mission.***

***All of the above-described characteristics, which make humans altogether unique, are all the results of God's special creation of humans - humans who are made in the "image of God" ("God-breathed" creatures).***

***It is important not to become "romantic" or "sentimental" when discussing the possible destiny of pets! There is no Biblical basis for suggesting that there is some kind of "General Resurrection" of animals. However, if heaven is the place where the children of God are to be forever happy and contented (among other things, in terms of joyous relationships), is it not conceivable that those Christians who feel a great need to have their pets beside them in heaven, will be granted the fulfillment of that need by the most loving Saviour? Of course, this idea cannot (from the Bible) be proven. It is only a conjecture. I do not think that all animals which existed on earth will be present in heaven, but I am inclined to believe that there will be many Christians (who, on earth, greatly enjoyed their well-cared-for pet) who will continue eternally to enjoy God's little creatures (dogs, cats, etc.) in their heavenly homes!***

***The highly respected Biblical Commentator (Adam Clarke) has an unusual insight into God's vindication of animals, in general. His insight is obviously speculation and conjecture, but this insight does have considerable value and merit. He very thoughtfully, earnestly, and (from his viewpoint) logically, expounds the following insights:***

> ***"It is evident that the brute creation (animals) are not placed in their present misery through either their choice or their sin; and if no purpose of God can be ultimately frustrated, these creatures must be restored to that state of happiness for which they have been made, and of which they have been deprived through the transgression of man…Had not sin entered into the world, they would have had much greater enjoyments, without pain, excessive labour and toil, and without death, and all those sufferings which arise from its predisposing causes…Therefore, allowing that they have even gratification and enjoyment in life, they have much less than they would have had had not sin entered into the world; and consequently they have been deprived of the greater portion of the happiness designed for them by the bountiful Creator. It is therefore obvious that the gracious purpose of God has not been fulfilled in them; and that, as they have not lost their happiness through their own fault, both the beneficence and justice of God are found to make them a separation. Hence, it is reasonable to conclude that, as from the present constitution of things they cannot have the happiness designed for them in this state, they must have it in another."***
>
> ***(Adam Clarke's Commentary; The Book of Romans; pgs. 105, 106)***

***If God's justice towards animals, (which suffer because of Man's historic Fall) calls for a vindication of all animals, how and where is a Just God going to bring justice to the animal world? Is there a "New World" (perhaps an "Animal Heaven") awaiting all animals (where there is No Sin)?***

***Why have I taken this "diverted path" in the Introduction of this Book (on the death and resurrection of Christians), to discuss the possible destiny of pets (specifically) and of animals (generally)? Very simply, because I believe there is a***

***widespread interest (and much questioning) regarding the destiny of pets! Pets number in the millions, around the world, and it is well known that countless pet lovers experience real and deep grief when they lose a pet (which most pet owners regard as "a member of the family")! Should not concerned counselors, pastors, writers, and especially friends of "sorrowing pet lovers" try to offer a few words of encouragement and comfort and possible hope (i.e., hope that Christian pet owners will likely enjoy their pets in heaven)? I personally believe that a part of the heavenly resurrection of a believer will include everything that was precious to that Christian while he dwelt on earth – including dearly loved pets! I believe that the beloved pet will be resurrected, to join the resurrected believer in his heavenly home! God knows what will make each one happy in heaven!***

***When my youngest daughter remembered her grandfather's dearly loved dog (Travis) – a dog who was a close companion to this rancher grandfather – my daughter (when she was still a child) decided to write a poem, commemorating the gentle ways of her grandfather's special pet. The last line of this following short poem expresses the wish (strong belief?) those beloved pets will be enjoyed again someday – IN HEAVEN!***

***TRAVIS***

***HIS TWINKLING EYES***
***WOULD LOOK AT ME.***
***HE SEEMS TO BE SAYING, "PLEASE PET ME."***

***HIS COLD WET NOSE, WOULD NUDGE MY HAND***
***SAYING, "THANK YOU, OH THANK YOU!"***

***HE WOULD ROLL OVER***
***ON HIS BACK, SAYING, "SCRATCH MY TUMMY".***
***MY HAND SCRATCHED HIS WARM TUMMY.***

***AGAIN HE WOULD NUZZLE MY HAND***
***SAYING, "THANK YOU".***

***"LET'S TAKE A WALK",***
***SAYS DEAR GRANDMA.***

*"HERE TRAVIS." I CALL.*
*TRAVIS FOLLOWS BEHIND*
*EVER SO POLITE.*

*WHAT'S THAT UP THERE?*
*GRANDPA'S POND AND*
*TRAVIS KNOWS IT!*

*HE TAKES ONE LEAP AND*
*LANDS RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE*
*OF THE NICE COOL WATER*
*ON THE HOT NEBRASKA DAY.*

*"COME TRAVIS, I CALL*
*HE FOLLOWS US HOME,*
*EVER SO POLITE*
*MAKING SURE THAT HE WALKS*
*IN BACK OF US,*
*NOT IN FRONT.*

*TRAVIS IS IN HEAVEN NOW.*
*WE WILL SEE HIM SOMEDAY,*
*I KNOW!*

*By Rhonda K. Christian*

***In this article entitled "Animals and The Kingdom of Heaven", Sean Connally notes that the greatest Christian apologist of the 20th century, C.S. Lewis, not only had a profound mind, but he also had a tender heart, and a practical and loving connection with pets (cats and dogs). He noted that those who visited C.S. Lewis, "at his Oxford home, were often surprised to find the place not only spilling over with papers and books but also overrun by cats and dogs."***

***No one, including the great C.S. Lewis (with his profound thoughts), has developed a full or totally satisfying theology regarding the final destiny of***

***animals (in general) and of pets (in specific), but at least C.S. Lewis is one of the few truly great minds which has struggled with this important issue.***

***The briefly stated ideas that I have shared earlier, are mostly ideas that originated with C.S. Lewis.***

***Here is what C.S. Lewis says, "The Theory I am suggesting…makes God the centre of the universe and man the subordinate centre of terrestrial nature: the beasts are not co-ordinate with man, but subordinate to him, and their destiny is through and through related to him (i.e., to man's destiny)."***

***Comments Sean Connolly (in his article): "And so, in Lewis' vision of heaven, the pets I had as a child – and indeed those I have now or may come to have later – may well be caught up in my experience of the heavenly realm when I die." The best expression of this idea is found in Lewis' theological fantasy, The Great Divorce – Here he describes a woman in heaven surrounded by a train of young children, angels, and significantly – birds and animals. The following dialogue makes explanation:***

> ***'What are all these animals? A cat – two cats – dozens of cats.***
> ***And all those dogs…why, I can't count them. And the birds.***
> ***And the horses.'***
>
> ***'They are her beasts.'***
>
> ***'Did she keep a sort of zoo? I mean, this is a bit too much.***
>
> ***'Every beast and bird that came near her had its place in her love.***
> ***In her, they became themselves. And now the abundance of life***
> ***She has in Christ from the father flows over into them.'***

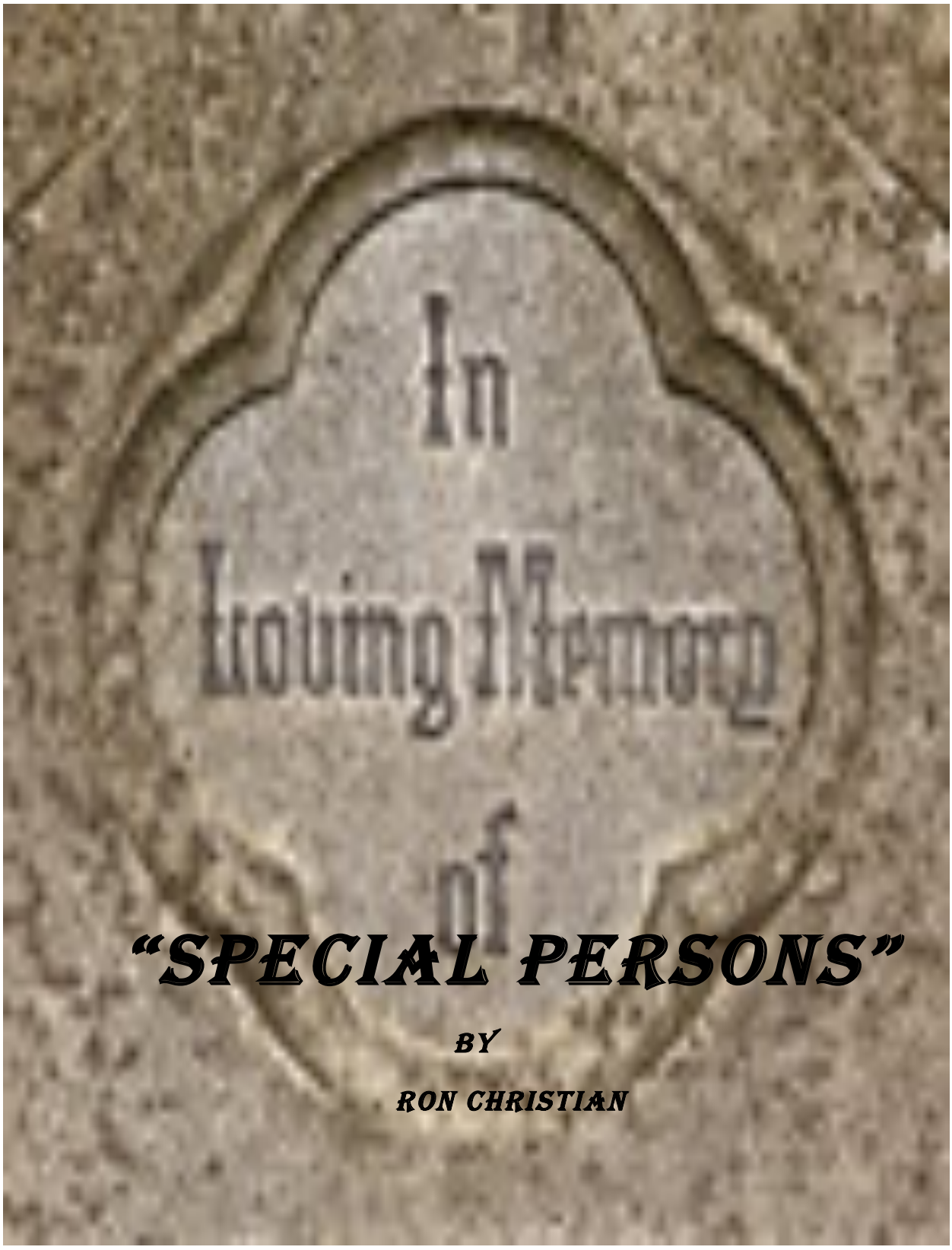
***NOTES***

# SECTION III

# IN MEMORY

# OF

# "SPECIAL PERSONS"!


In
Loving Memory
of
"SPECIAL PERSONS"
BY
RON CHRISTIAN

## POINTERS AT THE CROSSROADS OF LIFE!

*He stood at the crossroads all alone,*
*With the sunrise in his face;*
*He had no fear for the path unknown,*
*He was set for a manly race.*

*But the road stretched east, and the road stretched west;*
*There was no one to tell him which way was the best;*
*So my chum turned wrong and went down, down, down,*
*Till he lost the race and the victor's crown,*
*Because no one stood at the crossroads there.*

*Another chum on another day,*
*At the selfsame crossroads stood;*
*He paused a moment to choose the way*
*That would lead to the greater good.*

*And the road stretched east, and the road stretched west;*
*But I was there to show him the best;*
*So my chum turned right and went on and on,*
*Till he won the race and the victor's crown;*
*He came at last to the mansions fair,*
*Because I stood at the crossroads there.*

*Since then I have raised a daily prayer,*
*That I be kept faithfully standing there,*
*To warn the runners as they come,*
*And save my own or another's chum.*

*(Author Unknown)*

**(Note: Most of the persons, whose lives and memories we celebrate in this Book, were faithful 'pointers at the Crossroads of Life', encouraging countless numbers of persons – seekers – to take the 'road of Christ' that leads to eternal life! Their noble lives are sacred to our memories. "They, being dead, yet speak to us!")**

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# GENERAL MESSAGES

## "I OFTEN USED DURING THE EARLY YEARS OF MY PASTORATE".

## DESCRIPTION OF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***This message is a simple, yet thought-provoking message that I found helpful during the early years of my pastorate. (I used the "essence" of this message several times during those earlier years). I believe it is comprehensive, yet concise, interesting and relevant and (most importantly) Biblically based (with the use of important Scriptures).***

## DESCRIPTION OF FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

### DEATH – THE UNAVOIDABLE DEATH IS A UNIVERSAL FACT OF LIFE.

***The Bible says, "It is appointed unto man once to die." (Hebrews 9:27a) "Death is the one certain fact. Philip of Macedon had a slave to whom he gave standing order. The man was to come in to the King every morning of his life, no matter what the King was doing, and to say to him in a loud void: 'Philip, remember that thou must die.' Death is the only prediction which we can make about human history with absolute certainty." (Christian Doctrine; Whale; pg. 172) Death is the common denominator of life.***

***"There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death." (Ecclesiastics 8:8)***

***"For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." (James 4:14)***

***"As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." (Psalms 103:15, 16)***

*"The days of our years are threescore years and ten, or even if by reason of strength fourscore years, yet is their pride (in additional years) only labor and sorrow; for it is soon gone, and we fly away. Who knows the power of Your anger? (Who worthily connects this brevity of life with Your recognition of sin?) and Your wrath, who connects it with the reverent and worshipful fear that is due to You? So teach us to number our days that we may get us a heart of wisdom." (Psalms 90:10-12, Amplified Bible)*

## *DEATH COMPELS MEN TO CHOOSE BETWEEN FAITH AND DESPAIR*

*Said one perceptive person, "Either we despair, or we believe. There is no middle course, no razor-edge of non-committal on which to balance precariously." The man who has no faith in God is likely to say the same thing as the man of the world, who said regarding death: "The wise man is remembered no longer than the fool, for, as the passing days multiply, all will be forgotten. Alas, wise man and fool die the same death!' So I came to hate life, since everything that was done here under the sun was a trouble to me; for all is emptiness and chasing the wind." (Ecclesiastics 2:16-18)*

*Said one believer: "Only he who believes in God wins the victory over despair. Only the infinite mercy of the Eternal Love, incarnate, suffering, dying, rising from the dead, is big enough for the tragedy of human existence." The Christian with strong faith in God knows that death does not end it all, but that the perishability of death will someday be swallowed up in the imperishability of eternal life. With the Apostle Paul, the true Christian declares; "This perishable being must be clothed with the imperishable, and what is mortal must be clothed with immortality. And when our mortality has been clothed with immortality, then the saying of Scripture will come true: 'Death is swallowed up; victory is won!' 'O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?' The sting of death is sin; and sin gains it power from the law; but, God be praised, he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (I Corinthians 15:53-57, NEB)*

*Death will inevitably cause you to say one of two things, either "All is emptiness and chasing after win", or "God be praised, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Death compels men to choose between faith and despair.*

*A well-known atheist in France confessed his most deep-seated urge: "I have in myself a great need of permanence…I mean a need of believing*

***that there are products not subject to decay and degradation, works on which temporal changes have no influence." However, there is no stability, permanence, or hope without faith in Jesus Christ. All is darkness, gloom, and despair without personal trust in the Resurrected Christ.***

## *DEATH LETS LIFE SPEAK ITS FINAL WORD*

***"As a tree falls, so shall it lie." "As a man dies, so will he forever be." "We acquire here (on earth) spiritual wrinkles that eternity itself can never iron out." (Marston) The righteous who die in righteousness shall shine forever in his righteousness. The wicked who dies in his wickedness shall forever be doomed to wickedness. Death forever fixes one's eternal state irrevocably.***

***The Bible makes it very clear that "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." If you sow a faithless, unbelieving life, you will reap the barrenness and lostness of an endless eternity. If you are facing death with terror and condemnation, let me point you to a way out. That way out is Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28) "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts 16:31)***

## *DEATH RELEASES ONE INTO THE ETERNAL PRESENCE OF GOD*

***There is within the bosom of every man a longing for immortality. Man is born with a thirst for infinity. Man is overbuilt for this world, and his aspirations call for a fulfillment that is beyond the scope of time.***

***Even in the Old Testament when man's understanding of immortality was very limited, there are some aspirations shown, aspirations which could only be fulfilled in some type of life hereafter. Job cried out,***

***"Still, I know One to champion me at last,***
***To stand up for me upon earth.***
***This body may break up, but even then***
***My life shall have a sight of God." (Job 19:25-27)***

*The Psalmist expressed the belief that a man could enter into such a close relationship with God in this life, that not even death could break that relationship.*

> *"My flesh shall rest in hope, For Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hell; neither wilt thou suffer Thine holy one to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Psalms 16:9-11)*

*Here we find a deep confidence that man's aspirations for immortality will not be frustrated, but that man's deepest aspirations will be fulfilled. The very existence of aspirations is a clue that man is not merely a product of nature, but that he is a spiritual creature whose true greatness is found in a supernatural. Says Harold Sloan, "In nature, then, man aspires, but he merely aspires and dies. The universe provides no fulfillment for his outreaching. Two courses only are open to him. He can surrender to disillusionment, despair, and cynicism, or he can turn from the natural to the supernatural, discovering the answer to his need in forces which transcend nature….Shall man, then, whose faculties lift him so high above the beast, deny the actuality of everything those higher faculties need for fulfillment, and shut himself up to the universe of the beasts?…Man's aspirations belong to his inner world; and it is this inner world which he knows most immediately, and therefore best." (He Is Risen; pgs. 22, 27)*

*Death is simply a bridge that spans the gulf between time and eternity. One who is true believer in Christ goes over that bridge into the nearer presence of Christ. For all eternity, the believer will praise and glorify Christ. Heaven is a place of indescribable joy, as all the hosts of heaven join in corporate praise to God. The apostle John had a vision of heaven: "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred's, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." (Revelations 7:9, 10)*

*Death for the Christian is the end to earth's labors, and is the beginning to heaven's eternal development and labor. Said Victor Hugo: "For half a century I have been writing my thoughts in prose and verse, history, philosophy, drama, romance, tradition, satire, ode and song – I have tried them all, but I feel I have not said the thousandth part of what is in me. When I go down to the grave, I can say like so many others, 'I have finished my day's work', but I cannot say, 'I have finished my life'. My day's work will begin again next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley; it is a*

***thoroughfare. It closes on the twilight to open with the dawn." (From Chaos to Character; Marston; pg. 164)***

***What about the dead who die in Christ?***

***"No, not cold beneath the grasses,***
***All forgotten in the tomb:***
***Rather, in my Father's mansion,***
***Living, in another room.***
***"Living, like the one who loves me,***
***Like yon child with cheeks abloom,***
***Out of sight, at desk or schoolbook,***
***Busy in another room.***
***Nearer than the youth whom fortune***
***Beckons where the strange lands loom;***
***Just behind the hanging curtain,***
***Working in another room." (Ibid; 164, 165)***

# Remembering
# Howard Hoffman -1994

## Biographical Sketch

***This man's son (Bill Hoffman) was my "right hand man" while I pastored the Free Methodist Church in Fort Collins, Colorado, for many years (1967-1994). Bill was a pastor for a few years, but then chose to be an active layman in our Church for many years. He was one of the most faithful, reliable, cooperative "team players" I have ever worked with. Positive, supportive, prayerful, wise, discerning and very likeable! I was honored (and surprised) when Bill asked me to preach the funeral for both his father and his mother. I have included the message I gave, in honor of his father - a very godly man and (like Bill)) a very reliable and hard working man! A man who was very loyal to his beloved (small) Church, for decades! Howard served the Lord in another Church, in the Denver area.***

## Funeral Service (or) Tribute

***Mr. Hoffman was respected and loved in his home. Those who knew Mr. Hoffman best loved him the most. As a husband, Mr. Hoffman was deeply loved by his most lovely wife. They parented six beautiful children, all of whom Mr. Hoffman was very proud of. Each of his children have developed their own lives, and each of the six children and their families have a great love for him.***

***Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman trod life's pathway together in mutual love and with courageous endeavor, sometimes in the midst of great challenges and severe trials. Together they experienced the joy of establishing a home in which each member mutually cared for each other. A very close-knit home. Brothers and sisters loving each other deeply. Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman taught their children to love life, to love one another, and most of all to love God. The 'Family Altar' was important to them, and they taught their children, both by precept and by example to live honest and upright lives. Love and discipline were effectively combined in their wise nurture of their children. They taught their children the importance of integrity and openness and humility and transparency.***

***Yes, Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman labored diligently for the noble and worthwhile things of life. As the strong head of his home, Mr. Hoffman was the object of affection, respect, and admiration by both wife and children. Mr. Hoffman's life was greatly enriched by having wonderful grandchildren and great grandchildren. As a family man, he was the source of joy, gladness, and laughter. He was so 'earthy', human, and authentic. Precious are the memories of his kind counsel, fatherly care, and godly example. He honored God's Word, practiced daily prayer, and lived the life of love. Blessed is the home of which he was leader, guide, and guardian. Long after his children left home and established their own homes, they continued to look up to their father for wise counsel and encouragement.***

***Mr. Hoffman was a real friend to many. Mr. Hoffman was so common in so many ways, and yet he was so uncommon in his love, kindness, insight, wisdom, and friendship. He commended the respect of many men with whom he worked throughout life. He was no stranger to work. He enjoyed, and was active in, work for many, many years. Fulfilling his tasks faithfully, thoroughly, and conscientiously, Mr. Hoffman gave dignity to work. His hands were skillfully active most of the time. He was creative and went about his labors with a business-like concern. He knew how to inspire others towards the accomplishment of a worthy goal – and perhaps this is part of the secret for the success of his children in their lives.***

***Mr. Hoffman was recognized as a real gentleman and understanding friend within his neighborhood and Church. He had a host of friends where he served and labored for so many years. He was so uncalculating and generous in his involvement in God's work, and he was so unpretentious in his life–style and so genuine in his motives. It would be hard to find a more honest man anywhere. He did not seek the limelight, but was happy to work 'behind the scenes', faithfully carrying out his tasks – be they ever so common at times. He seemed able in a natural way to combine the qualities of ruggedness and tenderness, impetuousness and patience, forwardness and reservation. He lived the life of a real man, knowing how to laugh and how to cry, how to think and how to act, how to worship and how to play.***

***Mr. Hoffman was a dedicated Christian and Church Worker. The most important question which each man must face is, "Who shall be my Master?" Every man is the servant of some Master, and Mr. Hoffman was no exception. Mr. Hoffman's determination to serve God was manifested in many ways – his faithful Church attendance, his life of prayer, his love for the Bible, his desire to help others, his spirit of generosity and liberality. Mr. Hoffman lived not for this life alone; he lived for eternity. He lived for two worlds – the world of material things and the world of***

***spiritual reality. While Mr. Hoffman greatly enjoyed the good things of this life, his vision was not blinded by the glamour and superficiality of material things. He built his life on the Rock, which remains eternally after the shifting sands of Time have been swept away. Because Mr. Hoffman's footprint was stamped on the Eternal Rock and not on the shifting sand of Time, his influence lives on, and "he being dead, yet speaketh." As a transformed man of God, Mr. Hoffman stood for the great qualities of life – integrity, justice, and mercy. Realizing that he was overbuilt for this life alone, Mr. Hoffman lived not only for the body, but also for the spirit, not only for the temporal realm, but also for the celestial realm.***

***There are many qualities in the Christian life which are important, but there can be no more important quality than the quality of faithfulness and loyalty. "There is nothing in this world which can take the place of loyalty. If all the other noble qualities of life were placed in the balance against loyalty, loyalty would outweigh them all." (Barclay's Revelation; vol. 1; pg. 101)***

***Mr. Hoffman was a faithful man, amidst the changes and chances of life. He remained faithful to His Lord until the end, and the Bible says, "Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee a crown of life". In his last hours, Mr. Hoffman was conscious of his environment and most of all he was conscious of his Lord. He was communicating with his Saviour only shortly before his death. He was anticipating meeting his Saviour, and was not afraid to die.***

***Childhood, Adolescence, Adulthood, and Old Age – these are the passing stages of life. One may be abruptly introduced to the next stage, but more often, one enters the next stage gradually and slowly. The tenderness of Spring gradually changes into the fragrance of Summer, followed by the ruggedness of Fall and the aging of Winter. So each of life's stages is followed by a more mature and experienced stage. Death signals finality for this earthly realm of existence, but out of the realm of death comes the dawn of eternity. Death seals the end for one realm of existence, only to introduce an infinitely more glorious realm of existence.***

***Death may be filled with mystery and clouded with uncertainty, but for the Christian the sting of death is removed. Because Christ trod the terrifying road of death, his followers may now trod the road of death without fear and without terror. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." (Psalms 23:4)***

***The Bible tells us that every Christian shall rise from the dead and shall receive a new body. "Those who have died in Christ will be the first to rise, and then we who are still***

***living on the earth will be swept up with them into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And after that, we shall be with him forever. So by all means use this message to encourage one another." (I Thessalonians 4: 17, 18; Phillips)***

***This corruptible, frail body of clay will be transformed into a healthy, strong, celestial body, which shall never know sickness, pain, or death. Wrote Paul to the Corinthians, "The trumpet will sound and the dead shall be raised beyond the reach of corruption, and we who are still alive shall suddenly be utterly changed. For this perishable nature of ours must be wrapped in imperishability; these bodies which are mortal must be wrapped in immortality. So when the perishable is lost in the imperishable, the mortal lost in the immortal, this saying will come true: Death is swallowed up in victory." (I Corinthians 15:52)***

***The Christian not only has hope of having a resurrected body, but the Christian also has hope of seeing his loved ones again. Love outlasts death. If we experience love in this life, how much more shall we experience love in heaven! What a glorious time that will be to be united with husband, wife, father, mother, brother, sister, friend! Our love then will be complete and lasting.***

***The memory of a loved one and the anticipation of a glorious and heavenly reunion with him should provide a balm and healing for the grieving soul. As one person says, "The healing of the Christian's grief should be a process of remembering rather than a process of forgetting – a returning sense of gratitude to God for the life He has made a part of ours and a joyful looking forward to the heavenly reunion He has promised us. Christian love will remain untarnished after the last tree has fallen, the last mountain worn down, the last star becomes a cinder. In the vast time-scale of eternity, our brief partings are but the episode of a moment.***

***"The thing that remains with us during this period of separation is the meaning of the life that was entwined with ours. Death does not sum up its meaning any more than the period on the last page sums up the meaning of a book. Our beloved dead are still alive even though we cannot see them or speak to them. What they are is what they were, maturing into the perfection of their eternal destiny." (Peter Day)***

***Joy shall replace sorrow, peace shall replace turmoil, reality shall replace dreams, and union shall replace separation.***

***The Christian has hope of seeing Jesus, face to face someday! As Barclay notes, "For the Christian, heaven is where Jesus is. We do not need to speculate on what heaven will be like. It is enough to know that we will be forever with Him. When we love anyone with***

***our whole hearts, life begins when we are with that person; it is only in their company that we are truly alive. It is so with Christ. In this world, our contact with Him is shadowy, for we can only see through a glass darkly. It is spasmodic, for we are poor creatures and cannot live always on the heights. But the best definition of it is to say that heaven is that state where we will always be with Jesus, and where nothing will separate us from Him anymore."***

***Jesus, these eyes have never seen***
***That radiant form of Thine;***
***The veil of sense hangs dark between***
***Thy blessed face and mine.***
***I see Thee not, I hear Thee not,***
***Yet art Thou oft with me;***
***And earth hath ne'er so dear a spot***
***As where I meet with Thee.***
***Yet though I have not seen, and still***
***Must rest in faith alone,***
***I love Thee, dearest Lord, and will,***
***Unseen but not unknown.***
***When death these mortal eyes shall seal,***
***And still this throbbing heart,***
***The rending veil shall Thee reveal***
***All glorious as Thou art.***

***Mr. Hoffman has trod the road of death and has landed in that beautiful land where the sun always shines, where the flowers perpetually bloom, where the angels beautifully sing, and where the glory of Christ dwells. No longer is Mr. Hoffman bowed down with the cares of life. His tears are dried and his countenance is radiant. He has the glow of eternity on his face. Because Mr. Hoffman was faithful, even unto death, he now wears the crown of eternal life. He shall eternally rejoice in the presence of his blessed Saviour, Jesus Christ.***

# REMEMBERING

# EDNA VAN DUSEN -1972

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***When I was a very young (grade school) child I spent time with my dear grandmother, whose godly example greatly influenced me to become a genuine Christian. After I personally accepted Christ as my Savior, as an 11 year old child (March 12, 1956), I began frequently to go to my grandmother's home, after school, to learn from her, to hear her speak of God's mercies in her long trial-filled life, to listen carefully as she explained various portions of Scripture, to find out from her what her 'secrets' were that made her Christian life so victorious and radiant.***

***Edna Van Dusen had a limited formal education, but she was "self-taught". She loved to read – including the Bible, many Christian books, especially "The Pilgrim's Progress" which was her favorite book – read many times! She had the "gift of teaching", as evidenced by the fact that she taught the adult Sunday school Class in her Church, for several decades. She loved yard work! She liked to cook! She was 'close' to her two sisters (one of whom she personally cared for in her home) since this sister was crippled from polio all her life). My grandmother's mind was trained to understand truth.***

***Her heart was tender to feel compassion for hurting persons. Her will was strong to follow Christ, even if it was difficult. Her husband abandoned her, leaving her to raise four children. My mother (one of those children) experienced a certain level of poverty. But grandma's strong will and God's grace prevailed!***

***I knew my grandmother to be a true (loyal) follower of Christ – a 'saint' of God! But she was not "other-worldly", "distant", "unapproachable", or "mysterious". While it is true that she was deeply spiritual (a woman deeply in love with Christ, and a very informed Bible student, and a serious reader of Christian literature), she was, nevertheless, very "human", "practical," "approachable", "pragmatic", "enterprising", "hard-working", "a***

***lover of plants and flowers, trees, and birds". She was a woman who "lived for two worlds" – the world of time and the world of eternity. She honored God in all things as she worshipped very often in her small Church for many decades, and as she carefully cleaned her house and washed her dishes and baked her three-layer chocolate cake (which brought the 'praises' of many including me).***

***She was such a "well-rounded" woman, a woman with deep humility without any humiliation. She was a great "soldier of the cross" – a woman who strongly defended the 'Faith', but a woman whose heart, at the same time, was tender and tolerant towards suffering people. She hated sin, but she did not hate sinners. She seemed to have "more than her share" of suffering throughout her long life, but she nevertheless maintained a spirit of great faith and optimism through all the "storms of life".***

***When her wandering, "cowboy" husband deserted her for his own selfish pursuits, she was left without any financial security – left by herself as a young woman with four children to raise! Because Edna had limited formal education and, therefore, no specialized credentials to commend her for a good job, she, nevertheless, and with determination, decided to use her 'rugged' hands to do any menial or manual labor that she could find. Even though it was hard and boring work, she knew she could do laundry for other women who, because of their better financial status, did not choose to do their own washing of clothes. Of course, when this situation took place more than a hundred years ago, there were no electric washing machines. Clothes were washed by one's own hands, by using an old-fashioned "scrub board" in a large tub of water. My grandmother told me about an awesome and mysterious experience that she had one time while she was diligently involved in the washing of clothes, on an old-fashioned "wash board", a humble task to earn a little money to keep her children from starving! She told me that she personally was deeply burdened with a sense of "spiritual poverty", as well as with her obvious "economic poverty". As she apparently was "weighed down in her soul with an overwhelming burden of guilt," she was praying fervently, at the same time that she was laboring hard washing clothes on the old "wash board".***

***As I recall, she told me that her fervent praying was accompanied with large tears descending from her cheeks and falling into the dirty wash water before her. As she was pouring out her life to God, seeking forgiveness, assurance, and peace, something strange and wonderful appeared before her! She saw, of course in "vision form" a "large river of blood"! When she saw the river, full of blood, she recognized it as none other than the "precious blood of Jesus Christ"! Then, she heard the voice of God speak to her, very distinctively: "Edna, plunge in and be made clean". Again, Edna, plunge in***

***and be made clean!" God commanded her to be made whole and clean! The Bible says that God will "not despise a broken and a contrite heart." God heard the cry of a young burdened-down, guilt-ridden lady, a lady who had been forsaken by an adulterous husband, a woman who was burdened by the "cares of life", and a woman who had no one to turn to but to the "Living God". God is a merciful and a gracious God, a God who loves all, a God who has a special care for the widows and for the divorced!***

***Following that dramatic experience of soul healing, during the decades to follow in her long life, she faced many more trials and tests, but God allowed her to have other "divine encounters". For the purpose of teaching her, and of encouraging her, and of strengthening her, and of enlightening her. At the end of her long life, Edna could testify that (unlike her wandering husband – whose own life turned out to be very sterile, although I heard that late in his life he made peace with God), I say, at the end of her long life she could testify, that God never left her, that God never forsook her, that God's messages were new every morning for the entire 89 years of her life! (The blood, the blood, oh halleluiah, it cleanses me" – many times she testified to this reality, during her spiritual pilgrimage).***

***"There is a fountain filled with blood***
***Drawn from Immanuel's veins;***
***And sinners, plunged beneath that blood,***
***Lose all their guilty stains."***

***"The dying thief rejoiced to see***
***That fountain in his day;***
***And there may I, though vile as he,***
***Wash all my sins away.***

***"E'er since, but faith, I saw the stream***
***Thy flowing wounds supply,***
***Redeeming love has been my theme,***
***And shall be till I die."***
***(There Is A Fountain by William Cowper)***

***It was when I was a young teen (a time shortly after I prayed to accept Christ as my personal Savior, March 12, 1956) – and because it was so many years ago, I do not remember all of the detailed circumstances surrounding that long-ago event. What was the "event"? I remember I was alone, at night, in the back yard of my minister's house (a parsonage), and close to the small white-framed Church where my ancestors for generations had worshipped. I loved to attend that small Free Methodist Church with my beloved mother. I truly believed that my experience of praying for salvation***

***was real and was vital, but nevertheless, I was struggling so much spiritually in my new found 'faith', trying to better understand the meaning and the implications of Christianity – not Christianity as a religion with codes of ethics, but Christianity as a personal and daily love relationship with God.***

***I found myself so burdened that night regarding "spiritual matters" (with my mind confused and my heart so heavy), that, alone in the darkness that night, I started praying most fervently and crying almost uncontrollably! After considerable time of pleading with God for assurance and comfort and guidance and deliverance from my heavy burden, I remember saying to God: "If I ever get religion, I want the kind of religion that my Grandmother has!" I was, of course, thinking of my gracious, loving, kind, faithful, and wise Grandmother Van Dusen! (second only to my dearest mother whose influence in my life was invaluable). My Grandmother Van Dusen exemplified what, to me, was a true and genuine Christian, whose life was patterned consistently after Christ Himself!***

***I believe she was a "balanced Christian", manifesting the Spirit-given "fruits of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-23). She was a 1st Corinthians 13 woman – a woman who loved her God supremely and who loved her fellowmen sincerely. She was outgoing and very friendly and conversational. She had so little financially (a small monthly pension), but she was gracious in her giving to her local Church – a Church that, even though it was very small in attendance, was very important to her! This Church (one of the oldest buildings in Fountain, Colorado) was built many years ago, before my grandmother's birth. It was built in 1880's. (This small Church – small as far as the actual building construction and small also as far as the attendance – finally 'closed it doors' after existing for about 120 years! I was a 5th generation family member that received much of my "spiritual nature" in that local Church, until I went away to college). Through all the "ups and downs" of the life of that small Free Methodist Church, my grandmother was "steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (and the same could be said of my dear mother, who attended that same small Church for several decades).***

***My grandmother had a strong constitution (body), and she was known to work hard, long hours – and she also worked 'fast'. (I can see her "fast movements" just now, in my 'mind's eye'). She was strong in many ways. (My dear mother, who was very 'close' to her mother – Edna Van Dusen –, lost her husband just one week before her mother died! A double sorrow! But God's imparted grace to mother was sufficient, and my mother who suddenly became a widow and who became motherless within one week –***

***healed and eventually rebounded and she continued to live for God until she went home to heaven, 28 years after the death of her husband and her mother).***

***My good and godly grandmother (Edna Van Dusen) lived to be a "ripe old age" (in spite of all the suffering that she endured throughout her long lifetime). Before she died, she spent several months in a nursing home, suffering from the deterioration to her body which cancer causes. Her speech was difficult to understand, a few weeks before she died (for the cancer had taken its toll on her mouth, as well as other places). My mother was with her, as she was dying, and my mother was quite sure that the last words (so appropriately) that she said were; "I'm trusting the blood of Jesus Christ!***

## "FUNERAL MESSAGE (OR) TRIBUTE

***"My Childhood Memories Of Grandma Van Dusen."***

***Talking by the hour with grandma, sitting at her feet drinking in the wisdom of her years.***

***Listening to her recount the experiences of her own early childhood during the frontier days.***

***Being awakened by the grandfather clock in the middle of the night while staying in her home.***

***Enjoying many delightful, well-cooked meals in her home.***

***I will best remember my grandmother as being a very strong woman – strong in many ways.***

***She was strong physically. Until only a few years ago, she was working hard in her home and in her yard. She kept a beautiful yard, and enjoyed viewing her flowers, shrubs, trees, and well-trimmed grass. Grandma was a woman of a strong constitution. Her movements were quick and her energy was abounding. Throughout grandma's entire life, she knew what hard work was. Her life was not easy, but her energy and zeal matched her tasks. The writer of the Proverbs describes her well when he wrote, "She sets about her duties with vigour and braces herself for the work". (Proverbs 31:17)***

***She was strong in will. Grandma was a woman of strong convictions. She felt deeply and expressed herself firmly. She was tolerant of the viewpoints of others, but she was not afraid to strongly express her own feelings. The hard circumstances, which she was forced to face at times in her life, gave her a certain independence that marked her truly as great. Facing the storms of life gave her a resolution of purpose and strength of character that can only be said to be beautiful. She was a woman who possessed a strong will and purpose.***

***Grandma was strong in mind and was a self-educated woman. The thing that grandma missed most when she lost good eyesight was her reading. One would be amazed to count the hundreds of books that grandmother read in her lifetime. The ideas and concepts, which she entertained, were intellectually challenging. She taught a Sunday school class for about fifty years, and her teaching ability even amazed many formally educated men. Her memory was astounding and she entertained many with her ability to converse. I am grateful that she maintained mental acuteness until the very end. During her long life, she had read the Holy Bible – her most favorite book – many, many times. Probably the book she enjoyed most reading outside of the Bible, was the old classic 'Pilgrim's Progress'. She talked about the celestial city, which was the cherished goal of Christian's long pilgrimage. Now she herself has reached that celestial city after her long pilgrimage on earth.***

***She was strong in spirit. What characterized my grandmother more than anything else was her deep faith in God – a faith that was vital, alive, and most beautiful. She walked and talked with Jesus every day. Her life was filled with love, kindness, understanding, and compassion. She involved herself in the lives of many others, seeking to lend a sympathetic, helping hand. Her counsel was wise, and her reasoning was seasoned with the Word of God. Grandma never was rich materially but she was rich in every other way. She was generous and systematic in giving what money she had to God's work. One would be amazed at the amount of money grandma gave in a lifetime to her Church. Grandma loved her Church, and she was very loyal to her pastors and a friend to all fellow parishioners. All in the Church were moved emotionally by her definite testimonies. Grandma was a very humble, unselfish person.***

***A short time before her death, I told grandma how much she had meant to me and how I would be always indebted to her for her wisdom, love, and influence that had touched my life in so many ways. Although she could not talk at that time, I could verily discern her words as she whispered "Give God all the glory". It was very important to grandma for people to know that she was simply a sinner saved by grace. The greatest desire of***

***her life was that all of her family and loved ones would give their lives to Christ and live for Christ every day. She was a mighty woman of prayer.***

***On one of the last occasions that I saw grandma as she lay in bed, obviously never to recover, every wrinkle in her face looked so beautiful to me. As I beheld her, I thought to myself "Here is one of God's choicest servants, a rugged soldier of the Cross, one who has faithfully served God and helped people for many years". It seemed even then that some of the glory of heaven radiated from her countenance.***

***As I recall, one of Grandma's favorite Scriptures was that found in II Timothy 4:7, 8. This scripture was first written by the apostle Paul, but it certainly applies to grandma now. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."***

***Grandma now rests from all her earthly labors and reposes in the bosom of her precious Jesus. I anticipate meeting her someday and again sitting at her feet to learn from her words of wisdom and love. My love for her now is very deep, but it shall be much greater over there.***

***The memory of her will inspire me the rest of my life, and her counsel will influence me in every decision that I make throughout my life.***

***Thank you, grandma, for being such a truly great and strong woman. Your Grandson,***

# REMEMBERING
# MILLARD AYLE – 1980

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***This man and his wife were very "close" to each other, the personable, friendly, the conversational – type – persons whom everyone enjoyed being around. Because Millard was "handy" with his hands, he found enjoyment (as a hobby) in constructing "rocking horses" for children. Beautiful and sturdy, a delight for any smaller child! And because he enjoyed my company (both as a pastor and as a friend), he presented one of these skillfully constructed "rocking horses" to me – to give to my two young daughters! Even after my daughters had long outgrown that "rocking horse", I still had that unusual toy stored in my garage. Yes, that was the kind of man Millard was – joyful, kind, thoughtful, playful, personable, and generous. I did not have the privilege of being his pastor during the years of his "normality", but when his dedicated Christian daughter asked me to visit her father when he found out that he had a serious bladder cancer, I found myself drawn to Millard, time and time again, while his cancer became worse and worse. Finally, when Millard lost his battle with this dreadful disease, I was given the honor of giving a tribute at his service. This man loved his family and his friends, but most of all Millard came to love his dear Lord!***

## FUNERAL MESSAGE (OR) TRIBUTE

***Millard Ayle was one of my dear friends. I sorrow with those who sorrow today, and yet I rejoice exceedingly because I know that Millard is with the dear Lord whom he loved and longed to see.***

***I saw Millard about five minutes before he passed away. I left the hospital room and visited briefly with his daughter and son-in-law, not realizing how close to death he was at the time. I then shortly left the hospital. As I was walking to my car, I was***

***thinking of my dear friend, Millard, thinking of all the pain he had endured for nearly a decade, thought of the 19 surgeries he had endured, thought of his gentleness and love and good humor, thought of his dear loved ones whom he cherished. But then a beautiful picture came to my mind. I could see that happy little man that I had grown to love during the last few years, no longer suffering but clothed with a new body – a resurrection body - filled with heaven's joy and in a place where he would enjoy perfect health. No more sorrow, sickness, or pain. All the former things of earth would then be passed away. He would be with his dear Saviour, serving Him with joy and anticipating the remainder of his family becoming reunited with him in heaven!***

***These, in brief, were the thoughts passing through my mind as I walked away from the hospital on Friday morning after seeing Millard. But I did not know that while these heavenly thoughts were flooding my mind, Millard had already died and that Millard had just been introduced into heaven's glory! It was a half hour later that Tom Saali, Millard's grandson, called me, and said, "My grandfather went home to be with Jesus, just five minutes after you left his hospital room!"***

***What can I say today about Millard Ayle? Time is not long enough nor words adequate enough for me to express my full appreciation and love for Millard Ayle. But let me share a few of my impressions of Millard Ayle.***

***Millard was a loving husband and father. Seldom have I seen a family more loving and tender and devoted than Millard Ayle's family. He was both the object of unusual love and the subject of unusual love. He loved, and he was loved. The devotion of his wife during happiness and sorrow, during health and sickness – down through the years – was an admirable quality to behold! Crafts, cookies, conversation, companionship, caring, compassion - these are a few words that describe the relationship between Millard and his wife.***

***They laughed together and they wept together. They worked together and they fished together. Millard's burdens were his wife's burdens. Never have I seen a woman more dedicated to the welfare of her husband than Millard's wife! Sacrificial love is the motivation of her life. Rena told me that the last words that she exchanged with her husband on Thursday evening after he was taken by ambulance to the hospital were these: "Daddy, I love you." Millard replied, "Momma, I love you." Love characterized their entire lifetime relationship together!***

***Never have I seen a father love his daughters and sons-in-law more than Millard. Millard was the delight also of his grandchildren, (as seen in the delightful reading,***

***which Tom gave today about his grandfather). Millard was the delight of his grandchildren. He knew how to laugh, to play, and to joke, with them.***

***Millard loved all his family and he loved his friends. Many were his friends, and great was the admiration of his friends for Millard.***

***Millard loved life and he loved nature. His favorite sport was beside a fishing lake or in his shop where he exercised his skillful craftsmanship, creating a hundred things from wood. Millard and his wife made scores of people happy with their handmade crafts.***

***Millard loved God and he loved the Saviour. For years, Millard and his wife daily read the little devotional booklet 'Our Daily Bread'. One of the last requests, only a couple of days before he died, was that his daughter read the 'Daily Bread.' Shortly before he died, one of his daughters (Madalyn) read Psalms 91. Psalms 91:3 says, "Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence." After reading the Scripture, Millard gently pounded his chest and prayed something like this: "Lord, deliver me from this pestilence".***

***God answered that prayer. God has delivered Millard from the pestilence of disease and pain. The Bible tells us that the sufferings of this life cannot be compared with the glory of heaven. Is it possible that because the intensity of Millard's pain was so intense, that now the intensity of heaven's glory for Millard is that much greater? No longer is Millard weighted down with the cares and distresses of life. He is released into God's nearer presence, ever to be with the Lord!***

***There is no doubt that Millard made peace with God. During the last 6 to 7 years that I knew Millard, I saw great spiritual growth. It seemed that the more pain he endured, the more tenderness he developed. About a month or so ago, I had a heart-to-heart talk with Millard about heaven. Millard said he was ready and that he was waiting for God to call him Home to heaven. As much as he loved life and the people whom he cherished in life, he said that he looked forward to a better life hereafter.***

***If Millard were standing here today, speaking to his loved ones and friends, what would he want to say? Among many things that he would say, I believe he would remind us first of all that this earthly life is brief. The Bible says, "God knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." (Psalms 103:13-15)***

*"When as a child, I laughed and wept,*
*Time crept;*

*When as a youth, I dreamed and talked,*
*Time walked;*

*When I became a full-grown man,*
*Time ran;*

*When older still I daily grew,*
*Time flew;*

*Soon I shall find in traveling on*
*Time gone.*

*(Author Unknown)*

***It is appointed unto every man once to die. Are you ready to die? Have you been saved? Is your name written in God's Book of Life? Have you been born again? Remember, until one is ready to die, he is not really ready to live!***

***Not only would Millard remind us of the brevity of life, but also I believe he would remind us of the futility of life without God! Jesus asked this penetrating and all-important question: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26) There is nothing more important in all of life than to make peace with your God. How can a person make peace with God?***

***By acknowledging your need for forgiveness. Every person before he comes to God is a sinner and is in need of God's forgiveness.***

***Next, one must confess his sins to Jesus Christ and accept God's forgiveness as the gift of God. A gift is not necessarily deserved and a gift cannot be earned. A gift can only be received, in gratitude. When you receive God's gift of forgiveness what is the result?***

***You become a new person with all of the rich benefits of God, such as abundant life, peace, assurance, eternal life with God.***

***Because Millard Ayle accepted Jesus as his Saviour, his sins are forgiven and he is now with Jesus in heaven.***

# REMEMBERING
# RUSSELL BRUNNER -1984-

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***Even though I only had contact with this young man (age 20 when he died) for a short time, I found him to be a precious, gifted, handsome, sincere young man. He was married for about 1 1/2 years before he died. His obituary notice said that "he enjoyed fishing, sports, and bodybuilding, and was Mr. Teenage Colorado in 1982 in the bodybuilding lightweight class". A relative of his asked me to conduct the funeral service, even though Russ had never been an attender of the Church I was pastoring at that time in 1984. I counted it an honor to be asked to say a few words (not a full-fledged sermon).***

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

***Russ Brunner was a 'double winner'. This is the phrase that he used to describe himself during the last two or three weeks of his life. When talking together we talked about God, life, heaven, and victory in Christ. Paul said, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain!" This verse from the Bible meant a lot to Russ. Paul was a winner on earth and a winner in heaven. Physical death could not take life – real life - from Paul, but death simply allowed Paul to enjoy the nearer presence of Christ. Russ too believed in Christ and received Christ into his life as his personal Saviour. He placed his faith in the living Christ, and therefore death had no power over Russ. Death was not his enemy, but simply his door of entrance into the very presence of the living Christ.***

***When Russ could hardly talk, during the last two or three days before his death, he would point his finger upward in praise and adoration to God, which symbolized "Jesus is Lord'! Because Russ believed in Jesus, Russ now lives eternally with the Saviour in heaven. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord! Russ is now consciously enjoying the presence of Christ and the presence of the saints of heaven. He***

***no longer experiences pain, sorrow, or heartache but he now enjoys the pleasures and joys of heaven. He will receive a new resurrected body – a spiritual, identifiable body that will never be susceptible to disease or discomfort. He now enjoys eternal health. He no longer walks by faith but he walks by sight; his eyes behold the beautiful face of the loving Saviour whom he shall serve forever and forever.***

***Says William Barclay, "We can say that God has it in his power to make it up to those who are taken too soon away, and to those to whom sorrow and suffering has tragically come…God is seeing to it that the life cut off too soon is getting its chance to blossom and flourish, and the life involved in tragedy is finding its compensation. The eternal world is redressing the balance of the world of time."***

***I am sure that Russ Brunner would want everyone at his funeral to think seriously of God and make peace with God if you have not yet done this. A few months ago, Russ gave his life to Christ. He was prepared to die. All of us must prepare to meet our God. Some will meet God soon and some will meet Him late, but it is appointed unto all men once to die. The old must die, and the young may die. Russ was young when he died, but because he was ready to die, he is now equipped to enjoy the life of Christ in heaven.***

***Are you ready to meet God? If not, prepare today. The Bible says, "Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Repent of your sins and accept Jesus Christ into your life today! Then you too can anticipate seeing your Saviour someday, face to face, and of seeing friends and loved ones, like Russ Brunner.***

# REMEMBERING
# VALERIE MILLER - 1992

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***It probably was the "darkest day" in the life of our local Church, namely, the cold-blooded murder of one of our dearest members of our Church, committed by the crazed husband (who was a black belt instructor, a military man, a marksman, a so-called patriot, a studious and well–liked person). Without going into long details regarding his personhood and personality, he was domineering as a husband, extremely possessive, highly opinionated, an inflexible conservative when it came to political and militaristic viewpoints. He was likeable, and he could even be the "life of the party". He was intelligent, he had two teenage daughters and one young grade school son, and they were all intelligent and good-looking, like their (Mexico-born) Hispanic father and their Anglo mother. John's wife, Valerie, was one of the most beautiful women (physically) that you could imagine! She had a most delightful, loving, extroverted personality, and she was multi-talented. A most beautiful voice, as evidenced time and time again when she sang solos in our worship services. ("She brought heaven down to earth" when she sang, and she never sang for self-enhancement, but only for the glory of God). Everyone in our church really loved and admired Valerie Miller! She made money (out of necessity) for her family, as a seamstress (she could "do" almost anything with clothes, from making something new to doing difficult jobs of altering clothes). She was a portrait artist whose paintings could easily win first prize in any contest!***

***If one would ask John (Valerie's husband) if he loved his wife, he would without wavering declare, "Of course, I do!" But, while I was their pastor for several years, I recognized that there was some serious "breakdown" in their communication. I am quite sure that Valerie felt that, during their 17 years of marriage, John failed to get serious about his responsibility as husband, and specifically as financial provider. Of course, I do not know all the reasons, but finally Valerie "could take it no longer" (after***

***she had tried for many years to be the cooperative and submissive wife, even though she had given up some of her own goals to be that submissive wife). She left him a few days before the horrible incident (of murder) on our Church parking lot. For a few days, John was staying at the home of one of our Church members. On that fateful Sunday morning (August 23, 1992), John (the marksman) came to the sanctuary of our Church, just before the second worship service began, and he motioned to Valerie that he wanted to see her. She submitted to his demand, and she and John had a brief "tempestuous dialogue" in the foyer, which I witnessed. Several, about 10 persons, including a police officer in full uniform – (along with his gun) felt inclined to follow Valerie and John out onto the parking lot where they continued to carry on a "heated discussion". Everyone on the parking lot were good friends of John and Valerie, including the police officer who would not normally be at that particular worship service. One or two couples (friends) who followed them to the parking lot, tried to calm John, but to no avail. As Valerie stepped away from John, a few feet, John pulled his concealed weapon, and (marksman that he was) he shot Valerie in the heart! I saw her die, right at my feet! A most horrifying sight! One of the men who witnessed the murder (a man who was a new Christian and a friend of John and Valerie) said he saw two angels attend to Valerie, as she was dying (one at her head and one at her feet).***

***As soon as John opened "fire" on his wife to murder her, the police office (Mike Swihart, a very godly man and, ironically, a good friend of John's) immediately opened "fire" on John, and John in turn simultaneously opened "fire" on Mike. I stood a few feet away on the parking lot as bullets were being simultaneously exchanged between these two men (friends!). I could hardly believe what I was seeing! Both men were seriously hurt. It took Mike several weeks in the hospital to recover. If one of the bullets would have hit in a slightly different position, Mike would have been killed. While John lay on the parking lot, he was still conscious enough to try to reach for his gun to continue to shoot. Toxie Dearman (who saw the angels a few seconds before) went over to where John was lying, and, as he saw John trying to pick up the gun on the parking lot, Toxie kicked away the gun. John then said to Toxie, "What have I done?" Toxie answered, "You just killed your wife!" John replied, "Oh no, I am going to hell. Pray for me!" Toxie replied, "You pray for yourself!" By afternoon, while he was being treated in the hospital, John died! All of this happened on John and Valarie's 17th wedding anniversary! A most tragic happening, to be sure, but we must leave the eternal destiny of every person in the hands of Almighty God!***

# FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

***What is the meaning of Human Existence?***

***First, human beings are created in God's own image. Every person has a mind, a body, a spirit. Because God is a Trinity (Father, Son, Spirit), so you are a tri –unity. You have the ability to commune with God, to know and to fellowship with God.***

***Second, life without God is meaningless. Sin brought misery and disillusionment into the world. Man is made by God and man is restless without God. The things of this world don't satisfy the soul of man. Money and pleasure and power and education – none of these things can bring meaning and purpose in life.***

***Third, God has His 'stamp of ownership" on every person's life. Why does God have a claim on your life? Simply because God created you. Noted David about God's creation of the human being: "For you created my inmost being: you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." (Psalms 139:13-16) You belong to God by right of God's special creation of you. From God's perspective, no person is a 'mistake', for God allowed the conception of every human being! Also, you belong to God by right of Christ's redemption of you. Christ died on the cross for every person and His shed blood was the price of your soul's redemption. Wrote Paul, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." (I Corinthians 6:19-20)***

***Fourth, if the Bible teaches us that God created us, that Christ died for us on the cross, and that our bodies are God's temples for God to live in, then it is important that all of us surrender ourselves to God. Wrote Paul, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – which is your spiritual worship." (Romans 12:1) Every person must surrender himself to God.***

***Have you surrendered yourself to Jesus Christ? Have you asked Jesus Christ to come into your heart? Have you confessed all your sins to God and asked His forgiveness? "If we confess our sins, He (God) is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins, and cleanse you from all unrighteousness." (I John 1:9)***

***One thing we can say for certain: God loves every human being. This means that God who created you is the God who loves you and who gave His Son Jesus to die on the cross for us.***

***There are some people who foolishly called a tragic accident or a premature death "an act of God'. Notes Barclay, "I do not think that anyone can calculate the vast amount of damage that has been done by suggesting that terrible and tragic events in life are the will of God.***

***"Quite clearly, Jesus did not think sickness, illness, and untimely death the will of God. Quite clearly, he thought them the reverse of the will of God. They were the very things that he had come to help and to overcome".***

***"What then can we say at a time like this? We can say that God is as grieved as we are, that he is sharing in our sorrow and our grief, that he is afflicted in all our afflictions that his heart is going out to meet our hearts".***

***"We can say that he has it in his power to make it up to those who are taken too soon away, and to those to whom sorrow and suffering has tragically come. If God is justice, and if God is love, I am as certain as it is possible to be certain of anything, that there is a life to come. And in that life to come God is seeing to it that the life cut off too soon is getting its chance to blossom and flourish, and the life involved in tragedy is finding its compensation. The eternal world is redressing the balance of the world of time."***

***An unusual lady, an outgoing friend, a dedicated Christian, a joyful participant in life, a humble servant, a multitalented person – these describe the special woman that Valerie Miller was. She had a host of friends of all ages – from small children to older folks. A radiant countenance, a winsome smile, an outgoing personality, a joyful laughter, a warm heart, a reverent attitude – these are a few descriptions of Valerie Miller. She genuinely cared for people. She was an excellent seamstress, a talented portrait artist, a beautiful singer, and a talented dramatist, an aspiring teacher. Her witness for Christ was remarkable. She unashamedly shared her love with people. She was surrounded with a host of admirers – persons who respected her unusual witness for righteousness. Her sweet smile and her joyous laughter brought great pleasure to countless people! She was one of the most talented persons I ever met, and also one of the most humble persons I ever knew. She never boasted in her accomplishments. She was most enterprising, industrious, creative, and innovative. She had a tender heart and a listening ear. She loved to visit and she loved to laugh! Her presence was like a breath of fresh air! She brought cheer and gladness into the atmosphere of any group of people.***

***She was a most dedicated mother whose children, in this hour of affliction, have demonstrated the tenacious spirit, which was so characteristic of Valerie. Her daughters are a reflection of their wonderful mother – beautiful in physical appearance and radiant in personality.***

***The Bible says that we are to give "honor to whom honor is due". Honor is due to Valerie's outstanding parents! I have seldom, if ever, in an hour of adversity and sorrow, seen such faith and such trust and composure, in the lives of grief –stricken parents. Bill and Virginia Rutledge have exemplified faith in their Lord in most phenomenal ways!***

***The most outstanding characteristic of Valerie was her strong faith in her wonderful Lord. She was a joyous believer, and one who loved to praise her Saviour in word and in song. She was an outgoing witness and one who was very responsive to people.***

# REMEMBERING

# JIM CHRISTIAN-1974

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***Jim Christian, and my dad (Jim's older brother) and Mike, Mart and Evelyn (Jim's other siblings) were raised in a "good home", but a "divided home", nevertheless. That is to say, the mother of these children was a devout full-blooded Irish Catholic (and she attended Mass faithifully), and the faither of these children was (at best) a nominal Protestant (who, as far as I know, seldom or never attended any Church services). Some children, raised in a "divided home" decide (in spite of their disadvantages) to "take the straight and narrow way" of genuine Christianiaty. And that is noteworthy and wonderful when that (rarely) happens! But, as is so many times the 'case', Jim and his siblings (at best when I knew all of them) chose to go to no Church, and they ended up being "lost spiritually" and insensitive to spiritual values. They all, of course, manifested some commendabe qualiaties (sure as kindness and generosity, etc.), but none of them - including Jim – showed any apparent desires to become a Christian. That is, a until they all, late in their lives, finally responded to the awakening power of the Holy Spirit! Perhaps because of my godly mother's prayers for each of them, for many years, and due to the example of her loving and righteous life, all of these persons (in the "Christians clan") who seemed so unreachable for God, became believers before they died!***

***My Uncle Jim, who developed cancer, lay in bed in great suffering, and I (who loved my uncle, but who felt somewhat intimadated by his "pagan ways') was directed by the Holy Spirit to go to his house (i.e., to his bedroom where he was very ill) and to ask him if I could share the "Plan of Salvation" with him using a detailed, illustrated presentation in a large notebook! When he said 'Yes', I was thrilled, and because he was "hurting so badly" with the advanced case of cancer, I quickly went through the presentation with him. When I asked him if he desired to repeat with me "The Sinners Prayer', he said he did! I witnessed the coversion of my dear Uncle Jim – a vitual***

*"heathen", but a man whom God greatly loved! (My mother, a "prayer warrior" had been praying for his salvation for many years!). Late in life, but he definitely was saved and was ready to meet God in peace when he died. He died only a few weeks after his conversion. Yes, unfortunately his life was lost (because of a long practice of sinning), but his soul was gloriously saved (because he repented of his life of sinning and because he placed his total faith in the Lord Jesus Christ)! I, who had the privilege of leading him to the Savior, also was given the privilege of conducting his funeral service! I look forward to seeing my Uncle Jim someday in Heaven! All by God's grace alone!*

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

*Death is a universal fact of life. Said one, "DEATH is the most democratic institution on earth. It comes to all men regardless of color, education, wealth, or rank. It allows no discrimination, tolerates no exceptions. The mortality rate of mankind is the same the world over: one death per person." (Fred Kuehner)*

*Death is the common denominator of all men. None can escape the reality of death. Of all the world's wonders, the greatest wonder of all is that, although a man sees others dying all around him, he himself finds it hard to believe that he himself will die. But the Bible says, "It is appointed unto all men once to die." (Hebrews 9:27a)*

*"Death is the one certain fact. Philip of Macedon had a slave to whom he gave a standing order. The man was to come in to the King every morning of his life, no matter what the King was doing, and to say to him in a loud voice: 'Philip, remember that thou must die.' …Death is the only prediction which we can make about human history with absolute certainty." (Christian Doctrine; Whale; pg. 172)*

*"There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death." (Ecclesiastics 8:8)*

*"For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." (James 4:14)*

*"As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." (Psalms 103: 15, 16)*

*"When as a child, I laughed and wept, Time crept;*
*When as a youth, I dreamed and talked, Time walked;*
*When I became a full-grown man, Time ran;*
*When older still I daily grew, Time flew;*
*Soon I shall find in travelling on, Time gone."*
*-Author Unknown-*

***Death compels men to choose between faith and despair. "Either we despair, or we believe. There is no middle course, no razor-edge of non-committal on which to balance precariously." (Whale; 178) The man who has no faith in God is likely to say the same thing as the man of the world, who said regarding death: "The wise man is remembered no longer than the fool, for, as the passing days multiply, all will be forgotten. Alas, wise man and fool die the same death!' So I came to hate life, since everything that was done here under the sun was a trouble to me; for all is emptiness and chasing the wind." (Ecclesiastics 2:16-18)***

***"Only he who believes in God wins the victory over despair. Only the infinite mercy of the Eternal Love, incarnate, suffering, dying, rising, from the dead, is big enough for the tragedy of human existence." (Whale; pg. 178) The Christian with strong faith in God knows that death does not end it all, but that the perishability of death will someday be swallowed up in the imperishability of eternal life. With the Apostle Paul, the true Christian declares: "This perishable being must be clothed with the imperishable, and what is mortal must be clothed with immortality. And when our mortality has been clothed with immortality, then the saying of Scripture will come true: 'Death is swallowed up; victory is won!" ' O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?' The sting of death is sin; and sin gains its power from the law; but, God be praised, he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (I Corinthians 15:53-57)***

***Death will inevitably cause you to say one of two things, either "All is emptiness and chasing after wind", or "God be praised, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Death compels men to choose between faith and despair.***

***Death lets life speak its final word. "As a tree falls, so shall it lie." "As a man dies, so will he forever be." "We acquire here (on earth) spiritual wrinkles that eternity itself can never iron out." (Marston) The righteous who die in righteousness shall shine forever in his righteousness. The wicked who dies in his wickedness shall forever be doomed to wickedness. Death forever fixes one's eternal state irrevocably.***

*The Bible makes it very clear that "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." If you sow a faithless, unbelieving life, you will reap the barrenness and lostness of an endless eternity. If you are facing death with terror and condemnation, let me point you to away out. That way out is Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11) "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts 16:31)*

*I believe that Jim Christian did believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Shortly after his death, his youngest son called me and described the sense of peace, which he personally felt following his dad's passing. He said something like this: "I really believe dad made peace with God and had faith in Christ." He said this with a sense of great joy.*

*The end of a man's life is more important to look at than the beginning or the middle. The beginning and middle of Jim Christian's life was not known for religiosity or devotion to God and the Church. But the last of his life spoke differently. The last three years of his life saw a distinct change in the general direction of his life. He began to attend Church regularly. His attitude towards God was marked by simple belief, and respect towards the holy things of life found a new place in his heart. He became very tender, as evidenced by his tears when one would talk to him about God and eternity.*

*Allow me to share with you the event of one of the most important nights of Jim Christian's life. That night was only a few months ago – Tuesday night, February 26, 1974.*

*I went to my uncle's bedside and visited for about a half hour. The conversation was warm and friendly. Amidst his great pain, he managed to smile at one of his own jokes. I knew I should leave him to rest, but at the same time, I felt compelled to talk to my uncle about God and eternity. I asked him if he had ever personally accepted Christ into his life. He replied that he had not, but that he probably should. I then asked if I might share the steps to finding peace with God. He said: "Go ahead, Ronny".*

*I did. And in a matter of a few minutes, we found ourselves together praying 'The Sinner's Prayer.'*

*This is the exact prayer that he prayed that night: "I now acknowledge Jesus Christ as my risen Lord---I Confess all my sins to Him---The ones I remember and the ones I do not remember---With God's help I now turn from my sins---Thank you for forgiving me as you promised ---I now invite Jesus Christ into my life---I need Him more than anyone else in the world---Thank you for coming into my life as you promised---Thank you for making me your child---Thank you for keeping your Word.---In Jesus' Name. Amen."*

***(Prayer from "The Salvation By Appointment" Flip Chart; written by George Delamarter)***

***Do you have peace with God today? If not, you may come to Christ today. Follow these simple steps:***

***Acknowledge that you are a sinner; Realize that sin has the death penalty; Realize that you cannot save yourself, and admit that even your own good works, by themselves, will not atone for your sins; Accept Christ into your life by confessing your sins to Him and by believing in Him with your total being.***

***Death releases one into the eternal presence of God. Birth, Childhood, Adolescence, Adulthood, and Old Age – these are the passing stages of life. One may be abruptly introduced to the next stage, but more often, one enters the next stage gradually and slowly. The tenderness of spring gradually changes into the fragrance of summer, followed by the ruggedness of fall and the aging of winter. So each of life's stages is followed by a more mature and experienced stage. Death signals finality for this earthly realm of existence, but out of the darkness of death comes the dawn of eternity. Death seals the end for one realm of existence, only to introduce an infinitely more glorious realm of existence.***

***Death is simply a bridge that spans the gulf between time and eternity. One who is a true believer in Christ goes over that bridge into the nearer presence of Christ. For all eternity, the believer will praise and glorify Christ. Heaven is a place of indescribable joy, as all the hosts of heaven join in corporate praise to God. The apostle John had a vision of heaven: "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."***

***Jim Christian has trod the road of death and has landed in that beautiful land where the sun always shines, where the flowers perpetually bloom, where the angels beautifully sing, and where the glory of Christ dwells. No longer is Jim Christian bowed down with the cares of life. His tears are dried and his countenance is radiant. He has the glow of eternity on his face. He shall eternally rejoice in the presence of His Saviour.***

***What about the dead who die in Christ?***

*"No, not cold beneath the grasses,*
*All forgotten in the tomb;*
*Rather, in my Father's mansion,*
*Living, in another room.*

*"Living, like the one who loves me,*
*Like yon child with cheeks abloom,*
*Out of sight, at desk or schoolbook,*
*Busy in another room.*

*Nearer than the youth whom fortune*
*Beckons where the strange lands loom;*
*Just behind the hanging curtain,*
*Working in another room."*

# REMEMBERING TED CROWN -2002

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***Even though the following is not a full-fledged funeral sermon (but a tribute instead), I counted it a privilege to be asked to share some words of appreciation for a truly great servant of the Lord, and a recognized leader in the Free Methodist Denomination, and specifically a leader in the Rocky Mountain Colorado Conference where he served, first as pastor and then as conference superintendant for 13 years. During those 13 years, Ted served as my "boss", "guide", "encourager", and more. A warm–hearted, jolly, wise, steadfast man of God!***

***Ted's last name - 'Crown' – speaks well of the kind of man that Ted was, namely, a 'man of royalty'! Among the many hundreds of songs which Ted loved to sing, I feel sure that one of those songs was 'I'm a child of a King'!***

## FUNERAL MESSAGE (OR) TRIBUTE

***Ted Crown, who deeply loved the 'King of Kings' was a man of virtue. Of all the godly traits, which he manifested, one of the greatest was the trait of 'faithfulness' or 'fidelity'. One scholar (William Barclay) notes that fidelity "is the virtue of the man who, through all the changes and the chances of life, down even to the gates of death, is loyal to God…There is nothing in this world which can take the place of loyalty. If all the other noble qualities of life were placed in the balance against loyalty, loyalty would outweigh them all."***

***What were some of the ways in which Ted demonstrated 'loyalty' or 'faithfulness'? First, Ted Crown was faithful to his wife and family. Ted and Sue often revealed their 'coupleness' and deep love for each other! Through all the 'ups and downs', the 'joys***

*and sorrows', the 'successes and failures', the 'changes and chances' of life, Ted remained steadfast and unmoved in his growing love for his wife. In his 'fun-loving way', Ted would say, "Sue doesn't have to wait until she gets to heaven to receive her 'crown', for God gave her a 'Crown' while still on earth." One of the countless ways in which Ted demonstrated his 'practical love' for his wife was through his faithful support of Sue as she tenderly cared for her elderly mother, in Ted's and Sue's home, for well over 20 years! Ted and Sue also cherished their children and grandchildren. Even though it was Sue's delight to 'pull out some recent pictures of her grandchildren', I am sure that Ted was every bit as proud of his children and grandchildren as Sue was.*

*Second, Ted Crown was faithful to his church. Seldom has any person served as long as a minister in the Rocky Mountain Conference of the Free Methodist Denomination as Ted Crown! He not only faithfully served local churches as their pastor, but he served as Rocky Mountain Conference Superintendent for a rather extended time. During my own long-term pastorate, Ted was my conference superintendent for 13 years, as I recall. I greatly enjoyed knowing him, not only as my superintendent during that time, but as a faithful and encouraging friend and godly counselor. Ted was not only a 'strong preacher' and an 'effective superintendent', but he was also involved in conference and local Church leadership in a variety of capacities during the years when he was not serving as the conference's 'top leader'. Because Ted was such a 'friendly' and 'outgoing' person, he enjoyed the admiration and fellowship of a host of friends, through the many years of his faithful service to God and to the Church. Included among his friends were hundreds of children and young people, many of whom accepted Christ and were nurtured in the Christian Faith as a result of Ted's and Sue's loving influence. I and many other adults enjoyed working with Ted and Sue at Horn Creek Ranch, near Westcliff, Colorado, during 'summer children's and youth camps'. Because of their youthful attitudes, Ted and Sue continued to work with children and youth, even into their elderly years!*

*Third (and most importantly), Ted Crown was faithful to his God. Throughout Ted's long life, he sought to love the Lord God with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind. Also, by God's grace, he sought to love his neighbors as himself! I believe Ted Crown was a 'Spirit –filled man', as evidenced by the 'fruits of the Spirit', which 'graced his life'. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." I believe Ted's life revealed that he had all of these 'fruits' in abundance but one of the 'hallmarks' of his life was the 'fruit of joy'. He was no stranger to sorrow and suffering and loss and grief, but (in spite of life's losses), Ted 'Allowed the joy of the Lord to be his strength'. He loved to laugh, both 'at himself', and 'with others'! 'Grace-oriented', not 'legalistically-minded'! Youthful and*

***progressive, even in his old age! A courageous leader of men because he was a humble follower of the Lamb of God!***

***As one great devotional writer (John Baillie) reminds us, it is possible through God's grace to use all of life's experiences to advance our spiritual lives. I believe Ted Crown, through the 'testing and trials' of his many years of 'walking with God', learned the true 'art of living'. As Baillie points out, I believe that Ted learned to:***

> ***Use disappointment as material for patience;***
> ***Use success as material for thankfulness;***
> ***Use suspense as material for perseverance;***
> ***Use danger as material for courage;***
> ***Use reproach as material for longsuffering;***
> ***Use praise as material for humility;***
> ***Use pleasures as material for temperance;***
> ***Use pains as material for endurance.***
> ***From 'A Diary of Private Prayer; by John Baillie; pg. 101)***

***Learning the 'art of living' takes much time and prayer and a 'rich endowment of power from on high'! Life on earth for Ted was very wonderful, but life in heaven now for Ted is infinitely more wonderful! "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the mind of man, what God hath prepared for those who love Him!" Jesus said, "Be thou FAITHFUL until death, and I will give thee a CROWN of life!" "Faithful Ted Crown' has now been 'crowned' with the 'Crown of life'! He will be missed, but thank God for his 'victorious home going'! May we, like him, be 'faithful during life's journey'!***

# REMEMBERING
# BEULAH PILCHER - 1971

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***I was both sad and glad as I entered the hospital room of Beulah Pilcher. I was glad to be in the presence of one of the most godly persons I had ever known. As an older member of the Church that I pastored, I had long admired her godly wisdom and her sweet temperament and her wise words and her special skills and her lifetime of service with her minister husband. She had been a widow for several years; and her husband died before I became her pastor. Yes, as I entered that hospital room, I was glad when I thought of the many times that she and I had worshipped together, and when I thought of the joyous fellowship I had enjoyed with her and with the several other widows in the weekly "Cottage Prayer Meeting". When I went to her mobile home, I greatly enjoyed listening to her stories from the past, times when she and her dedicated husband (a minster) saw God work miracles in the lives of persons that they reached out to. Yes, lots of reasons for gladness when entering her hospital room.***

***But, I also had reason for sadness! I had ambivalent feelings, before entering that hospital room! I had a certain "dread" come over me. I knew that (again) when I entered that room, and stood beside her bed, that I would be looking into the face of a woman who would (in spite of the drugs she had been given) be in the agony of pain! Slowly dying of that very dreadful disease - cancer! I don't actually remember now (since it has been several years since her agonizing death), but I think it took several weeks (if not months) before her agony (suffering) finally ceased! Death was such a "welcome friend" for her! During her bout with cancer, she had been ready to die for many months, for she knew her Lord so well! Why then did it take so long for her to die? Why did she have to suffer so greatly, and for so long? If God was not the "source" (Cause) of this suffering, then was God trying to teach this godly child of His some important lesson? How was this terrible suffering, being endured by a beautiful human being, consistent with God's love?***

***Some well-meaning Christians – Christians who believe they are honoring the "Sovereignty" of their living God – find themselves saying some very hurtful (and erroneous) things to broken-hearted parents of infants or young people who have died. Things like "Well, God wanted another 'angel' in heaven, so that is why God chose to take your baby." How horrible and how heretical! I held a double funeral service for a young couple whose car was hit head-on by a drunk driver, and this young father and mother left behind several children to grieve the tragic loss of their loving Christian parents. Was it God's "perfect will' for this couple to die on that sunny, Saturday afternoon, as they were enjoying a relaxing ride in the country, and who suddenly were killed as an oncoming vehicle (driven by a drunk driver) hit them head-on at the top of a hill on that country road? And what about the several children, who died from one cause or another – from cancer or some other 'defect' – whose parents, as their pastor, tried hard to comfort them in their bereavement? Would it have helped those sorrowing parents for me to have told them that they should not grieve too much, for the death of their children was a manifestation of God's mysterious, sovereign, and 'perfect will"? Was it God's "perfect will" (if not "pleasure") to take the life of my beloved, godly fifteen year old niece – who died in 1981 from a seizure as she was happily riding on a roller coaster in an Amusement Park?***

***Notes William Sangster, "People talk at times of sickness and disease as being 'the will of God', but it does not prevent them waiting on the doctor for a cure. It is only 'the will of God' in the sense that God created the world order in which sin and disease were possible. But man has misused his freedom. So sin has come into the world, and sickness and disease with it. But God is not more opposed to sin than he is opposed to sickness. His will for men and women is perfect health of body and of soul. 'Why then', people ask, 'doesn't he banish sickness with one stoke of his almighty power?' If this question troubles you, ask yourself another one. 'Why doesn't he banish sin in the same way?' The answer is, 'because our freedom is involved.' The moment God forced us to goodness; we should be robots and not men. At some level, our freedom is involved in sickness as well – not in precisely the same way, not in a fashion easily recognizable, but in the fact that we sometimes break God's laws of health through folly or ignorance and the penalties follow (even where we are in no way to blame, as with little children and many adults too). God is fighting disease as he is fighting sin. All who really heal are his colleagues. Medical research students receive his aid – whether they are aware of it or not. He does not write the answers on the heavens for us, because he treats us as persons and works with us in fellowship. But he is against disease."***

***It is with these above comments on the phenomenon and mystery of human suffering, that have helped me in my long time and persistent struggle with the question as to***

***why people in general suffer and why very godly people (like Beulah Pilcher) in specific suffer so greatly! There are many, many mysteries in life that will never be fully solved by us frail "creatures of clay". To understand all the mysteries of life (which God has not chosen to reveal) is about like an ant trying to understand the mysteries of Einstein's brain! God's ways are higher than our ways, as high as the heavens are above the earth, and so are His thoughts compared to our thoughts! The one "mystery" that God has revealed is the fact that what Jesus (the Incarnate One) was here on earth – Perfect Love – God the Creator has always been! Jesus revealed the very heart of God – the heart of compassion and mercy! And Jesus' death and resurrection made it possible for the Creator God to "release" his mercy and His forgiveness upon a wicked human race. All who receive that mercy and forgiveness are transformed totally. The old life passes away; behold all things become new!***

***The greatest "mystery" which became the greatest "revelation" is that God loves every human; that God offers forgiveness and eternal life to every human being, without any exception!***

***So, even though the mystery of human suffering remains (i.e., mysterious and unexplained death of millions of persons through natural disasters, and through unjust persecution and through premature deaths of infants and through tragic accidents, and though diseases of all kinds), we can learn to see the world (with all its injustices and inequities) "through the lens of God's eternal love", demonstrated conclusively on Mt. Calvary and through the Empty Tomb! Even so, we must never give "easy" or "simplistic" or "dogmatic" answers to the problem of "human suffering", especially to those whose hearts are broken because of the premature and tragic death of their loved ones. We must softly tell the brokenhearted ones that God loves them.***

***Why do some Christians, when they are going through the dying process, go through much more intense and extensive pain than do other Christians who die painlessly and quickly? No one but God knows the answers to that question! One sure thing: every Christian, as he is dying and regardless of how much or how little pain he is enduring during the process, is assured of God's presence and His enabling power! "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me." (Psalms 23) It is my understanding that the last words that John Wesley said, before he died, were: "The best of all, God is with us!" As many martyrs for Christ were dying, throughout the last twenty centuries of Christian history, it is known that words of triumph were on their lips – even while they were greatly suffering! If God gives His people (followers) "Living Grace" (i.e., power to live the Christian life), so God will also***

*give Christians "Dying Grace", (i.e., the strength to go through the powers of dying victoriously).*

*One woman whom I had known for many years lie dying. Her loved ones (who may not have been "professing Christians") who were standing around their mother's "death bed", asked me if I would repeat the 23rd Psalm for them and for their mother. That Psalm – the most popular of the 150 Psalms – has given unspeakable comfort to countless persons, as they were dying! God assures believers that he will be with them, as they are dying! Unspeakable comfort, for otherwise fearful persons as they face the "Great Unknown"! God will take our hand and He will lead us safely to our eternal home!*

*The "mystery" of why some Christians suffer and why some other Christians apparently suffer much less (at least as it is observed from a human "vantage point") – this mystery probably will never be "solved" on this side of eternity. For instance, Hebrews 11 (the great 'faith chapter') records the fact that many believers, because of their faith in God, escaped the "edge of the sword" in persecution, while other believers, who possessed equally great faith in God, died by the "edge of the sword" during bitter persecution! Both are equally blessed by God, but some Christians at that time (and actually during our modern times) experienced great physical suffering for Christ, while other Christians escaped great physical suffering! Why did God deliver some from suffering, while he allowed other Christians to suffer greatly – in life and during death? Does God have favorites? No, but no person knows "the mind of God".*

*Why have some persons (Christians and non-Christians) had a rather "easy or comfortable exit" from this life, and other Christians (like Beulah Pilcher), and many other Christians have had a painful time, during the long dying process? Only God can answer that difficult question! I personally believe that God is the "Great Compensator" in eternity! He will reward each person in eternity, according to the quality of his/her life (good works of faith) that he/she lived on earth. There will be differing "degrees of rewards", given by God to persons in heaven! Just to live in heaven will be indescribably wonderful, but there will be (as I understood it) a great deal of difference in the kind and the degree of rewards that God will give to heavenly citizens. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), Jesus says that those who are "greatly persecuted for righteousness' sake", will have a "great reward" in heaven! The greater that believers suffer (in faith) here on earth, the greater will be their reward in heaven, whether it is the suffering of economic deprivation, or the suffering of grief and loss of loved ones, or the suffering from an incurable disease, or the suffering of a premature death, or the suffering of an extended death process, or the suffering from manifold*

***disasters, or the suffering of martyrdom, or the suffering of being aborted, or some other "unjust or unexplained" suffering. God will be, in eternity, a "debtor to no man". "The books will be balanced!" Total justice will be vindicated! God will see that all things "come out rightly"! What God wants us to understand, we will understand in heaven! Our "question marks" will be straightened out to be "exclamation marks"! We see through a glass darkly now; in eternity, we will see clearly! God is a God of love and all that was done unjustly on earth will be corrected – made right! Those who suffered most on earth will receive their great compensation by the God of Heaven! And that includes Beulah Pilcher!***

***A few words regarding the burial of Beulah Pilcher. I remember that long ride with Beulah's daughter (and others) in a comfortable car, from Fort Collins (where the funeral was held) to a rather distant cemetery in Wyoming. During the time in the car, (following the hearse), on that long ride, Beulah's daughter (who loved to talk) shared so much with me about past events in the fruitful life of her godly mother, and, of course, many of those stories included events in the life of both Beulah and her minister husband. Those times (events) were filled with both inexpressible joy and heartbreaking sorrow. It was a privilege to serve the Lord as pastor (of small churches), but these were times of not only great joys, but also of great sorrow.***

***This daughter was so deeply dedicated to her mother, for so many years! They were so 'close' to each other in so many ways! This daughter was going to miss her mother greatly, but she was grateful that her mother was finally out of her terrible pain, caused by her terrible cancer!***

***When we arrived at the cemetery, I noticed how well kept it was, and I noticed that there were slight hills as well as flat parts in this ancient burial place. At the brief graveside service, as usual I spoke the "simple words" of Scripture and some exhortation, and then I prayed the 'closing prayer', and, of course, I tried to say a few words of comfort to the few loved ones who were surrounding the casket which would soon be lowered into the ground (done, of course, after all had departed from the cemetery). One very large tree, located very close to Beulah's burial plot, caught my eye. In fact, the sight of this tree stirred my heart and my soul! It was a tall (old) Evergreen Tree! "Of all the trees that God created" (I thought to myself) "this tree symbolizes eternal life!" It is "ever-green", never losing its leaves! Beulah's body would rest right beside the great evergreen tree! How significant!***

***Beulah Pilcher's soul (spirit) is everlasting! She will live with God forever! She will never lose her true identity – her true self! She is with her Lord forever! No more***

***sickness! No more pain! No more death! Perfect life! Perfect health! Everlasting joy! Everlasting fruitfulness!***

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

***First, I would like to say that Mrs. Beulah Pilcher was a good woman. She was a woman with an indestructible and intrinsic loveliness, with the fragrance of love constantly emanating from her life. She knew how to sympathize – that is, feel for others – and oftentimes that sympathy reached the point of empathy – feeling with others. She was able to reconcile differing points of view and she spoke a word of wisdom at the most appropriate times. She was a noble, strong person, so well thought of by so many.***

***Mrs. Pilcher was a strong woman – strong in many ways. She was strong in her devotion to her family. How highly she spoke of her husband and children. She was also strong in her devotion to her friends. She was a woman given to the joyous task of encouraging others. I can speak personally at this point. Many, many were the times that I have enjoyed visiting, studying, praying, eating and laughing with her. She always had a way of leaving you a better person for having been with her. She was strong in her devotion to her Church. A faithful member of her Church for many years (50 years at lest), she taught children as well as adults, encouraged the youth as well as the elderly. She was a skilled storyteller, and a real Bible Student, having taught Sunday school classes for many years. As a pastor's wife for several years, she always retained a high and noble vision of perfection, combined with a practical and human understanding of others, and thus so warm and approachable. She found herself in the role of a counselor many times. The sheer goodness and kindness of this dear woman will be greatly missed by those who knew her.***

***The Second thing I would like to say about Mrs. Pilcher, is this: Mrs. Beulah Pilcher was a woman full of the Holy Ghost. She was a Spirit-controlled woman, and sought always to act and to react under the leadership of God's Spirit. The Holy Spirit was not a doctrine only to Mrs. Pilcher; rather the Holy Spirit was a living, divine presence resident in her heart and life. Her abounding energy, her unusual insight and wisdom, her all-encompassing love were all due to her daily appropriation of God's grace and power through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in her life.***

***This fact was especially made evident during the last few months of her life, during which time she suffered so much with an incurable disease. It seemed that with increasing suffering, there was increasing sweetness in her life. It is said that a crushed rose is sweeter than a rose that is intact. The sweet fragrance of her Christ-like***

*living permeated the lives of others, during the last days of her physical confinement. This unusual endurance, forbearance, and self-control can only be attributed to the fact that Mrs. Pilcher was a love-mastered, Spirit-controlled woman of God.*

*Because Mrs. Pilcher was a woman full of the Holy Ghost, she was a woman concerned in others. This concern was shown in so many ways – fervent prayer during the multitude of prayer sessions which she led, a warm handshake, a pleasant smile, an encouraging word spoken to the downhearted, a shared portion of Scripture with a struggling soul at a Church altar, a well-prepared meal in her home for young and old friends alike.*

*Because Mrs. Pilcher was a Spirit-filled woman, her testimonies were most practical and also gloriously victorious. She not only thought it possible to live an abundant life, but indeed, she lived such a life. One of the keys to her successful life was that she was a woman "filled with the Holy Ghost".*

*The Third thing I would like to say about Mrs. Beulah Pilcher was that she was a woman of faith. That is, Mrs. Pilcher was a woman who simply trusted God. She trusted in, relied upon, and adhered to God's Word. Faith is born out of a trustworthy character. The one who can best express faith is the one who best keeps faith – that is the one who is faithful to God, to the Bible, to the Church, and to people.*

*Some may ask why Mrs. Pilcher was such a woman of faith. It was simply because Mrs. Pilcher beautifully blended prayer and Scripture reading in her life. She spent much time talking to God through prayer and she allowed God much time to speak to her through the Bible.*

*How is faith in God developed? It is through communication with God. Beulah Pilcher would agree with D.L. Moody when he said, "I prayed for faith, and thought that someday faith would come down and strike me like lightning. But faith did not seem to come. One day I read in the tenth MEMORY of Romans 'Now faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' I had closed my Bible and prayed for faith. I now opened my Bible and began to study, and faith has been growing ever since."*

*Beulah Pilcher was such a great woman of faith because she worked at cultivating faith, throughout her lifetime. The discipline of cultivation is essential for a strong faith. Initial saving faith in Christ is not enough; it is only the foundation for all the other virtues of life.*

***To obtain the character of Christ-like character, you need more than a saving faith. The Scriptures says, "You must also work hard to be good, and even that is not enough. For then you must learn to know God better and discover what he wants you to do. Next, learn to put aside your own desires so that you will become patient and godly, gladly letting God have his way with you. This will make possible the next step, which is for you to enjoy other people and to like them, and finally you will grow to love them deeply. The more you go on in this way, the more you will grow strong spiritually and become fruitful and useful to our Lord Jesus Christ. But anyone who fails to go after these additions to faith is blind indeed." (II Peter 1:5-9, Living Bible)***

***But we know that Beulah Pilcher was not blind spiritually, for although she was converted in youth, she worked hard for many years at character building, and sought earnestly to please God. Indeed, she was very fruitful and useful to our Lord Jesus Christ.***

***Faith means trusting God when circumstances are threatening and when problems defy understanding. Beulah Pilcher believed that God is a God of love – that is, He wants what is best for a person. Mrs. Pilcher believed God is a God of wisdom – that is, He knows what is best for a person. Mrs. Pilcher believed God is a God of power – that is He has the power to give what is best for a person. This invincible faith in an Almighty God of love, wisdom, and power held Mrs. Beulah Pilcher steady through all the changes and chances of life. This does not mean that Mrs. Pilcher was never troubled by circumstances, but it does mean that Beulah Pilcher trusted God and committed problems to God. She believed that "all things work into a pattern for good to those who love God." Beulah Pilcher believed that 'Behind a frowning providence God hides a smiling face." During periods of trial or temptation, Beulah Pilcher learned to look for the deeper, hidden meanings and lessons which God wanted to teach her. She trusted God when she could not understand, and, of course, that is not easy, but that is part of the reason for her greatness. She believed that by and by she would understand all.***

***Beulah Pilcher now rests from all her earthly labors and reposes in the bosom of her precious Jesus.***

***"No, not cold beneath the grasses,***
***All forgotten in the tomb;***
***Rather, in my Father's mansion,***
***Living in another room."***

*"Living, like the one who loves me,*
*Like yon child with cheeks abloom,*
*Out of sight, at desk or schoolbook,*
*Busy in another room."*

*"Nearer than the youth whom fortune*
*Beckons where the strange lands loom;*
*Just behind the hanging curtain,*
*Working in another room."*

# REMEMBERING
# EVERETT LANCASTER -2006

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***Everett Lancaster, a proud native of Nebraska, but a long time resident of Colorado, was married to my older sister (Bobbie) for well over a half century. He and my sister (11 years younger than Everitt) were quite different in temperament, but they were unusually compatible in their lifetime relationship. They both worked for decades in their respective professions, but career advancement was not their goal in life. They lived for God, and they secondarily lived for their four children – all of whom married in their early or middle 30's. Today those four children all are happily married, and all of them (and their families) are serving God in various ways! Yes, I have seldom seen a couple that was happier than Bobbie and Everitt! They loved to travel, to sight see, to do yard work, to host friends in their modest and beautiful house, to go out to eat with their many friends, to attend Church services regularly, to enjoy large family reunions with out-of-state siblings, and more! Without being "braggarts" (for Everitt was a humble and modest and other-oriented person), they showed "gratitude" for their 9 grandchidren (which, for many years, they did not have). Everitt, when Bobbie first met him (when he was probably about 30 years old) was probably not yet a believer. Bobbie was the partner in the marriage who was the more "verbal" one regarding her personal faith in Christ. Everitt was respectful of Bobbie's personal faith, but Everitt was not raised in an evangelical home. The idea of a personal relationship with God was rather "foreign" to Everitt. But, because Bobbie deeply loved Everitt (and would not "nag" him about religion or the Church), eventually the personal faith in Christ "took hold", and Everitt's life manifested a genuine faith in Christ. He, along with Bobbie, seldom missed their Church Services, and Everitt was supportive of the various 3 pastors at the same Church Bobie and Everitt attended over 50 years!***

***Everitt seldom verbalized his faith, for he (opposite to Bobbie) was a natural introvert. He, of course, was not a "silent person", for he liked to visit, but he mostly listened to***

*others and he showed interest in the affairs of other people. (The world needs more "good listeners" like Everitt). Everitt, till the day he died, was a "good husband", "loving father", "caring grandfather". And, till the day he died, he depended heavily upon his dear wife who, for years, had been a very devout and joyful Christian, and one who "took the lead" regarding spiritual matters. Everitt was not intimidated by his wife (for Bobbie was always careful to show Everitt great respect and love), but, nevertheless, Everitt felt more comfortable with his extroverted (kind) wife being the "verbalizer for the faith" (which he possessed, but which he found it difficult to personally express verbally). Everitt (my brother-in-law) was a "prince of a man", a man so many people loved to be with! A man who gradually grew in his faith through the years! The "Quieter Type" with lots of depth spiritually!*

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

*Someone once said, "A sermon is simply reminding people of what they already know." I think that this is also true of most eulogies – simply reminding people of what they already know about a person. Anything I would share today, I feel sure you already know, but I think it is good for all of us to be reminded of some of the great qualities of Everett Lancaster. Of course, the few words spoken today do not begin to do justice in describing the great person that Everett was.*

*But let us together think of three things about Everett that made him such a special man. He was my sister's husband (my beloved brother-in-law).*

*First, we all know that Everett loved his Lord and he served his Lord – even though he seldom verbalized his love for his God. His life demonstrated that love. He manifested godly qualities in his daily life – such as joy, peace, kindness, gentleness, generosity, courtesy, humility. The fruits of the Spirit were manifest is his life. For more that fifty years, he and Bobby attended the same local Church, through all the ups and downs of theirs lives. They together were faithful to their several pastors and fellow parishioners. He and Bobbie sent their children to Christian School, held at their local Church. He and Bobbie lived consistent Christian lives with so much love that it is no wonder that their 4 children are all committed followers of Christ (with Christian homes).*

*Second, we all know that he loved his family. Deeply in love with his wife whom he admired and with whom he had close fellowship and sharing of both joys and sorrows. They did so much together. Both worked hard and long to raise their family . Both*

*laughted a lot with their children. They cared greatly for one another, and also for their four children and their children's families. They socialized often with their immediate family – going so many places together through the years. Their work was secondary to them; their family was primary, only after God. They were so grateful for their 9 grandchildren. Bobbie and Everett greatly enjoyed life in all its dimensions. All the family admired Everett. He was always available to his children, but he never wanted to intrude. He respected their privacy. As someone said, he wanted never to be 'out of the way' when his children needed him, but he never wanted to be 'in their way' as they lived out their own private and family lives.*

*Everitt highly valued and loved his siblings, as evidenced by the fact that for many years Everett and Bobbie enjoyed a 'family reunion' in the various cities where his siblings lived. He had several brothers and a sister, and about every 2 or 3 years all the siblings, and if possible their families, would get together for a 'grand old time' of fun and fellowship, laughter and pleasure, enjoying various scenic sights and local amusements. Lots of food, of course, and losts of visiting. I have always been impressed that Everett would let nothing get in the way of those family reunions. He was excellent to keep 'connected' with his extended family. He and Bobbie greatly enjoyed the countless times of being with their four children and their families, but he did not neglect his brothers and sister. What precious memories Everett had of those many times – in various locations, including times when his siblings came to celebrate in his beloved Colorado Springs where Everett lived most of his life.*

*Third, and more briefly, we all know that Everett loved his friends. Everett and Bobbie were popular among their friends. Everett had so many friends who loved and admired him. They loved to be in his company. Everett loved to visit, and I have never known anyone who was a better listener than Everett Lancaster. He showed genuine interest in others and he seemed to enjoy allowing others to talk while he attentively listened. He knew how to ask interesting questions which acted as a 'catalyst' to provoke more and more conversation from the person with whom Everett was engaged.*

*He was a kind and courteous and dignified person, without being sophisticated. He was personable and authentic and gracious and courteous and thoughtful. A real 'prince of a man'. In my opinion, a very godly man. One who seldom would talk about himself. One who allowed others to talk while he sat back and enjoyed listening. In my opinion, he was a very rare and wonderful person, with qualities that make him attractive and winsome and outstanding. Everett and Bobbie socialized together, and it was rare to see either of them alone in social settings. They had unusual 'couple*

*power'. When I thought of Everett I would automatically think of Bobbie, and when I would think of Bobbie I would think of Everett. Together their influence was powerful in any social setting. Bobbie and Everett were such joyous and good-hearted and warm-spirited persons. Everyone loved to be around them. They cherished their long-time friends, but they made room for new friends. They were such ideal friends – loyal, gracious, loving, excellent listeners, joyous participation, positive attitudes, hospitable.*

*I have been in their home countless times through the years, and every time they treated me as if I were a 'king'. So unselfish and loving and courteous and hospitable. I always felt so loved in the presence of Bobbie and Everett Lancaster, and I know that is true of hundreds of others whom they befriended during the last 58 years of their marriage. May the influence and memory of Everett Lancaster live on for decades to come.*

*Is there any hope for life after death? Without Jesus' resurrection there would be no hope for the future, after physical death. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live." (John 11:25) Belief in the resurrection of Jesus gives the foundation of hope in the subsequent resurrecdtion of the body of true beliefers.*

*To help you anticipate your future resurrection life, think of life's stages. "The unborn child is up under his mother's heart, well taken care of, well fed, and happy. He likes it there. Suppose then, that someone could come to the baby and tell him, 'You are going to be born. You're not going to stay her.' And he would learn that by being born, he would leave this warm secure place. That would not be being born to him, but that he would be dying for him. Dying is the end. And the baby would say, 'I don't want to be born. I don't want to die. I like it here. I'm warm. I feel love all around me. I'm happy and content. Just leave me alone. I don't want to leave this nice place.'*

*"But there comes a day when he is born. Or, looking at it from his angle, when he dies out of that place, and is born into our world.*

*"What happens to him"? He feels soft, tender, loving hands gently holding him. He looks up into a wondrous face, that is full of love, and it is shining down at him. Then as he grows, he has the glorious experiences of childhood, and young manhood, and the future is before him. He feels strong and it is good to be alive. He marries and raises children. He becomes middle aged. He is creative and happy, and life is good. The world is good. And the years begin to add up. His hair becomes white, and his form a bit feeble. He knows he has to die, to leave all this and go into another place. But he protests: 'I don't want to die. I like it here. I love to feel the warmth of the sun on my*

***face, the softness of the rain, the sting of snow. I love to see great mountains, shouldering out the sky. I love to watch the ocean washing upon soft shores of sand. I love to be with my family, and my friends. Life is good; I don't want to leave here.'***

***"But one day he does die, to this world."***

***"Do you mean to tell me that all of a sudden God changes? Isn't it reasonable to believe that the first thing he will feel is the touch of great loving hands? That he will look up into a fact that is infinitely loving? He will look around him, and his breath will be taken away by the beauties that he sees. All tears will be wiped from his eyes. And he will say, 'Why was I so afraid of this thing called death, when as I now see, it is life!'***

***"And the Christian will live forever!" (quoted by Robert Andrews on the 'Light and Life Hour'; April 22, 1973)***

***"God, if on earth I see your smiling face in the beautiful sunset, and feel your love in the cool breeze of the early morning, what will your presence be like in heaven!"***

***AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21, NIV)***

# REMEMBERING
# BESSIE EICHEN -1982

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***Bessie Eichen, a lover of God, a lover of her dear husband and family, a lover of her fellow believers in the local Church where I pastored, and a lover of God's great creation! She believed in prayer – both private and public prayer – and she faithfully worshipped her Lord in the fellowship of God's Church (first as a Quaker and later as a long-time Free Methodist). She and her husband, neither afraid of hard work, offered their manual skills to help with the building of the small Free Methodist Church facility, just three blocks from where they had purchased their new house, (unfortunately, her husband died only a few years after the new Church building was constructed, but Bessie enjoyed the Church facility for several years following her husband's death). Bessie kept a well-ordered, neat, creatively decorated house, and she enjoyed her flowerbeds in her yard.***

***During the time she was a widow, I enjoyed some very meaningful visits with her, and we laughed together and we prayed together. She loved life, but she looked forward to Heaven, where she would be with her beloved husband and loved ones again. About 14 years after her husband died, that longing was fulfilled. They were reunited forever!***

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

***Birth, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age – these are the passing stages of life. One may be abruptly introduced to the next stage, but more often, one enters the next stage gradually and slowly. The tenderness of spring gradually changes into the fragrance of summer, followed by the ruggedness of fall and the aging of winter. So each of life's stages is followed by a more mature and experienced stage. Death signals***

*finality for this earthly realm of existence, but out of the darkness of death comes the dawn of eternity. Death seals the end for one realm of existence, only to introduce an infinitely more glorious realm of existence.*

*Death may be filled with mystery and clouded with uncertainty, but for the Christian the sting of death is removed. Because Christ trod the terrifying road of death, his followers may now trod the road of death without fear and without terror. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod, and thy staff they comfort me." (Psalms 23)*

*Bessie Eichen was a wonderful person. She is now with her Lord. Death has ushered her into the arms of her Saviour and into the presence of all the saints in heaven.*

*Think with me for a few minutes of some of the greet qualities of Bessie Eichen.*

*Bessie Eichen was a wonderful wife and mother. She lived for over half a century with her fine husband Fred, until Fred died on June 19, 1968. She and Fred are now reunited in heaven. Bessie told me a few weeks ago that the longer she lived without Fred's earthly companionship, the more she missed him. She said she looked forward to meeting her husband in heaven. While she loved life fully, she at times was homesick for heaven. Bessie and Fred were wonderful companions, working hard together during times of both hardship and prosperity. They loved each other dearly. Over fourteen years ago, I preached Fred's funeral message, and today I am privileged to honor the memory of Fred's dear wife – Bessie Eichen.*

*Bessie was not only a wonderful wife for many years, but she was a loving mother and grandmother. She delighted in her precious children and grandchildren, as evidenced, among other things, by the displays of beautiful pictures of her family in her living room. With great delight and pride, she enjoyed showing me the fifth generation pictures. Just the last of October she had her picture taken with one of her great, great grandchildren.*

*Bessie was a great friend to many, many people. It was easy to cherish Bessie Eichen's friendship, for she had an unpretentious, down-to-earth way of making you feel good when you were in her presence. Her hearty laughter will be missed by so many of us. She had the wonderful ability to see the funny side of life, and could be the life of a party, but she was never insincere, frivolous, or insensitive to other's feelings. She loved her friends and communicated frequently and warmly with them, but being the independent person she was, she was never possessive of others. She was strong-willed and had a mind of her own, but she was nevertheless flexible, adaptable, tender, and*

*open to reason. She was a loyal friend, considerate of others, loving in communication, cheerful in conversation, and good-humored in her outlook of life. Until the day she died, she was youthful in her attitudes, and forward looking in her plans. She was mentally alert and physically strong. Her heart, after serving her for nearly 90 years, simply wore out. Her friends loved her because she was personable, interesting, unique, sincere, conversational, and good-humored. She always seemed to have a twinkly in her eye, a chuckle in her voice, and a joy in her soul. She was a happy person who learned to live one day at a time, trusting her Heavenly Father for every day's provision.*

*Bessie Eichen was a lover of God. She was genuinely converted to Christ many years ago, and had for several decades lived a devout Christian life. Hers, however, was not a somber Christian life; instead, she was a joyful Christian. She was glad to talk about eternity and heaven, but she was never preoccupied with the hereafter. She was prepared to die, and therefore she was prepared to live fully in this present life. She was a woman who lived for 'two worlds', the world of time, and the world of eternity. She was acquainted with hardships, trials, and sorrows, but, through it all, she retained a strong faith in her Lord. I often prayed with her, and I would always leave her home, after visiting with her, a better person. Her prayers helped lift one's spiritual burdens. She often read her Bible and she enjoyed reading Christian books and collecting devotional tracts and poems. She was a hard worker in her local Church, especially during her younger life. When she and her husband were past seventy, they were both still working hard to help build what was at that time the newly constructed Free Methodist Church. Faithfully, Bessie Eichen paid her tithe to her Church. She was a cheerful giver. Her depth of spirituality was revealed in the fervent prayers she prayed. She expressed a deep spiritual concern for the things of God. I myself enjoyed meeting with her and other older folks in a cottage prayer meeting each week for a period of several years. She loved to sing the hymns of the Church, and the earnestness with which she prayed, greatly stirred my heart.*

*Perhaps Bessie Eichen's greatest desire of her life was that everyone of her family members be genuinely converted to Christ and be living the Christian life every day. She often spoke of her Christian life every day. She often spoke of her desire that in heaven the 'circle would not be broken'. She wanted to meet all of her loved ones in heaven someday.*

*She believed in the plan of salvation, that every person must confess his sins to Christ and receive Christ into his heart by faith as personal Saviour and Lord.*

***If Bessie Eichen could come back today and stand before you, I believe she would try to describe the indescribable beauty of heaven, the joys of meeting her Saviour, the pleasures in being reunited with loved ones and friends, the importance of receiving Christ as Saviour while there is still opportunity.***

***May I ask you today: Have you personally repented of your sins and surrendered your life to Christ as Saviour and Lord? Are you daily trying to follow Christ? If not, then for Jesus' sake most of all, but also for Bessie's sake and for your sake, may I urge you to turn your life completely over to Jesus Christ today!***

***One day a couple of years ago (on Dec. 18, 1980) when I was visiting Bessie, she handed me a printed poem entitled "Safely Home' and asked that I read it at her funeral.***

***The words of this poem are words, which wonderfully express Bessie Eichen's personal faith in her Saviour. It is her testimony and her words of comfort to you, her friends, and loved ones.***

## *Safely Home*
### *by Unknown*

***I am home in Heaven, dear ones;***
***Oh, so happy and so bright!***
***There is perfect joy and beauty***
***In this everlasting light.***

***All the pain and grief is over,***
***Every restless tossing passed;***
***I am now at peace forever,***
***Safely home in Heaven at last.***

***Did you wonder I so calmly***
***Trod the valley of the shade?***
***Oh! But Jesus' arm to lean on,***
***Could I have one doubt or dread?***

***Then you must not grieve so sorely,***
***For I love you dearly still;***
***Try to look beyond earth's shadows,***
***Pray to trust our Father's Will.***

***There is work still waiting for you,***
***So you must not idly stand;***

***Do it now, while life remaineth--***
***You shall rest in Jesus' land.***

***When that work is all completed,***
***He will gently call you Home;***
***Oh, the rapture of that meeting,***
***Oh, the joy to see you come!***

# REMEMBERING

# SARAH HORNER -1967

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***This is the first funeral sermon I preached, five days after I came to Fort Collins, Colorado (July 22, 1967). I was 22 years old, to start my pastorate of the Free Methodist Church (which was to last nearly 27 years, 1967-1994). I was asked to conduct the service for Sarah G. Horner, member of the Free Methodist Church, even though I had never had the privilege of being her pastor.***

***Sarah was born at Canton, Il., Dec. 30, 1878. On November 20, 1900, she married to Perry E. Hornor at LeMars, Iowa. Mr. Hornor died in 1960.***

***Mrs. Hornor had lived in Fort Collins for the past 43 years. She was a member of the Free Methodist Church and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union.***

## FUNERAL MESSAGE (OR) TRIBUTE

***Survivors include three sons, Darrell Hornor of Fort Collins; Claire Hornor of Thousand Oaks, CA, and Donald Horner of Yosemite Park, CA.; a sister, Mrs. Marietta Finnell of Fort Collins, seven grandchildren, and five great grand children.***

***Jesus said, "Because I live, ye shall live also". (John 14:19b) The greatest evidence of the power of Christianity is the resurrection.***

***A Hindu or Buddhist my come to a Christian and claim to be able to show the Christian the tomb where his religious founder is buried. The Hindu or Buddhist may then challenge the Christian to do the same. The Christian need not answer ashamedly that***

*he can't show where Christ is buried, but rather he can answer joyfully that Christ's tomb is empty. In fact, the Christian alone can point to the empty tomb of his founder. Christianity is a religion based on the empty tomb. There is the power of Christianity. Christians serve not a dead hero or honor the memory of a great teacher, but rather serve a loving Savior who is in the world today.*

*The World is full of its skeptics and doubters. There are many who deny that God is real and personal. They say that God is dead. This only makes us realize how much the Devil is alive, and how much the Devil is deluding the hearts and minds of men.*

*The Resurrection is the chief cornerstone of the Christian faith. Christians rejoice because they serve a living Savior. The song that perhaps best expresses the theme of Christianity is the song 'He Lives', by Alfred H. Ackley.*

*I serve a risen Saviour; He's in the world today.*
*I know that He is living, whatever men may say.*
*I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer,*
*And just the time I need Him He's always near.*

*Chorus:*
*He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today!*
*He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.*
*He lives! He lives! Salvation to impart!*
*You ask me how I know He lives. He lives within my heart.*

*Why is the resurrection so important to the Christian faith? The resurrection is important because it is the (1) Foundation of Faith, and (2) Foundation of Hope.*

*Foundation of faith as Paul clearly affirmed the Resurrection as fundamental to one's faith. He wrote to the Corinthians: "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if, the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." (I Corinthians 15:13-18)*

*If Christ did not rise from the dead, then death had the 'final word' and death proved to be stronger than life. To put faith in Christ, would be to put faith in one who was*

***defeated by death and thus one who had no power over death. If Christ did not overcome death, then He has no power to give man victory over death, regardless of how much faith man puts in Christ. Faith in Christ is only meaningful if Christ conquered death. Belief in the Resurrection is the very foundation of the Christian Faith!***

***Foundation of hope through Christ. we not only have real life on this earth, but hope of life hereafter. Paul wrote, "If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied." Why is this? It is because it would mean that all Christians are greatly deceived in even thinking of an afterlife. Further, if there was no hope but in this life, there would be no real justice. Oftentimes in this life, wrong goes unpunished and right goes unrewarded. In this life, it sometimes seems that the balance is tipped in favor of the wrong, but in eternity, each man will receive his just due. There must be a resurrection in order that the believer may receive his reward, which oftentimes in this life he fails to receive.***

***The Resurrection is the basis for hope. Peter wrote: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, keep in heaven for you." (I Peter 1: 3, 4)***

***Because of the Resurrection, we have hope of seeing our loved ones who have died in the Lord. Paul wrote to encourage those who were bereaved of loved ones: "Now we don't want you , my brothers to be in any doubt about those who 'fall asleep' in death, or to grieve over them like men who have no hope. After all, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again from death, then we can believe that God will just as surely bring with Jesus all who are 'asleep' in him. Here we have a definite message from the Lord. It is that those who are still living when he comes will not in any way precede those who have previously fallen asleep. One word of command, one shout from the archangel, one blast from the trumpet of God and the Lord himself will come down from Heaven! Those who have died in Christ will be the first to rise, and then we who are still living on the earth will be swept up with them into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And after that we shall be with him forever; so by all means use this message to encourage one another." (I Thessalonians 4:13-18)***

***Dr. Norman Vincent Peale tells of his feelings after his mother's death. This is what he said: "I remember when my dear mother died in a little town in upstate New York. We took her body back to Ohio for burial. On the journey, we had to change trains at Buffalo. I was walking down the platform and saw on a truck the shadowy outline of a box. I walked over, almost fearing to read what was there. It said, 'Remains of Anna***

***Peale.' That was rather a crude statement, and it might have struck me as repulsive. But the more I thought about it, the more it carried a glorious message to me: what was in that box was merely a physical form that I loved and my brothers loved and my father loved and many people loved. But my mother herself was not there. And when I walked out of the cemetery, having left her body there, these words from the Gospel of Luke rang through my mind: 'Why seek ye the living among the dead?' When our loved ones leave us, we lay away their physical bodies, no longer needed, like coats that are worn out. But at the time of death the person is released into a heavenly body." (Easter – Symbol of Life and Hope)***

***The Bible teaches that the earthly body will decay and return to dust. However, the Bible also teaches that the real person will never die. The spirit of the person never dies. The personality of a person will survive eternally. The personality or the real you, cannot be destroyed. The Bible teaches that the believer in Christ will receive a new body which is not susceptible to pain or death.***

***On one of the opening pages of Scripture, the physical constitution of man is described: "For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return". (Genesis 3:19b)***

***Man's life is described as a flower of the field, which is here today and gone tomorrow. (Psalms 103:15-16) Man's body will decay, but man's spirit will live eternally. To the Christian there is no fear of death. Death is simply the bridge to a greater and more beautiful life. In the last book of the Bible, the following words are recorded: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." (Revelations 14:13)***

# REMEMBERING

# LULA MAE BELL - 1978

## *BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH*

***This lady was a vibrant testimony of the dramatic transforming power of God! Someone said that the greatest testimony of Christianity is its ability to make "a bad man/woman good!" Lula, the first part of her life, could not be characterized as a "good and holy woman", but after her amazing conversion to Christ (in her 40's) she became a joyous, guilt-free, liberated Spirit-filled, love-driven, mission–minded, church-going, generous–hearted, good-humored, most likeable person! She loved to study the bible and to pray! She loved to fellowship with other believers at her church (where I pastored). She shared a direct (but loving) witness to her many relatives (her sons and their families, and her large extended family). She was a delight for me (her pastor) to be around! I prayed often with her and her beloved husband, both of whom I led together to Christ in their home. Rocky (her husband, whose tribute also appears in this book) was a dramatically converted person also, and he and his wife were wonderful "partners in the Faith"!***

***As I recall, Rocky died (in his 50's) just three years before Lula died (at the age of 52). After Rocky died, it was difficult for Lula to be emotionally "happy". She went through great grief when he died, and her grief was compounded when one of her sons committed suicide! But God sustained her during the last "dark" years of her broken-hearted life.***

# FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

***Lula Mae Bell, what a precious woman she was. I first met Lula seven years ago. One of her relatives asked if I would visit in her home, and talk to her and comfort her amidst some problems she was facing. I did. I sensed immediately upon entering her home in June 1971, that there was a real spiritual hunger in her life. After sharing God's simple plan of salvation with Lula, she wonderfully invited Christ into her life. Because Rocky, her husband, was not home that day, I returned the following day and shared Christ with Rocky and he also simply and wonderfully accepted Christ into his life as personal Saviour.***

***A whole new life began for Rocky and Lula Bell. They grew fast in their faith and knowledge of Christ. I had the joy of spending many hours with them, studying the Bible, and answering many questions. Their relationship together with Christ deepened, and the circle of their friendship with fellow Christians in the Church broadened greatly. Their interest in learning was great, as evidenced by diligent study of the Scriptures and extensive reading of devotional and missionary literature. Together, they found opportunity for service and work in the local church, and their testimony was radiant.***

***They talked together about the Lord often and a spirit of love and excitement permeated their home. I spent some wonderful hours in their home, sharing Christ and praying with them. The deepest desire of their lives together was to see all of their loved ones and family turn their lives over to Christ and experience the joy and peace and forgiveness which they experienced in Christ. They prayed night and day for this to happen. They often spoke to relatives about Christ's love and forgiveness, and urged their family to go to Church.***

***For the four years following their conversion to Christ, they spent together in great happiness. And then Rocky contracted cancer and died. Lou's loss of Rocky was almost more than she could bear, combined with Lou's own ill health and emotional and spiritual tumult. The hardest lesson of all is to trust God amidst the dark Gethsemane of life.***

***Lou was deeply depressed, discouraged, and worried and engulfed in life's problems. Emotional sorrow combined with physical distress gave birth to many unanswerable questions.***

***"There are times when a Christian has to learn the hardest lesson of all, the very lesson which Jesus Himself had to learn in Gethsemane; he has to learn how to accept what he cannot understand.***

***"There are times when things happen that he cannot understand, but he can still say, 'God, Thou art love; I build my faith on that.'" (Barclay's Corinthians 222, 223)***

***But even amidst the sorrow, which Lou felt shortly following Rocky's death, Lou shared with me her gladness that she and Rocky had given their lives to Christ four years before Rocky's death. Doubtless, those four years were the happiest years in Lou Bell's life.***

***Sorrow and doubt and extensive grief filled Lou's life at times, and grief intermingled with personal physical distress did not make life easy for Lou Bell during the last three years since Rocky's death. But Jesus understands and he sheds sympathizing tears for us, amidst our human infirmities and spiritual distress. Lou loved Jesus and she was saved by grace – and that is what counts.***

***Does Jesus care when my heart is pained***
***Too deeply for mirth and song?***
***As the burdens press, and the cares distress***
***And the way grows weary and long?***

***Does Jesus care when my way is dark***
***With a nameless dread and fear***
***As the daylight fades into deep night shades***
***Does He care enough to be near?***

***Does Jesus care when I've tried and failed***
***To resist some temptation strong;***
***When for my deep grief I find no relief,***
***Tho' my tears flow all the nightlong?***

***Oh yes, he cares, I know he cares,***
***his heart is touched with my grief:***
***when the days are weary, the long nights dreary,***
***I know my Saviour cares. He cares.***

***The following was written a few months following Rocky's death, and is a vision, which Lu had of Jesus and of her husband.***

***Hello, Honey". I 'm glad to have you home. And there's Jesus – But you've never left me, Jesus. But thank you for bringing my husband home to me, if just for a while.***

***My dear wife, wipe away those tears, and listen – we're going to tell you what dying in Christ is. And oh, the beauty of his home – I'm happy, honey - I'm free to be God's servant. I can breath and I don't even cough.***

***Be still, my son. Let this woman's tears come. It is her grieving time.***

***But Jesus, what about me? I'm so lonely, and lost, you know the fears I have, yes, doubts, the sickness. Oh, so many things. When will I see your heavenly home, and take both of your hands and walk truly free?***

***Be still, my child, and wait upon me, your God. I have some special duties for you and after awhile you'll be home. Rejoice in me. And know my will.***

***My dear husband, know that I will be there as God allows me to. Also, know that I love you, and it hasn't been easy without you. I miss you. And the world seems cold and strange.***

***Honey, don't put yourself in this, the home, or other things. They're not important. Hold no hatred in your heart. But be in prayer to our Almighty God. And you'll know eternal life with me. Do God's will.***

***Son, it's time to go. But my Holy Spirit shall remain here. Goodbye, for a while, honey, and know I love you, sweetheart. As I turned, Jesus put his arms around me, and the sense of holiness sweet everywhere. Praise God.***

***(Written by Lu Bell, I think, sometime in late 1975 or early 1976)***

***Jesus cares for Lou, and the God who began a good work in us at conversion, is the same God who perfects that good work in us in heaven.***

***And Jesus cares for you today, who sorrow:***
***Does Jesus care when I've said 'good-bye'***
***To the dearest on earth to me,***
***And my sad heart aches till it nearly breaks***

***Is it ought to Him? does He see? Jesus sees your grief and heartbreak today. Jesus is touched with the feelings of your infirmities. Jesus is a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief. He is able to heal you and comfort you.***

***Yes, death is a universal fact of life, and it is an inescapable reality which all of us must eventually face. It is important that each of us prepare to meet God. The old must die, and the younger may die. May I urge each of you today to surrender anew your lives to Jesus Christ. Take him as your personal Saviour and Lord and live for Him as the Lord of your life, daily.***

***Heaven is nearer than we think. Heaven is a place of dynamic growth and restful labor for our Lord. What about the dead who die in Christ?***

***No, not cold beneath the grasses,***
***All forgotten in the tomb:***
***Rather, in my Father's mansion,***
***Living in another room.***

***Living, like the one who loves me,***
***Like yon child with cheeks a bloom,***
***Out of sight, at desk or schoolbook,***
***Busy in another room.***

***Nearer than the youth whom fortune***
***Beckons where the strange lands loom;***
***Just behind the hanging curtain,***
***Working in another room.***

# REMEMBERING

# ROBERT CHRISTIAN- 1971

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***I am the youngest of four children, born to Bob and Helen Christian, both of whom lived in the quaint little town of Fountain, Colorado all of their lives. My dad's ancestors and my mother's ancestors (who knew each other) were some of the first inhabitants of this small community (back in the later 1800's). My father, the oldest of five children, was born in 1898, and he was a graduate of the Fountain High School, he being the only boy along with four girls to enjoy that distinction as graduate. It was not too common (in the earlier 1900's) for high school graduates to go on to college after high school, so my dad (somewhat scholarly by orientation) was thankful for the education that he received. He soon found himself fully employed as a "meat cutter" (and he became very skilled at this job, and finally he owned his own grocery store in Fountain). Dad was a competent "business man", effective in "meeting" the public.***

***Bob Christian found it easy to be outgoing, friendly, gracious, self-giving, generous, and consequently, he found people (including his customers) "swarming" around him because of his friendly disposition. My dad, for decades, enjoyed the "food business", and he enjoyed "shooting the breeze" (as dad described the activity of talking! Ha!) with scores of people (many of whom knew him well, because his customers in his small grocery store saw him regularly).***

***Dad was no stranger to pain, for he suffered some kind of injury to his feet when he was quite young. The pain, at times, was rather intense, but Dad was not a "complainer" (instead, he was very positive in speech and in attitude). When someone would ask him how he felt, he would quickly respond "Fine and dandy!" (Even if he felt lousy!) THAT WAS DAD! One of the most determined, forward-moving, goal-oriented, kind-hearted, generous, hard-working persons I have ever known. He was the most involved person, in caring for his elderly parents, that I have ever observed. He cared a***

***lot for his one sister and his three brothers; all of whom (with their families) lived in or near Fountain. As a grocery man and butcher, he regularly brought meat (including steaks) to his siblings and to his parents. My mother, who was a great cook, always (it seemed to me) to have her cupboards filled with all kinds of groceries, and she always had the best of meats. Our family never lacked for food, thanks to our kind and generous and hard-working father.***

***My dad had a special place in his heart for poor persons. My dad never believed in doing any "good work" for the "praise of others". He was a person who showed his compassion for "needy persons" without "fanfare" and in "secret" if possible. My older brother remembers going with our dad to deliver groceries to poor persons. I was told (not by my dad) that our dad provided a simple house (that he owned, one of his several older rentals) for a certain older (poor) widow that dad regarded as one of his "unique friends", and I understand that dad provided her with groceries, and that dad paid for all of her funeral expenses. (It was important that his relatives and friends be buried with dignity).***

***Yes, Robert Christian, as his last name would indicate, was very "Christian" in many ways! But, with all his wonderful qualities and virtues, he was never an openly professing Christian. He was honest, compassionate, kind, generous, friendly, and respectful (towards the ministers of the local Free Methodist Church where my mother and I***

***attended regularly). He was very positive in his attitudes, an appreciator of nature, a lover of pets, and gentle in his treatment towards his four children. He believed that each of his children had great potential! Never once did he say a hurtful or discouraging word towards me, as I was growing up! When I decided to pursue a career ("calling") as a minister, I understand he expressed to my mother his concern about the smallness of salary that ministers generally received. But, nevertheless, he supported me fully and gladly. (But I was a pastor for only 4 ½ years before he died). Unfortunately, dad never attended Church. Only once or twice in my experience with my dad, did I sit with him in any Church service.***

***Without depreciating the above-mentioned great qualities and virtues of my beloved father, in all honesty I must acknowledge that, because dad did not have the strength which being a Christian gives, dad failed miserably in one or two dimensions, during his long life.***

***He probably picked up the habit when he was quite young (as a result of being around his several non-Christian relatives), the habit of terrible profanity (cussing). Not only***

*when he was frustrated and angry, but even during so-called "normal conversation" with this non-Christian brothers, dad could "turn the air blue" with his "ugly profanity". (Of course, he guarded his speech considerably when he was with certain "respectable persons" like mother's ministers, etc.). He and his three brothers were persons who did not profess Christianity, and all of them had learned the "skill" of using most "colorful words"! (I hated to hear these word; I surrendered to Christ when I was 11 years old; I loved my dad and uncles very much, but I determined I wanted a life of righteousness, including clean language".)*

*Also, my dad (who had so much "penned up" hurt and frustrations), took out his feelings on my mother! Mother became his "scapegoat" for most of their 47 years of marriage. It was very hard on her, but she remained patient and loving through all this emotional and verbal abuse! Mother prayed earnestly for dad and his siblings. As for as I know, all of*

*them\were saved before they died (probably because of mother's faithful praying for many years). Dad, just four years before he died, prayed the "Sinner's Prayer", when he was in the hospital recovering from a heart attack. My dear older brother led him to Christ. I plan to see Dad in heaven!*

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

*What is Man?*

*The Bible answers that question: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul". (Genesis 2:7)*

*Man is a living soul. What is the soul? The soul is the selfhood, the personality, and the personality that never dies. The personality lives forever. The body of man will die, but the man himself will never die.*

*The personality (the real you) can never die. The personality of a man is what makes a man truly great.*

*My dad whom I very deeply loved is not dead, only his body is dead. A person is known by his personality,*

***What was there about his personality that made him so great? Many traits could be pointed out that made my dad so great, but I wish simply to mention a few.***

***First, he was a man of Generosity: In Giving – never calculating, but liberal. Not a grasping hand, but giving hand. He received great joy by giving to other people. Very unselfish. In expression of appreciation of others. My dad ennobled others – not degrade but build up. Had a multitude of friends, as shown by many whom he greeted while he worked and talked. (Loved to talk with old friends). All admired Dad for his outgoing concern for other people. Knew how to give a listening ear and as sympathetic heart. (Many of his friends and relatives are here today for which our family is grateful).***

***Secondly, a man of hard working.. Dad worked hard with his hands and with his head. Beautified the earth – could take a weed patch and transform it into a rose bed. Strong, virile, robust. He prided himself in having good health, and enjoyed good health until the last few years of his life. He was a man of industry and he wholeheartedly involved himself in his business projects. He was a man of unusual stamina and endurance. He was forward-looking, optimistic, and felt that the future was bright with hopeful prospects. He had what many people would call old–fashioned 'spunk'. To the very last, he had determination. He never indulged in self-pity, and never became preoccupied with selfish interests. He did not live to himself, but found delight in living for others. He sought to bring cheer to others. His conversation was filled with words of enthusiasm and faith, and many left his company ennobled and encouraged. He was a man of abounding energy, and maintained mental acuteness until the very end.***

***Thirdly, he was a man of tenderness. While Dad was a man with calloused hands from hard work, he was also a man with a tender heart. He loved Nature, he loved children, he loved his family and friends, and he loved God his Creator. While dad was not one to demonstrate emotions outwardly, one could see many times tears moisten his eyes as a sign of his heartfelt understanding. He became increasingly tender towards God and the Church, and he maintained to the end a concern for people in need. Hardly a day passed during the past months without my mother reading from the Bible and they having prayer together. My dad respected the things of God and took a real interest in the things of the Church.***

***Five years ago, when my dad suffered a heart attack that almost took his life then, my brother prayed with my dad to receive Christ as his Saviour. During the past five years, my dad has increasingly grown tender towards the things of God.***

***The Bible says, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Psalms 51:17)***

***The Bible also says, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him…the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy." (Psalms 103; 8, 10, 11)***

***My day was tender towards God and God's people, and that is the greatest sign of being ready to die and ready to meet God in peace.***

***May I kindly ask you – the friends and relatives of my father – "Are you Ready to Meet God in peace when you come to the end of your life's journey?"***

***"For He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." (Psalms 103: 13-15)***

***"When as a child, I laughed and wept,***
***Time crept;***

***When as a youth, I dreamed and talked,***
***Time walked;***

***When I became a full-grown man,***
***Time ran;***

***When older still I daily grew,***
***Time flew;***

***Soon I shall find in traveling on***
***Time gone.***

***Author unknown***

***It is appointed unto every man to die. Are you ready to die? Until one is ready to die, he is not really ready to live!***

***Futility of life without God. Jesus asked this penetrating and all-important question: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:26) There is nothing more important in all of life than to make peace with your God.***

***Way to make peace with God. How can a person make peace with God? (1) By acknowledging your need for forgiveness; every person before he comes to God is a sinner and is in need of God's forgiveness. (2) Next, one must confess his sins to Jesus Christ and accept God's forgiveness as the gift of God. A gift is not necessarily deserved and a gift cannot be earned. A gift can only be received in gratitude. When you receive God's gift of forgiveness, what is the result?***

***The result, You become a new person – with all of the rich benefits of God – abundant life, peace, assurance, and eternal life with God.***

***Because my dad accepted Jesus as his Saviour, his sins are forgiven and he is now with Jesus in Heaven.***

***"No, not cold beneath the grasses,***
***All forgotten in the tomb;***
***Rather, in my Father's mansion,***
***Living in another room.***

***Living, like the one who loves me,***
***Like you child with cheeks abloom,***
***Out of sight, at desk or schoolbook,***
***Busy in another room.***

***"Nearer than the youth whom fortune***
***Beckons where the strange lands loom;***
***Just behind the hanging curtain,***
***Working in another room.***

***Dad, good night here, but good morning over there. Dad, I will see You in the morning!***

# REMEMBERING

# FRANK BIRKINBINE - 1981

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***Frank Birkinbine was an "old timer" in Fort Collins, Colorado, having come from Nebraska to this city in 1929. He lived almost a century (age 97), and he worked at Colorado State University as a custodian for many years. He loved the out-of-doors, and he took pride in maintaining the properties of CSU, including the lengthy lawns with their extended sprinkling systems. He was a 'giant' of a man, and extremely strong! I can still envision his big hands and a strong grip! He loved his wife, to whom he was married for 73 years. I once asked his dear wife (Grace) what she thought was the 'secret' to their long and successful marriage. She said, "Whenever we had a conflict, we would go to separate rooms, and always before we went to bed, we would resolve our conflict." Good advice for all married couples – never go to bed still angry with one another. The Bible says, "Don't let the sun go down on your anger". Frank and Grace had a deep love for one another; they had real "couple power". I went to their home, on a weekly basis, because their home was the "meeting place" for the "Cottage Prayer Meeting" where older folks met for prayer and fellowship. What a joy to be a participant (when I was a young pastor) in that happy group, for probably ten years! Talking, reading the Bible, praying, eating together, and "lots of hugs" too!***

***Frank Birkinbine was a kind-hearted, wise, and discerning elderly man and he was most hospitable every time I was in his home. He occasionally liked to talk about the "Old Times"; including the ways of the "rural life", that he knew when he was young. I, a pastor in my 20's, was fascinated to hear him and the other older folks in the prayer group, visit about the "good old day". Strangely enough, Frank never attended Church. His wife always came to the Church where I served as her pastor, by herself. Frank was never hostile towards Christianity. Indeed, he was very respectful towards "Holy matters". I never found out from his wife why he chose not to attend services. Were***

***there deep "hurts" regarding the "institution of the Church" that he experienced in the distant past and that he never resolved?***

***I don't know, but as the years came and went, I noticed an increasing "softness" about Frank. Not that I ever (in the earlier years) sensed in him a direct opposition to the local Church that I pastored, or to me personally. I don't know the time when or the place where Frank made a personal commitment to Christ, as Saviour, but I know that, after his wife died, and when he lived a few years in a nursing home, he often talked about his desire to go to Heaven to be with his wife. He said he no longer had the goal of living to 100!***

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

***Frank Birkinbine was respected and loved in his home. As a husband, Frank was loved and respected deeply by his wife. Frank and his wife, Grace, trod life's pathway together in mutual love and with courageous endeavor. Together they experienced the joy of establishing a home in which each member mutually cared for each other. Together they labored hard, sometimes during hard times, to find and keep to the noble and worthwhile things of life. As the head of his home, Frank was the object of affection, respect, and admiration by both wife and children. Frank's life was greatly enriched by having wonderful grandchildren and great grandchildren. As a family man, and as a hard worker, Frank was unpretentious and matter-of-fact as he faced life in a very realistic way. He was the source of joy and laughter to many. He was a real friend.***

***Frank Birkinbine was a Real Man and was no stranger to hard work. Frank was a hard worker, a patient and persistent man who weathered many hard times. He was no stranger to work. He enjoyed his work. He was actively involved in work, well into his late eighties and even in his nineties. Fulfilling his tasks faithfully, thoroughly, and conscientiously, Frank gave dignity to his work. Frank was creative and went about his work with a business-like concern. He worked long hours, and was considered one of the strongest men around. He worked in his earlier years in farm labor with horses. In those days, there were no tractors. He often talked about picking corn by hand, from early morning until late at night.***

***There were few 8-hour days then. But even though he spent much time in work, he always had time for his children and wife. Those were the days before radio and T.V. Many a cold winter night was spent with the family, around a large pan of popcorn, playing table games and eating fresh apples.***

***Frank was always recognized as a real gentleman and understanding friend within his neighborhood. Over the long span of his life – a span of nearly a century – Frank made many, many friends. Frank, because of his extra long lifetime, outlived almost all of his friends. Frank was a real man – a man who seemed to combine the qualities of ruggedness and tenderness, impetuousness and patience, forwardness and reservation.***

***Frank Birkinbine became a Christian and Learned to Love God. Frank was not always a Christian, but through the persistent prayers and love of his godly wife, Frank became a sincere, tenderhearted Christian. For several years, I went to the home of the Birkinbines for a weekly 'cottage prayer meeting'. The Birkinbines, along with several other older folks, enjoyed those prayer meetings. I greatly enjoyed talking to those older folks. We prayed together, sang together, talked, and laughed together. On certain special occasions, we had meals together. Sweet and precious are those memories! Frank Birkinbine was greatly loved in that group! As the years came and went, I saw Frank become more tender towards God. He thoroughly enjoyed those prayer meetings!***

***Frank was always a very strong man, but with the passing of years, he and his wife finally had to go to a nursing home to live. They were so close to each other. Frank greatly depended on his wife. We continued for a while to have prayer meetings at the nursing home! Finally, Grace passed away (only a year and a half ago) and Frank was lost without his wife. He longed to go to heaven to be with his wife. After his wife passed away at the age of 94, he no longer talked about wanting to live until he was 100. He wanted to go to heaven to be with Jesus and with his wife, Grace. Physically and emotionally, he was troubled, and he wanted to die. This was a great change for Frank, for Frank Birkinbine was a man who was in love with life, with people, with his work. He was one of the most positive persons I ever knew. He loved to laugh and to joke. He loved to work. He loved the out-of-doors. He loved to exercise. He was still riding a bike when he was in his seventies! He was a strong man, both in body and in spirit. But when his wife passed away, he was filled with loneliness and grief. His children and grandchildren were a great comfort to him. Never have I seen a family more devoted to a father and a grandfather, as the family of Frank Birkinbine. They visited him in the nursing home almost daily. But Frank had lost the dearest person on earth to him, and he longed to be reunited with that person – his loving wife. They had lived together for some 73 years, and for Frank to live without Grace was almost unbearable.***

***Frank and Grace are now reunited in heaven! Heaven must be indescribably beautiful. Companionship with our loved ones and with Jesus must be most wonderful.***

***Grace and Frank Birkinbine supremely desired the salvation of each of their loved ones! If Grace and Frank could come back and stand before us today, what would they possibly say to us? Among many things, I believe they would remind us of some very important and serious facts of life.***

***First, they probably would remind us of life's brevity. The Bible says, "For God knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." (Psalms 103:13-15)***

***"When as a child, I laughed and wept,***
***Time crept;***

***When as a youth, dreamed and talked,***
***Time walked***

***When I became a full-grown man,***
***Time ran;***

***When older still I daily grew,***
***Time flew;***

***Soon I shall find in travelling on,***
***Time gone.***

***(Author Unknown)***

***Birth, Childhood, Adolescence, Adulthood, and Old Age – these are the passing stages of life. One may be abruptly introduced to the next stage, but more often, one enters the next stage gradually and slowly. The tenderness of Spring gradually changes into the fragrance of Summer, followed by the ruggedness of Fall and the aging of Winter. So each of life's stages is followed by a more mature and experienced stage. Death signals***

***finality for this earthly realm of existence, but out of the darkness of death comes the dawn of eternity.***

***The Bible says that we must learn to number our days in order that we may get a heart of wisdom. The Bible says that the normal length of life is three-score and ten years or 70 years. Anyone who lives beyond that time is living on borrowed time. Frank Birkinbine amazingly lived nearly 30 years beyond the normal three-score and ten. God was so good to Frank. He lived far longer than the majority of human beings. And yet, even a hundred years of life on earth is like nothing compared to eternity! Life at the longest is brief compared to the ages of eternity. Our lives are like a vapor of steam, which appears for only a short time and then vanishes away. Remember, it is appointed unto every man to die. Are you ready to die? Until one is ready to die, he is not really ready to live.***

***Second, I think Frank and Grace would tell us that life without God is utterly futile!***

***Jesus asked this penetrating and all-important question: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? (Matthew 16:26). There is nothing more important in all of life than to make peace with your God.***

***Third, I think Frank and Grace would urge you to become a Christian if you have not yet surrendered your life to God.***

***How do you become a Christian? The Bible says we must confess our sins to God. "If we confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (I John 1:9)***

***The Bible also says that we must put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved". (Romans 10:9)***

***Also, the Bible says that we must open our lives to Christ and allow Him to rule our lives: Behold, I stand at the door, etc... Confess your sins, believe on Christ, and accept Him into your life today. That is what the Birkinbines did (Grace and Frank) and that is why they are rejoicing in heaven today!***

# REMEMBERING

# HAZEL BRIDGE -1996

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***Hazel Bridge was a saintly-type person, with the meaning of "saintly" being "God-conscious". Hazel was a person who loved her life, and the surroundings of nature's flowers and gardens and mountains and streams, and so much more! She was conscious of God's presence, not only in nature, but also in her family relationships. Through the many "ups-and-downs" (the joys and the sufferings, that she personally experienced during her long life, she believed that God was sovereign – that God's purposes were being worked out on the "canvas of life', in spite of the mysteries and injustices and inequities which were evident in this "Fallen World". She deeply loved God, and she believed that God would have the "final word' at the end of human existence. A very delightful woman of God!***

## FUNERAL MESSAGE (OR) TRIBUTE

***Hazel Bridge was a lover of nature. Gardener of unusual ability, (what a flower represents):***

***- God's delicate handwork (intricate)***
***- God's infinite variety (all sizes and shapes)***
***- God's exquisite beauty in colors***
***- God's sweet-smelling attractions***
***- God's multiplying power through reproduction***
***- God's gift of love***

***"For the wonder of each hour***
***Of the day and of the night,***
***Hill and vale and tree and flower,***

*Sun, moon, and stars of light:*
*Lord of all, to Thee we raise*
*This our hymn of grateful praise.*

***Hazel did not worship Nature, but she loved the God who is the Creator of nature, and therefore, she loved what God created. She often graced others by giving bouquets of flowers from her flower gardens to her friends. (She brought flowers from her garden to my wife's office when Venita was an administrator of a Christian School) Hazel Bridge not only cultivated physical gardens of flowers in her back yard, but she also cultivated a garden of beauty and Christlikeness within her heart.***

***Hazel as a person who reflected the beauty of God's holy nature within her own self, like physical flowers reflect the beauty of God's physical world.***

***Why was the world of beauty so meaningful to Hazel Bridge? I believe it was so, because she had a deep love for the Creator of Nature.***

***Lover of family and friends, she was so deeply committed to her precious children and her grandchildren. She was so kind and loving and accepting and non-judgmental, and understanding and empathetic, that is was no wonder that she was so loved and cherished by her children and grandchildren and many other relatives and friends.***

*"For the joy of human love,*
*Brother, sister, parent, child;*
*Friends on earth and friends above;*
*For all gentle thoughts and mild:*
*Lord of all, to Thee we raise*
*This our hymn of grateful praise.*

***Hazel loved to visit with her friends, in person and by phone. She loved to go places and to see beautiful sites with her friends and her family. She loved small children, as evidenced in recent years when she spent time at her daughter's daycare in Bellvue, Colorado, loving and playing with the several small preschool children. She was "Grandmother Hazel!" to several of them.***

***Hazel Bridge cherished her relationships with her family and friends. Proverbs 17:17 says, "A true friend is always loyal, and a brother (or sister) is born to help in times of need." Hazel Bridge was a loyal friend to many and she often helped others in their times of need and trouble.***

***Lover of God. Hazel Bridge's greatest distinction as a person was found in the fact that she was a woman of God – one who deeply loved her blessed Savior Jesus Christ.***

***It was easy for Hazel to sing the great song: "What a Friend We Have In Jesus".***

***"Have we trials and temptations?***
***Is there trouble anywhere?***
***We should never be discouraged,***
***Take it to the Lord in prayer.***

***Can we find a friend so faithful***
***Who will all our sorrows share?***
***Jesus knows our every weakness,***
***Take it to the Lord in prayer.***

***Hazel was no stranger to sorrow and suffering and to tears of grief. She was a woman of prayer, and she often found sweet relief when she laid her burdens down at the feet of Jesus. She knew by experience the truth of the Scripture, which says, "Casting all your cares upon Him for He careth for you". (I Peter 5:8)***

***Hazel persevered through trials, tests, suffering, and losses. She walked and she talked with her blessed Savior every day. She knew the power of prayer, and she experienced God's miraculous intervention in her life time and time again during her many years of being a follower of Christ. She loved the Holy Scriptures and she fed her soul upon the "Bread of Life" which the Bible is. She loved to fellowship and to worship with God's people in God's House – the local Church. She was a most reverent person who worshipped God in her everyday life – in the simple things of life – the routine duties of being a homemaker.***

***She was a most positive person, living by faith in her wonderful Lord – facing the future without terrorizing fear. Hazel Bridge was calm, quiet, and confident in her mannerisms and in her attitudes. She trusted in her God with her heart, even during perplexing times when she could not understand with her head. She believed, even during her losses in life, that God is a God of love who never allows His children to shed "needless tears". She believed that God has a purpose and that all things in life do work into a pattern for good to those who love the Lord.***

***This calm assurance in God, in the face of life's injustice, inequities, perplexities, and sorrows, kept Hazel steady and strong even during the last months of her life when she knew she was facing her last enemy – death.***

***Because she strongly believed in God, and in God's Son and in God's Word, Hazel did not succumb to fear, doubt, and unbelief. She believed that nothing could ever keep Christ's love from her.***

***She could say, with the Apostle Paul (in Romans 8:38-39): "For I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can't and life can't. The angels won't, and all the powers of hell itself cannot keep God's love away. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, or where we are – high above the sky, or in the deepest ocean – nothing will ever be able to separate us from the love of God demonstrated by our Lord Jesus Christ when he died for us."***

# REMEMBERING
# ED BROWN -1988

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***When I met Ed Brown (when he was in his early 50's). He showed some "signs" that he had lived another "way of life" other than the "way of Christianity". He had doubtless "sown some wild oats", and some of those "seeds" had "sprouted." For some reason, he had come to the Free Methodist Church (before I became the pastor) and he had requested the pastor to perform his wedding ceremony (I know Ed had been married at least once before). The woman he wished to marry was from a Christian background, and she was a lovely woman (a divorcee). After they were married and when I became the pastor it wasn't long until I visited in the home of this couple (Ed and Joyce), and they could not have been more friendly to me! Very earthy, very unpretentious, very gracious, very talkative couple! As was my practice with new people, (as a young pastor in my early 20's) and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, I asked Ed and Joyce Brown if they would enjoy me coming to their home for a Bible Study (at which time I explained I would share God's plan for our lives). This was one of many of the "Salvation By Appointment" Bible studies that I gave in the community, and they both (that night) prayed "The Sinner's Prayer". Their lives began to be transformed and they ended up having many "follow-up" Bible studies in their home (with two other couples; Bea and Ernie Rowe, and Rocky and Lu Bell). (All six of these persons have died and they all are now together in heaven!). Ed was truly saved, but much of his "unique humanity" (gruffness, for instance) continued to the day he died. I would say that Ed Brown was a "diamond in the rough". I really enjoyed his friendship! He attended church regularly, while I pastored almost until he died. He and his wife were generous in many ways! He was most friendly, when I visited him in his home! He was kind to me, and he was supportive to my ministry. A unique and wonderful man, now with Jesus in heaven rejoicing!***

# FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

***Ed Brown loved to labor with his hands. He drove a truck and operated other vehicles for many years for the county. Before that, he farmed near Ault, Colorado. He loved to keep a beautiful yard, and he enjoyed the delights of bountiful harvests and productive gardens. It was not uncommon for him, his wife, and his children to be using their mechanical skills on older cars. Many were his hobbies, but most of those hobbies were enjoyed in the wide-open spaces or amidst the rushing mountain rivers and streams. He seemed to have that unusual ability to combine diligent labor with delightful entertainment. He brought hardy laughter to many.***

***Ed Brown was a man who was deeply in love (with his wife). He admired and adored his dear wife, Joyce, with whom he lived for considerable time. Ed and Joyce were real friends, companions who loved to visit and who loved to share both life's joys and sorrows together. They bowled together, they went on long trips together, and they fished together, gardened together, and even worked mechanically on vehicles together. Seldom did you see one without the other. They shared life's sorrows together – for they were no strangers to sorrow. But, because they helped bear one another's burdens so well, they were able courageously to face life and to keep a generally positive and happy outlook on life.***

***Ed was a lover of nature. It was not uncommon to see Ed Brown in his yard, mowing grass or watering and weeding his large gardens. The day before he died, he was working in his yard. He loved to take long trips and to visit new scenic spots in our great nation.***

***Ed loved to visit with his many children who often visited him. He often lovingly talked about his several brothers and sisters. His home was always open to friends and family, and he was a very gracious host. Uncalculating by nature, it was easy for him to be generous in his giving of gifts to others.***

***Ed loved to joke and to laugh. His dry sense of humor and his surface gruffness made him a fascinating personality. He, at times, appeared to be blunt and rather opinionated, but he had a tender heart and a lot of love for others.***

***Ed, for many years, had a special place in his heart for his Church – the Free Methodist Church – where he was married to Joyce and where he regularly attended for many years. Hundreds of times throughout the last 20 years, I (as Ed's pastor) have greeted Ed Brown at the end of the worship services. He financially supported the work of God***

***in the local Church, and, in spite of some 'ups and downs' spiritually in the life of Ed, I can say that Ed Brown remained faithful to his Church through the last two decades. Scores of people through the years have come and gone, but Ed remained steadfast in his loyalty to me as his pastor and to the Church where he attended for so long. On the many occasions when I found myself in the home of Ed and Joyce, I experienced a very warm reception and a hospitable spirit. Ed and Joyce could not have treated me more kindly. They always enjoyed visiting and sharing with me. We shared sorrows and joys a lot – but far more joys than sorrows.***

***Ed Brown loved his country – the American way of life – and he served proudly in the armed forces during our nation's military crisis. He was proud to be identified with veterans who served on foreign soil during the times of war. He enjoyed the friendship of fellow soldiers during the last many years. On more than one occasion, Ed was found, side by side, with fellow veterans, at those solemn occasions when our nation's history and heritage were being recalled. 'Memorial Day' celebrations meant a lot to Ed Brown. He always upheld the sacred cause of freedom – and he was proud to honor the memory of the many men who bled and died to maintain that freedom! He was thankful to be an American – and especially an American soldier!***

***Many years ago, when I first became pastor of the Free Methodist Church in the late 1960's, I went to Ed and Joyce Brown's home for a special Home Bible Study, during which time they made a new and deeper commitment of their lives to Jesus Christ as Saviour. For several months, after that initial Home Bible Study, Ed and Joyce Brown met for weekly follow-up Bible Studies with two other couples - Rocky and Lu Bell and Ernie and Bea Rowe. That group of six adults - three couples - greatly enjoyed each other's company and fellowship for so long.***

***When I consider the many times, through the years, that I have been in the presence and in the home of Ed and Joyce Brown – both during great joys and during heartbreaking tragedies – I cannot help but think that the most important time was the evening many years ago when I was invited to their home for that original Salvation Bible Study. We gathered around their dining room table, and we opened the Bible together. We talked about God, Man, Sin, and Jesus Christ. They both accepted Christ that evening to be their Personal Savior. The most important day of their lives. Because of that decision, and their faithful follow-up, they are now in Heaven!***

# REMEMBERING

# C.V. MCCULLY - 1995

## BIBLIOGRAPHY SKETCH

***I knew this godly man since the time I was a young teen, and I enjoyed his hearty laughter and his engaging presence every time (in the Summer time) when he would be at the annual (10 day-long) camp meeting at Canon City, Co. He was one of the most jolly, kind-hearted, extroverted, affirming, sincere persons I ever knew! A man with strong convictions, but he was never stubborn or unyielding or forbidding in his attitudes and demeanor. Always open to suggestions from others who might not see "eye to eye" with him regarding Church policy or procedure. The kind of man who reminded me of a "kind of Santa Claus", but (admittedly), because he was probably at least 300 pounds in weight, it would be hard for anyone to give him a "firm hug"! Everyone loved "Brother C.V.", and people loved him not only because of his warm personality, but because of the "statesman" that he was in God's great work – as a long time pastor who shepherded his people very well, and as an effective, travelling evangelist who wept many tears with broken and contrite persons at many local Church altars, through the Country. I was both surprised and honored when his son asked me to preach his funeral sermon. One of my revered mentors, since my teen years.***

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

***I first met him in 1956 (when I was 11 years old). He was one of my childhood heroes, and remained a man of great spiritual stature to me throughout my adult life, until now. I loved him and admired him greatly. I loved to hear him pray, with his strong and enthusiastic voice, combined with his tender heart that enabled him often as he was praising God in his prayers, to break down and to weep! A man who was self-educated, never having gone to college, but who started to preach when he was about***

*19 years old – the time when he got married. Educated in the Holy Spirit, and one who knew God well, and who preached with great fervor and tender love, with practical applications for everyday living. A man with a tender heart and a warm and affectionate personality – easy to love, because he was a man overflowing with love for everyone. A man who believed in, and who personally experienced "The Old-Time Religion". He would feel very comfortable singing "Give Me that Old-Time Religion". "It was good for my mother, it was good for my father, and it's good enough for me!" "Makes me love everybody, makes me love everybody, and it's good enough for me!"*

*The Old-Time Religion, which C.V. McCully enjoyed, was the religion of Jesus Christ! Not a mere head knowledge, but deep heart knowledge! The kind of religion that transformed his entire life – his attitudes and action, and his reactions, and affections, and his goals and priorities and relationships; the kind that saved him from both the guilt and the power of sin; the kind that transformed both his outer conduct and his inner disposition; the kind that made him weep with those who wept and rejoice with those who rejoiced; the kind of religion that gave him zeal in devotion and fervency in prayer and great compassion for the lost; the kind of religion that made him magnanimous in personality and most winsome and attractive in his witness to unbelievers; the kind of religion that made small children love to be around him.*

*Brother McCully experienced the transforming power of Jesus' cleansing blood – saving him from his sins and delivering him from his life of self-centeredness. He testified to a great change in his life, when he was only 11 years old. He confessed that he later backslid for a few months, but that he brokenly came back to God, to be wonderfully healed, reclaimed, and restored. Later, as a young minister, he confessed to be wonderfully healed and reclaimed and restored. Later, as a young minister, he confessed that, although he had strongly preached the Gospel of Full Salvation, i.e., the message of "Entire Sanctification", he knew that what he preached sincerely, he did not truly and deeply and personally experience. He testified that, for several days, he got alone, as a young Free Methodist minister, and cried out to God in humility for the deeper "work of grace'", or what he termed as the "Second Blessing" – referring to "Entire Sanctification". He said that God gave him the victory over inner sin and self-centeredness. He said that, as a young preacher, he got the "big head" such as pride, when people bragged on his "great preaching"; he admitted that he was preaching, at first, more for the praise of men than for the glory of God! As C.B. McCully humbled himself as a young minister, before Almighty God, he said God sanctified his soul! That experience of being baptized by the Holy Spirit changed his personal life, and caused him to become a humble, love-filled, single-minded, whole-hearted, Spirit-anointed,*

*joyous Christian. "To spread Scriptural holiness throughout these lands" - this became the long–time passion of this humble man's life.*

*C. V. McCully preached many hundreds of sermons, to many thousands of people of all age groups, in many different states and conferences, over a long period of time – both as a local pastor of more than a dozen churches, and as a general evangelist in the Free Methodist Denomination!*

*C.V. McCully – affectionately known as "Brother" McCully – was God's special servant to encourage hundreds of persons, including many pastors and their wives in whose homes he stayed while he conducted one and two-week long revival services. He spent much time on his knees, weeping with and encouraging repentant sinners at revival services and at old-fashioned camp meetings. He loved, what he called "the mourners' bench" – the old-fashioned altars. He felt so comfortable in spending much time, kneeling in front of a broken-hearted sinner, who was trying to "pray through to victory". There was no one who rejoiced more greatly than C.V. McCully, when a repentant sinner arose to his feet with light shining on his countenance because of finding new life in Christ. C.B. McCully was a man of deep compassion, tenderness, an overflowing joy. Many were the times that he would stand to his feet during testimony services, with tears streaming down his cheeks, and with his hands raised high in praise to his dear Lord. A grateful man! An understanding man! A man who grew sweeter and sweeter in his spirit, the older and more decrepit he became in his body. He was strong in his convictions, but not sour in his spirit, or judgmental in his attitudes, or critical in his words.*

*Humble in his beginnings – he was born in a sod house in Oklahoma – he remained all throughout his life as an unpretentious, earthy, approachable, good–humored person who was a favorite to both the old saint and the young children. He especially loved young children, as evidenced even in several children's camps where he was the guest speaker. Children flocked around him, and teenagers loved his delightful sense of humor and his quick wit! His 6 children, and several grandchildren and his 14 great grandchildren all loved him so much! He influenced so many children.*

*From the day in his early ministry when he was filled with the mighty Holy Spirit, C.V. McCully sought to live an outgoing, love-filled, joyous, unpretentious life. He was authentic, genuine, sincere, transparent, and honest!*

*C.V. McCully reminds me of several characters in the Bible. But there are especially two characters who remind me of C.V. McCully. The first of the two characters whom I am thinking of is Nathaniel. Turn with me to John 1:45-51. Just as it can be said of*

***Nathaniel, it can also be said of C.V. McCully, that he was a "man without guile". That is, he was a man without deceitfulness, without hypocrisy, without duplicity, without dishonesty. C.V. McCully was a "true blue" person, an honest, upright, sincere, authentic, transparent person. There is a story of ancient sculptors who deceitfully filled their marred sculptured pieces with wax, and then painted over them, and tried to sell these sculptured figures to an unsuspecting shopper as if they were perfectly sculptured figures. Finally, some became suspicious and became wary of sculptors, and decided to test the claims to authenticity of these ancient artisans. They would take a sculptured piece, and expose it to the intense heat of the noonday sun. Of course, if these figures were marred and filled with wax, the sun would soon melt the wax underneath the paint and expose the deceitfulness and deception of the hypocritical sculptors. In other words, the guileless person is the authentic person, without deception "fillings" in his life – sincere and honest, through, and through. His private life and his public life match. No play-acting like the hypocrites of Jesus' day who were the brunt of Jesus' greatest criticism!***

***C.V. McCully was a man who "walked his talk", who was just as real in his personal and private life, as he was in his public life of ministry! No play-acting! A man without guile – like Nathaniel.***

***He was a man who did not try to impress others with a showy, put-on drama; instead, he was a man who enjoyed the company of ordinary people! Romans 12:9a,16 describes the kind of life that C.V. McCully lived: "Don't just pretend that you love others; really love them…Don't try to act big. Don't try to get into the good graces of important people, but enjoy the company of ordinary folks. And don't think you know it all". (Living Bible)***

***Oh, C.V. McCully would be the first one to admit that he was not without his faults and shortcomings and perhaps, at times, even sins. But C.V. McCully knew how to "plead the blood of Jesus Christ". He did not practice sinning. He consistently enjoyed victory over temptation and sin, C.V. McCully was quick to acknowledge his humanity and his weaknesses. He knew that the treasure of Christ was real in his life, but he also recognized that that treasure was contained in an "earthen vessel". He knew that, although he wonderfully experienced the "second work of grace' (as he called it), he needed daily and even constant cleansing in the "blood of Jesus". (Note I John 1:7, 9; 2:1-2) His goal in living the Christian life was not to be faultless, but he was practical enough to know that "we all make many mistakes" (James 3:1, Living Bible). But his goal was to be a Spirit-controlled man, who lived by grace, and who sought earnestly to demonstrate his supreme love for God by obeying God's commandments. He did not***

***profess to be faultless, but he did seek to be blameless, i.e., to live a life free of falsehood. It was his desire to have always a "pure heart" - that is, a heart undivided in its devotion and love for Christ. I believe C.V. McCully was a blessed man, a man who could well be characterized as one who lived the life of blessedness, as described in Jesus' Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12). A blameless man, a man who is Spirit-filled, is a man whose heart is pure. Said Jesus, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God".***

***So Nathaniel, who was a man without guile, is a Biblical figure whose example was followed by a humble 20th century saint named C.V. McCully.***

***The second Biblical personality that reminds me so much of C.V. McCully was Barnabus. (Note: Acts 11:19-26) See if you can identify some of the characteristics in the life and action of Barnabus that remind you of our beloved Brother McCully.***

***Among the many characteristics of Barnabus, which were seen personified in the personality, and activities of C.V. McCully, I think the characteristic of Encouragement boldly stands out. As Barnabus was the disciple of Encouragement, I believe C.V. McCully was the preacher of Encouragement. Not only in his preaching, but in his pastoring and in his informal friendships, and certainly in his home as a husband, father, and grandfather! He seemed always, throughout his long life, to be encouraging folks – young and old, weak and strong.***

***Why was Barnabus such an encourager? Why was C.V. McCully such an encourager? Because both Barnabus and C.V. learned the secret of living the Spirit-filled, Christ-centered life. When one is focused on Christ, he is a person who is "lost in wonder, love, and praise". That is, as a Spirit-filled person, he is not self-centered, overly- sensitive to the hurts from others, but he is able quickly to forgive and to forget the wrongs of others. Such a person is open to the needs and hurts of others. To be in love with Jesus, is to become interested in others. How can one love God supremely without learning to love those whom God loves – other people?***

***The chief evidence of the Spirit-filled life is supreme love for God and genuine and sincere love for others. No wonder both Barnabus and C.V. - Spirit–filled Christians – became such great Encouragers!***

***C.V. McCully, like Barnabus, was a Spirit-filled Christian. What I read about Barnabus, can be said also of C.V. McCully: "He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith". (Acts 11:24)***

***What is the evidence that one is truly sanctified, that one has the "old-time religion" of Jesus? Said John Wesley "Religion is the most simple thing that can be conceived. It is only humble, gentle, patient love".***

***What is the fruit (singular) of the Spirit – i.e., the evidence that one is truly filled with the Spirit? "When the Holy Spirit controls our lives he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." (Galatians 5:22, Living Bible) It may be said that all the fruits of the Spirit relate directly to love. God is love; therefore, he who is possessed by God is possessed by love. All other fruits are simply descriptions of love.***

***The secret to C.V. McCully's successful Christian life was his total surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. He consecrated his all, and the Holy Spirit sanctified his all. The Holy Spirit cleansed his motives and his desires, and shed abroad God's love in his heart. C.V. McCully enjoyed the benefits of full surrender, as described by E. Stanley Jones, "On this level you do not whip up the will, you surrender the will. Then you are relaxed and receptive, and faith becomes recuperative. Around our emptiness flows his fullness – and fill us; round our incompleteness flows His perfection – and perfect us; round our restlessness flows His rest – and rest us; round our sin flows His holiness – and invades us; round our selves flows His gracious Self – and displaces us; round our lovelessness flows His love - and loves us into loving. When we know how to take from these infinite Resources, we know how to live by fullness not our own. Hence, we live fully and over flowingly. Instead of religion being strain, hence drain, it is receptivity, hence release – release from ourselves and release to others". (Christian Maturity; pg.221)***

***C.V. McCully was captivated by the Grace of God – Amazing Grace that saved him from a life of sinning, and amazing grace that also saved him from the bondage of self-centeredness! He opened his life to God in simple faith. He kept his life opened to God daily. He learned daily to "die" to himself – to his selfish interests, and to daily be filled anew with the love of God. Once-and-for-all surrender to experience entire sanctification, and also daily surrender of himself to Christ's will and to Christ's nature (the nature of love) to enjoy a lifetime of progressive sanctification! He discovered, not only that he was a sinner by choice who needed the forgiveness of God, but that he was a sinner by nature who needed to be cleansed from his inbred and inherited sin nature (characterized mainly by self-centeredness).***

***He discovered that God was the reservoir of divine love, that he was the channel of divine love, and that the world of needy people was the recipient of divine love.***

***What was C.V. McCully's greatest desire in his life? That all whom he knew – relatives, friends, acquaintances – would know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, and that all believers would be totally surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and be filled with the Holy Spirit, resulting in all living a love-motivated life.***

***Have you been saved? If not, today is the best day in your life to confess your sins (I John 1:9), to believe in Jesus (i.e., to trust and commit, Romans 10:9), and to accept Him as your Savior (Revelation 3:20).***

***If you are a believer, have you surrendered your all to Jesus Christ, that He may become the Lord of your life. If not, then today is the best day for you to put yourself upon the altar of full consecration, and to ask the Holy Spirit who lives within you (as a believer) to cleanse your heart – to make you guileless, blameless, single-minded, whole-hearted, love-filled, Spirit-controlled with all the fruits of the Spirit developing abundantly in your life!***

# REMEMBERING

# MABEL BOROUGH – 1997

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***This woman was the "first cousin" of my own mother, but my mother (Helen) and Mabel were so close throughout their entire lives, from the years when they as children played together at the ranch of Mabel's parents, that they were more like "sisters". Both my mother and Mabel were very dedicated Christians, so they shared the same "values", and they "talked" the same language! They both loved the Lord dearly, and both loved to attend Church service. They both shared the same "godly heritage" (i.e., they could both trace the identity of their grandparents, etc, etc…, back several generations), and both were so grateful for those "saintly persons". Mabel was the one person in her extended family who had a very "keen mind" and who greatly enjoyed verbalizing stories regarding the lives of her ancestors! Interesting indeed! And even though she had strong "convictions" (different from my dear mother) regarding "proper dress' (etc.), my mother "agreed to disagree" with her regarding some of her "conventional proper dress". With great respect for Mabel (mother held her in highest esteem regarding her deep spirituality), my mother chose not to wear old-fashioned clothes like Mabel wore (very conservative clothing, reminiscent of clothing from the era of the 1800's). Mother was modest in appearance, but modern and up-to-date, and mother (a beautiful woman) liked to wear small earrings (considered 'worldly' by Mabel).***

***Well, in spite of her "odd" clothes (long, dull-colored dresses) and her plain facial appearance (no 'make–up' and no jewelry), Mabel and mother shared the same love for their Lord, and both of these "saintly" ladies loved to talk together, to pray together, to discuss the Bible together (although Mabel was more 'scholarly', and to laugh together. Both were joyous Christians! Both were in earnest to get to heaven, and to "take all their family to heaven with them!" Their hope has been fulfilled! They are both in***

*heaven, worshipping the Lord, whom they carefully served while on earth. And also rejoicing in perfect health, along with their loved ones who also were delivered from the afflictions of this earth. Mabel Borough – certainly one of the most faithful and delightful "saints" of God whom I ever knew!*

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

*Mabel Borough was a lady who was both "earthy" and "saintly" at the same time. Throughout her long life, ever since she accepted Christ as a young adult, she sought to be an earnest follower of Christ, conscientious in all her actions and consistently Christlike in all her attitudes. She was a woman who lived close to God, and her close walk with God resulted in her living close to people and their needs. She truly lived for two worlds – the world of time and the world of eternity. She was "lost in wonder, love, and praise", as she served God and as she ministered to her family and her friends and even acquaintenances around her. She was thoroughly saved from a life of sinning and she evidenced in her lifestyle that she was truly filled with the Spirit. What she desired, more than anything else in life, was to live a "holy life". "Holiness unto the Lord was her watchword and song". She was regularly transformed by the renewing of her mind, because she was a diligent student of the Word of God – not just during the few years that she, as a young lady, attended Bible College, but all throughout her long life. She loved to read the Bible and she enjoyed reading many Christian books. She was a prayer warrior, and she blessed countless lives when she prayed with and for other believers – including her family. She faithfully attended church services for several decades, and was a faithful supporter of her local Church and her Church's Christian Day School and Bible College. By her life, her looks, and her lips, Mabel witnessed for her Lord – letting her "light shine" wherever she found herself – in her home, in her Church, in her neighborhood, and even among nurses and doctors in the hospital where she spent too much time during the last several years with serious illnesses. She was sweet in her spirit, and good-humored in her personality. She loved to laugh – not at people, but with people – for she often saw the "funny side of life". She was conservative in her dress, and rather strict in her personal convictions in her attempts to avoid compromise with sin and worldliness, but Mabel was not sour in her spirit or somber in her countenance. Rather, she had radiance on her face, a joy in her voice, optimism in her outlook on life, and a soothing calmness in her presence. She strongly believed in the sovereign power of God, and she rested on the promises of God's provision during times of adversity, pain, suffering, loss, perplexities. Her faith in God was strong, her witness for God was consistent, her love for God was intense, her praise*

*of God was spontaneous, her joy in God was contagious, her walk with God was intimate, and her service for God was humble – yet filled with dignity.*

*Mable was committed to a life of holiness – a life that pleased God and one that brought an awareness of God to others. By a conservative and simple lifestyle, by an unshakeable faith in God, and by an uncompromising standard against sin and worldliness, Mable sought to leave her impact for God upon the world around her. While she hated sin intensely, she loved sinners consistently and sincerely – for she never forgot that she herself was only a child of grace – a sinner saved because of the sacrifice of Christ on Mount Calvary. She shared with me, not too many months before her death, her experience early in her life when she was lost in sin and deeply under conviction by the Holy Spirit and in need of a Savior when she was a young adult. She called upon the Lord, in the desperation of her heart, and found forgiveness and reconciliation and new life in Christ. Even though to some, Mabel may have seemed overly-conservative in her dress and overly-strict in her personal convictions regarding what she considered to be worldly, Mabel's lifetime theme was the grace and the Love of God, and the Joy of the Lord which was her strength. She sought earnestly to live a fully surrendered, Spirit-filled life of true holiness. She took seriously God's command: "Be ye holy, for I the Lord Thy God am holy". But, even though she may, at times, appeared to be austere and forbidding, judgmental or harsh, unloving, or sour in her spirit, she did not impose her convictions upon others. She allowed other believers the liberty to form their own personal convictions and to be led by God's Spirit and their own conscience. She knew that other believers, like herself, had to work out their own salvation, and each believer is personally accountable to Almighty God.*

*She was committed to living a life that was separated from the evil ways of the world, and she took seriously the exhortation of the Scriptures: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (II Corinthians 6:17-18) She took seriously the command, which is found in 1st John 2:15-17 "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust there of; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." The way these same verses are given in the Living Bible is very clear and vivid. "Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love these things you show that you do not really love God; for all these worldly things, these evil desires – the craze for sex, the ambition to buy*

***everything that appeals to you, and the pride that comes from wealth and importance – these are not from God. They are from this evil world itself. And this world is fading away, and these evil, forbidden things will go with it, but whoever keeps doing the will of God will live forever." In a day and in a society where compromise seems to be the rule rather than the exception, the message of these verses seems very relevant – and the life of Mabel was one that was committed to separation from sin in all its obvious and even subtle forms.***

***What does it mean for one to be committed to living a life of holiness? The word 'holy' means first 'separate'. The Holy Bible is a book, separate from all other books because it is the Book of God's Revelation. Priests in the Old Testament were considered 'holy', because they were 'separate' from all other men – specially chosen by God to carry out the priestly duties. Even their clothes were considered "holy clothes", because their garments were separate or unique or different from all other garments worn by those who were not priests. The Lord's Day (or Sabbath in the Old Testament) is considered a "Holy day", for it is set aside from all the other days of the week as a special day of corporate worship.***

***A Christian is called a "saint" the very moment he accepts Christ, for a "saint" is best translated as "a holy one" – i.e., one who has surrendered in faith to Jesus Christ and has chosen to leave the evil practices of the world to follow Jesus Christ. A Christian is a 'holy one' because he seeks to be separate from a lifestyle of sinning. It does not mean that a Christian never sins, but it does mean that a Christian (a holy one) does not practice sinning. He is now following Christ and does not habitually sin. And when he occasionally sins, he immediately confesses his sin to Christ and he is immediately forgiven and restored to fellowship with his precious Lord. So, holiness first means "separation from a lifestyle of practicing sinning".***

***Second, holiness means "heart purity". God called Mabel to live a life that, as a believer, was committed to integrity, sincerity, honesty, humility, single-mindedness, and wholehearted devotion to Christ. Mabel sought to serve Jesus, both as her Savior and as her Lord. She surrendered everything to Jesus many years ago – her time, her talents, her treasures, her family, her influence, her total self. She sought for and received the fullness of the Holy Spirit in His sanctifying power. She sought daily to live a fully surrendered life to Christ, seeking only to please her dear Lord in a deep love relationship with Christ. Mabel sought to live separated from sin and separated unto her Lord – to do His bidding and to fulfill His will for her life. She sought to be sensitive to the "small, still voice" of the blessed Holy Spirit – to reverence her God, to love her Savior, to obey the Spirit's directions in her life. It was her desire to love the Lord***

***supremely, and to love her neighbor as herself. Mabel was not only deeply devoted to her God, but she was practically involved in charitable deeds and in loving actions towards her fellowmen.***

***I said, at the beginning of this tribute, that Mabel was both "earthy" and "saintly". I have shared briefly a description (although very inadequately) of her "saintly" life. But Mabel, as saintly as she was, was not (as someone said) "so heavenly-minded that she was of no earthly good". Mabel lived for God and anticipated going to heaven (and longed to see her many loved ones who had gone before her to heaven), but Mabel was also very 'earthy' – i.e., Mabel was "down–to-earth" and "practical" and "natural" in her every day conversations and activities and relationships with people. I earlier said that Mabel loved to laugh and to have fun in life. She saw the "funny side" of life, and (like her mother before her), Mabel was rather "witty" and good-humored. She took God very seriously, but she learned not to take herself too seriously.***

***Mabel loved the common way of life, and she saw God in the commonplace things of life. As a child in a large family – with several brothers and sisters – and being raised on a farm south of Fountain, Colorado, Mabel learned the joys of simple play and also the hard work of helping her father and mother make a success as farmers. My own mother, Helen Christian, who is Mabel's first cousin, spent much time playing and working with Mabel as Mabel and my mom grew up together. Through the years, Mabel and my mom exchanged stories from their childhood, and enjoyed laughing so much together. Mabel was like a sister to my mom – even throughout their adult lives together. My mother always looked up to Mabel as one of the most godly women she ever knew. My mother admired Mabel's brilliant mind and her tender heart and her joyful spirit. Less than a month ago, before her death, Mabel spoke by phone to my mother (who now lives with me and my wife in Fort Collins), and Mabel told mother then that she was not at all well. She had just returned from a 10-day stay in the hospital. I overheard a portion of the conversation, in which Mabel reminded Mother that the Bible declared that there is a time to be born and a time to die. Mabel knew that her time was probably short on this earth, but she had a spirit of such joy and peace and calmness and assurance. Mabel was truly a Spirit-filled, love-saturated lady who brought such joy to so many. I myself often asked her to pray with me, after we enjoyed a good conversation together on the phone. Her prayers brought such comfort and assurance and hope to me.***

***Mabel deeply loved her husband and her two children and their families. She probably did not miss a day praying for her family, and she was so grateful for her precious grandchildren. She also cherished her several brothers and sisters and their families.***

***Mabel was such a "family-oriented" person – one who loved to visit by the hour with her relatives, and one who kept abreast of , not only her immediate family members, but also her large extended family – including cousins and other rather distant family members. Mabel had a keen sense of appreciation for her family's history (family tree) – and probably knew more about her past heritage (ancestors) than anyone else in the entire generation of relatives. She loved to recall with great fondness and in detail (for she had a keen memory) the events of past happy days. She did some writing also – usually writings that had a historical orientation. She wrote a most interesting article on the early days of Colorado Springs.***

***Mabel had a rich heritage, full of spiritual ancestors whom she greatly esteemed and often spoke of . She has left a very godly and good legacy for those who come after her. Her life and example will never be forgotten – and even though she is dead, she yet speaks through her godly influence. May her beloved children and grandchildren follow in her noble footsteps. May her beloved husband who cherished his dear wife so greatly, be comforted in the months and years ahead as he thinks and ponders on bygone days and take new courage to continue to live by faith and trust in his dear Lord whom he and his wife served together for so very long. May the hope of meeting her again on that heavenly shore keep you and me full of gladness as we serve the Lord that she loved and served for so many, many years. "When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be". Follow on, dear pilgrims. Follow in the footsteps of the saints who have gone before us – in the footsteps of godly persons like Mabel Borough who now has her abode in that indescribably beautiful place called heaven.***

# REMEMBERING

# FORREST DONER –1979

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***During the first few years of my pastorate (in my 20's), I became a close friend to this "saintly old man" who was living in a nursing home when I first met him. He had been a long-time member of the Free Methodist Church – the local Church that I was assigned to pastor when I was a young man, having just graduated from college. Even though "Brother Doner" (as I affectionately called him) respectfully addressed me as his "pastor", I looked up to this mature "spiritual giant" as one of my "admired mentors". Even though this one-legged man (as a result of World War I) was in constant pain, he seldom talked about his disabilities; instead, this intelligent and perceptive man listened carefully to my frustrations regarding the several problems of our small, struggling Church. Included in the immediate challenges, which I was facing, regarding the newly built Church, was the fact that there was no funds available to pave (blacktop) the Church parking lot. Because there was no paving, this parking lot was subject to the growth of many (large) weeds! I was so frustrated about the fact that our 'nice' new Church would probably have little appeal to newcomers in the community who would be looking for a Church. (Like having a freshly baked cake, with no frosting!) Mr. Doner (so progressive and so full of vision for God's work, even though he was old in age), listened carefully and sympathetically. As a "prayer warrior", he lifted this request to God. God must have a "sense of humor", for, even though he was not a financially rich man, Mr. Doner (true to his name) was a "great donor" to God's work. He already was the most generous giver (donor) to our local Church (keeping our struggling Church afloat financially), but (get this!) when he sold his house (which was a rental house, since he was living in a nursing home), he gave one-half of the profit to our local church, designating the gift to purchase a new paved parking lot! Enough money to pave the entire parking lot (which remains there to this day!)***

***In spite of his personal suffering (i.e., his own wounds from his battles in W.W. I, and his deep sorrow he felt as a result of his son's death from a motor cycle crash), Mr. Doner was a joyous, hope-filled, progressive, prayerful, generous, kind-hearted person – a true "saint" of God, and one of my best friends when I was young.***

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

> ***19 Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. 20 Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. 21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. 22 News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. 24 He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord." "Acts 11:19-24; NIV***

***Forest Doner, in my opinion is a modern-day Barnabus. The description given to Barnabus so well describes Forrest Doner. Barnabus was chosen by the Church and the Lord to go on a mission of encouragement – to encourage the new Christians in Antioch. Forrest Doner was often used of the Lord to encourage other persons, especially young believers…He often times, like Barnabus, encouraged other people to remain true to Christ. He encouraged others to serve the Lord with all their hearts. As Barnabus, so it can be said of Forrest Doner that "He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great many were brought to the Lord".***

***Words or time would not permit me to rightly describe the great person that Forrest Doner was throughout his long life. Surely, he was one of my dearest older friends during the last 12 years that I knew him.***

***If Forest Doner were here this afternoon, I believe he would tell you that 1935 was the most important year of his life – when he was converted. He was a most generous and liberal sort of person, giving money to many, always tithing to the Church and giving***

*considerably beyond the tithe most of the time, and on occasions giving large donations to God's Work. When the Free Methodist Church in Fort Collins was first built, the people ran out of money and could not finish the parking lot. He sold his house in Fort Collins, and gave many dollars to beautify the Church grounds, putting in a parking lot, etc. That was the kind of generous person he was. He always wanted to give more, and he himself lived simply in order to have more for the work of the Church and the Lord.*

*Forrest Doner was a progressive-type person, always thrilled to hear of advancements in God's Work. I have heard him talk by the hour about the love projects which he was involved in, and what a thrill to hear him report progress in various projects and missionary organizations of which he was a part. He was always glad to hear of advancements in the Lord's Church, and especially his local Church. He was youthful in his thinking. Some who grow old become forbidding or negative, or critical, but not Forrest Doner. To the day he died, he remained positive, progressive, and always wanting to see greater Church growth. He often commented in his monthly letters to me that he was thrilled with local Church growth. He was always glad to hear of new converts.*

*Forrest Doner was a great encouragement to me in my early days of pastoral ministry. He spent hours talking and praying with me and we had great fellowship while praying and sharing burdens and victories in our personal lives. He was my spiritual counselor. Even after he left Fort Collins several years ago, he was faithful to write me almost monthly. He remained a member of the local Church and he monthly sent his generous tithes and offerings to the local Church that he loved so greatly.*

*Forrest Doner was loyal to his Church, but he was not narrow or sectarian. He was interested in God's work in many places and through many organizations. He loved the work of the Gideon organization. He was a charter member of the Fort Collins Gideon Camp, organized years ago. Some who are serving as pallbearers knew and cherished Mr. Doner, while they worked together in the Gideon Work. He was deeply interested in the distribution of Holy Scriptures. He had a live interest in the World Home Bible League to which he gave, and he was very mission-minded, receiving periodicals from many organizations.*

*Forrest Doner was an aggressive witness, both in his life and also by his words. He boldly spoke for Christ. He was discreet but forward with his witness. He was deeply concerned that all know Christ and that none be lost in sin. He used tracts effectively. His personal letters were filled with Bible verses and with references to God's goodness and love and mercy. He loved the Lord Jesus with all his heart, and he yearned to see*

***Christ face to face. He often spoke of heaven and looked forward to meeting his blessed Lord.***

***He spent hours studying and memorizing the Holy Scriptures. He left four Scriptures, which he wished to be read at his funeral. One was Matthew 5:16 (a verse that he exemplified so well): "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Forrest Doner let his light so shine before others that people were attracted to his Lord.***

***Another favorite verse was Isaiah 26:3, 4: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal." Because of his sensitive nature, it was easy for Mr. Doner to worry and fret. He long practiced this verse, and he sought to counter his worry by staying his mind on the Lord. When he suffered almost unbearable pain, he would 'stay his mind on Christ.'***

***Another favorite verse of Mr. Doner was John 14:3, "And if I (Jesus) go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there ye may be also." Brother Doner often spoke about prophecy and about the Second coming of Christ and about the signs of the last times. He believed that he would someday be with his blessed Lord. His desires have now become realized.***

***The fourth Scripture, which he requested to be read at his funeral, is this: "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?'" (John 11:25, 26) Forrest Doner lived for Christ and died in Christ, and he is now with Christ. He will never die. He enjoys eternal life.***

***But Forrest Doner was not so heavenly-minded that he was of no earthly good. He lived for two worlds, the world of time, and the world of eternity. He was deeply involved in life and in relationships. He loved people and he loved his works. He was a skilled accountant and bookkeeper. He admired educated people and believed one should do his best in the profession he chose on earth. He spoke with admiration concerning the successes of his son and daughter-in-law. He was a business professional and did well in his work. He was interested in the world of men, always maintaining an interest in the political and economic trends of the modern world. He subscribed to various politically orientated magazines, etc. He enjoyed life and he was not an escapist. He was a loyal American and prayed often for the leaders of our nations. He wrote political-type letters and talked about possible solutions to world problems. But He always saw the ultimate solution in Jesus Christ.***

***Of great importance to Mr. Doner was his family. He loved his son deeply and cherished the memory of his deceased wife, who died over a decade ago. Mr. Doner was no stranger to sorrow, having lost his younger son in a tragic accident several years ago. He experienced great pain at times, as a result of his war injuries. He was wounded in W.W. I, the day before the armistice was signed. He wasn't expected to live, but in spite of losing one leg, he lived an active life even, fishing in the mountains. He loved the out-of-doors But Mr. Doner is now out of all his pains. The former things have passed away. Behold, all things are new and wonderful and beautiful. He is now enjoying perfect health and perfect joy, being reunited with family and friends and most of all, with His blessed Lord. He being dead physically still speaks to us – the ones living on earth. He would still recommend his Lord as Saviour and Lord. He would still encourage us to be faithful to Christ and to the Church. He would tell us to be generous and loving and encouraging to others. He would tell us to pray and praise and work and hope and trust. There is no doubt that Mr. Doner has heard the greatest of all words: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful in little. I will make you ruler over much." (Jesus) May we so live that we too will hear those words.***

# REMEMBERING
# FRED EICHEN -1968

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***Fred Eichen was a long-time, active member of the Fort Collins Free Methodist Church, and a steadfast friend of many. His was one of the first funeral services I conducted, during the early part of my ministry, when I was 23 years old. When I was a young man (pastor), he was one of my godly mentors.***

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

***"Death is the most democratic institution on earth. It comes to all men, regardless of color, education, wealth, or rank. It allows no discrimination, tolerates no exceptions. The mortality rate of mankind is the same the world over: one death per person." (Fred Duehner)***

***Death is the common denominator of all men. One cannot escape the reality of death. Of all the world's wonders, the greatest wonder of all is that, although a man sees others dying all around him, he himself believes that he himself will not die. But the Bible says, "It is appointed unto all men once to die." (Hebrews 9:27a)***

***When one faces the sober fact of death, is there any room for hope? The answer depends on the person. There is no hope for the man who rejects Christ, but there is only a "certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation". (Hebrews 10:27)***

***However, for the Christian, the future is filled with a bright prospect. It is true that hope involves patience and waiting. Says the Scriptures, "We were saved by this hope, but in our moments of impatience let us remember that hope always means waiting for***

***something that we do not yet possess. But if we hope for something we cannot see, then we must settle down to wait for it in patience." (Romans 8:24, 25)***

***Says the Scriptures, "By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead". (I Peter 1:3, R.S.V.) "This hope we hold as the utterly reliable anchor for our souls." (Hebrews 6:19, Phillips)***

***What is the hope, which every Christian possesses as the reliable anchor for his soul? What are the bright prospects in the future for the Christian?***

***The Christian has hope of having a resurrection body. Every Christian shall rise from the dead and receive a new body. "Those who have died in Christ will be the first to rise, and then we who are still living on the earth will be swept up with them into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And after that, we shall be with him forever. So by all means use this message to encourage one another." (I Thessalonians 4:17, 18; Phillips)***

***This corruptible, frail body of clay will be transformed into a healthy, strong, celestial body, which shall never know sickness, pain, or death. Wrote Paul to the Corinthians, "Listen, and I shall tell you a secret. We shall not all die, but suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, every one of us will be changed as the trumpet sounds! The trumpet will sound and the dead shall be raised beyond the reach of corruption, and we who are still alive shall suddenly be utterly changed. For this perishable nature of ours must be wrapped in immortality. So when the perishable is lost in the imperishable, the mortal lost in the immortal, this saying will come true, death is swallowed up in victory." (I Corinthians 15:51-54; Phillips)***

***The Christian has hope of seeing loved ones. Love outlasts death. If we experience love in this life, how much more shall we experience love in heaven. What a glorious time that will be to be united with husband, wife, father, mother, brother, sister, and friend! Our love then will be complete and lasting.***

***The memory of a loved one and the anticipation of a glorious and heavenly reunion with him, should provide a balm and healing for the grieving soul. As one person says, "The healing of the Christian's grief should be a process of remembering rather than a process of forgetting - a returning sense of gratitude to God for the life He has made a part of ours and a joyful looking forward to the heavenly reunion He has promised us. Christian love will remain untarnished after the last tree has fallen, the last mountain worn down, the last star becomes a cinder. In the vast time-scale of eternity, our brief partings are but the episode of a moment.***

*"The thing that remains with us during this period of separation is the meaning of the life that was entwined with ours. Death does not sum up its meaning any more than the period on the last page sums up the meaning of a book. Our beloved dead are still alive even though we cannot see them or speak to them. What they are is what they were, maturing into the perfection of their eternal destiny." (Peter Day)*

*The Christian has hope of seeing Jesus. As Barclay says, "For the Christian, heaven is where Jesus is. We do not need to speculate on what heaven will be like. It is enough to know that we will be forever with Him. When we love anyone with our whole hearts, life begins when we are with that person; it is only in their company that we are really and truly alive. It is so with Christ. In this world, our contact with Him is shadowy, for we can only see through a glass darkly. It is spasmodic, for we are poor creatures and cannot live always on the heights. But the best definition of it is to say that heaven is that state where we will always be with Jesus, and where nothing will separate us from Him anymore." (Barclay's John; v. 2; pg. 181)*

*Jesus, these eyes have never seen*
*That radiant form of Thine;*
*The veil of sense hangs dark between*
*Thy blessed face and mine.*
*I see Thee not, I hear Thee not,*

*Yet art Thou oft with me;*
*And earth hath ne'er so dear a spot*
*As where I meet with Thee.*
*Yet though I have not seen, and still*
*Must rest in faith alone,*
*I love Thee, dearest Lord, and will.*
*Unseen but not unknown.*

*When death these mortal eyes shall seal,*
*And still this throbbing heart,*
*The rending veil shall Thee reveal*
*All glorious as Thou art.*

*Mr. Eichen was respected and loved in his home. As a husband, Fred Eichen loved and was loved by his wife. Fred and his wife, Bessie, trod life's pathway together in mutual love and with courageous endeavor. Together they experienced the joy of establishing a home in which each experienced mutual care one for the other. Together they labored diligently for the noble and worthwhile things of life. As the strong head of his home, Fred Eichen was the object of affection, respect, and admiration by both wife and children.*

*Fred's life was enriched by having wonderful grandchildren and great grandchildren. As a family man, he was the source of joy, gladness, and laughter. Precious are the memories of his kind counsel, fatherly care, and godly example. He honored God's Word, practiced daily prayer, and lived the life of love. Blessed is the home of which he was leader, guide, and guardian.*

*Fred Eichen was a natural leader and commended the respect of many men with whom he worked throughout life. Fred Eichen was no stranger to work. He enjoyed, and was active in, work until within a few days of his death. Fulfilling his tasks faithfully, thoroughly, and conscientiously, Fred gave dignity to work. Fred was creative and dexterous and went about his labors with a business – like concern. He knew how to organize men and inspire them to work towards the accomplishment of a worthy goal. Many were his work friends, and precious were his memories in working with them. In my short and interesting acquaintance with Fred, I listened with great interest as he recounted exciting work ventures from the past.*

*Fred was recognized as a real gentleman and understanding friend within his neighborhood. Over the span of his life, Fred made many friends, some passing and some close and faithful. Because of the steadfastness and compassion of his character, Fred's friendship was cherished and coveted by many. Combining the qualities of ruggedness and tenderness, impetuousness and patience, forwardness and reservation, Fred lived the life of a real man. Fred was a man who knew how to laugh and how to cry, how to think and how to act, how to worship, and how to play. The rare combination of qualities found in Fred Eichen made him a respected leader among men.*

*Mr. Eichen was a dedicated Christian and Church worker. The most important question, which each man must face, is, "Who shall be my Master?" Every man is the servant of some Master, and Fred Eichen was no exception. Fred's determination to serve God was manifested in many ways – his Church attendance, his life of prayer, his love for the Bible, his desire to help others, his spirit of generosity and liberality. Fred lived not for this life alone; he lived for eternity. He lived for two worlds – the world of*

***material things and the world of spiritual reality. While Fred enjoyed the good things of this life, his vision was not blinded by the glamour and superficiality of material things. Fred built his life on the Rock, which remains eternally after the shifting sands of Time have been swept away. Because Fred Eichen's footprint was stamped on the Eternal Rock and not on the shifting sands of Time, his influence lives on, and "he being dead, yet speaketh." As a transformed man of God, Fred stood for the great qualities of life – integrity, justice, and mercy. Realizing that he was overbuilt for this life alone, Fred lived not for the temporal realm, but also for the celestial realm, not only for the body, but also for the spirit.***

***Birth, Childhood, Adolescence, Adulthood, and Old Age – these are the passing stages of life. One may be abruptly introduced to the next stage, but more often, one enters the next stage gradually and slowly. The tenderness of Spring gradually changes into the fragrance of Summer, followed by the ruggedness of Fall and the aging of Winter. So each of life's stages is followed by a more mature and experienced stage. Death does signal finality for this earthly realm of existence, but out of the darkness of death comes the dawn of eternity. Death seals the end for one realm of existence, only to introduce an infinitely more glorious realm of existence.***

***Death may be filled with mystery and clouded with uncertainty, but for the CHRISTIAN the sting of death is removed. Because Christ trod the terrifying road of death, his followers may now trod the road of death without fear and without terror. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." (Psalms 23:4)***

***Fred Eichen has trod the road of death and has landed in that beautiful land where the sun always shines, where the flowers perpetually bloom, where the angels beautifully sing, and where the glory of Christ dwells. No longer is Fred bowed down with the cares of life. His tears are dried and his countenance is radiant. He has the glow of eternity on his face. Because Fred Eichen was faithful, even unto death, he now wears the crown of eternal life. He shall eternally rejoice in the presence of his Saviour, Jesus Christ.***

# REMEMBERING
# GENE PEREGOY - 2002

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL

***This sermon pays tribute to an honest, sincere, simple-faith man, a man who was a real patriot of his country, a man whose personal and economic struggles were considerable, but a man who deeply loved God and the Scriptures, and a man who expressed overwhelming gratitude to me as his pastor every time I enjoyed his warm hospitality in his home (along with his wife Barb, whose tribute also appears in this book). Gene and Barb both expressed uncomplicated (direct faith in their wonderful Lord!***

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

***I had the privilege of meeting Gene Peregoy (and his wife Barbara) three decades ago. It was my privilege to witness their exchange of wedding vows, November 24, 1972 (nearly 30 years ago). For several years after Gene and Barb were married, they and their four children attended the Free Methodist Church where I served as their pastor. It was a joyous experience for me to talk and to laugh and to pray with them many times, when I shared the warmth of their hospitality in their home. Both Gene and Barbara found a special place in my heart and I learned to love them as members of the Family of God – the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

***Gene Peregoy, like all of us here today, was a so-called 'common person' – no great acclaims or great worldly accomplishments. But, in the eyes of God, it is what is in one's heart and spirit that determines whether a person is truly 'noble' or 'ignoble'. I believe Gene Peregoy was a 'noble person' – a sincere and honest and humble-hearted man who was, in many ways, 'in love with life'.***

***Gene Peregoy was a devoted husband who deeply loved his dear wife, Barbara. Barbara's sudden death on November 20, 2000 (less than 2 years ago) was a 'terrible blow' to Gene, for Gene was so close and so dependent upon his wife. Gene admired (almost 'worshipped') his wife. Gene and Barb together experienced, as husband and wife, many 'ups and downs', many joys and heartbreaks, many laughs and cries, many changes and adjustments. And, through all of life's changes and chances, Gene remained a faithful and committed husband to his beloved wife. During the last two years that Gene has been separated from his wife - because of her death – have been 'rough' years, and Gene has missed his wife terribly. But now God – in His mercy – has reunited Gene with his beloved wife, and they shall never be apart again!***

***Gene Peregoy was a caring father, and (in spite of his admittance of mistakes in fathering) Gene truly loved and nurtured his children. It was his desire that the children whom he and Barb raised should be wise and godly and responsible human beings. I feel sure that Gene was most grateful to each of his children (and their spouses) and to any grandchildren – for all the love and encouragement, which they gave during his difficult trials, which he endured.***

***Gene Peregoy enjoyed the beauties of God's Nature. This love for Nature was partly developed and enhanced as a result of his wife's great love for plants and flowers. The Peregoy's home was 'graced' with a large number and a great variety of plants, which because of Barb's skill and her 'green thumb', were healthy and vibrant! It was my sheer joy when I was in their home, many years ago, to have Barb share with me the many unique plants, which she nurtured. Gene was so very proud of Barb's knowledge and care of her hundreds of unique plants! Gene had a great reverence for the God of Creation – the God who delighted Gene's eyes with multitudes of colored flowers, both inside and outside the Peregoy home! Gene loved the flower-strewn hills, and the floating clouds, and the star-lite nights! He was a man who was "lost in wonder, love, and praise", a man full of gratitude for the intricate beauties of God's out-of-doors!***

***"For the wonder of each hour***
***Of the day and of the night,***
***Hill and vale, and tree and flower,***
***Sun and moon, and stars of light!***
***Lord of all, to thee we raise***
***This our hymn of grateful praise."***

***Gene Peregoy loved his siblings, his parents, and his 'extended family'. The Peregoy family was a rather 'large family', and Gene was loved and admired by his many relatives. Gene's family was largely 'rooted' in the rural environment of 'country life' – and Gene appreciated his wonderful heritage. I remember, many years ago, when his parents were elderly, how much he credited and cherished his dear parents.***

***Gene Peregoy loved his Country – the United States of America – and he proudly served in the United States Army. He was a man who loved the American Flag. He believed in the principles of democracy, and he firmly embraced the Constitution of our Founding Fathers. He proudly wore his Army uniform, and he believed in defending the rights of the poor and the oppressed! He himself was never a 'rich man' in terms of financial plenty, but he was thankful for what he enjoyed materially and politically and spiritually as an American citizen. He especially valued 'freedom of religion', and he was a deeply devout person.***

***Gene Peregoy deeply loved his Saviour – the Lord Jesus Christ! Gene Peregoy was a sincere Christian believer. He loved God deeply and he accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. He was baptized in the Christian Faith. He was reverent in his attitudes, worshipful in his spirit, and he sought to be genuine and authentic and 'real' in his relationship with God and with others. He despised hypocracy. He wanted to be a 'true man of God', without guile or duplicity or insincerity. It was my joy to conduct some 'Bible Studies' with him and Barb, in their home, many years ago, and I found both of them to be eager to learn and open to share their insights from life's practical experiences. Gene was no stranger to suffering, but I found Gene to be rather courageous and brave through the 'ups and downs' of his life. He loved to pray and to read the Bible, and he was often in the Church services at the Free Methodist Church where I pastored in Fort Collins. Gene had a special interest in Biblical Prophecy, and he liked to talk about Christ's ultimate and final victory over all evil at the end of the world! Gene loved to talk about the 'glories of heaven' (described in the book of Revelation from which Gene liked to read). Since Gene has crossed the line from earth's existence to heaven's glory, Gene now experiences 'in reality' what he used to often anticipate 'by faith'!***

# REMEMBERING

# ROCKY BELL - 1975

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***Rocky Bell, like his wife (Lu Bell, whose tribute also appears in this book) was "saved out of the raw." He was dramatically changed in so many ways, when he opened his life to Christ, during one of my many home Bible Studies (called "Salvation By Appointment" Studies). Through this simple approach of home evangelism, I was privileged to lead many scores of adults to a "saving knowledge of Jesus Christ". Rocky and Lu, like so many other couples through the several years of my long-term pastorate (1987-1994), prayed earnestly to be "saved" (redeemed). The Spirit wrought a great miracle in their lives together, when they deeply repented and surrendered themselves to the Mighty Lord and Master. Rocky (with his dear wife) immediately demonstrated the "fruits of repentance". No more smoking! No more use of alcoholic beverages! He and Lu became regular Church attendees! He began (with Lu beside him) to use his various gifts and talents in Christian service! His joyous, positive attitudes immediately caused many in the local Church to be strongly attracted to him. He became a fervent "prayer warrior!" Even though he was not "flushed with money", and lived a simple life style (in his mobile home), he and his wife began to give regularly and generously. He was one of the most amiable and adaptable and compatible and enjoyable "fellow laborers" that I ever knew! He and Lu were very burdened that several of their loved ones were (according to their evaluation) not "saved". They could not understand why so many of their loved ones (unsaved and unchurched) could not see the importance of "making peace with God" like they had "made peace with God"!***

***Rocky and Lu talked to so many "family members" about their need to accept Christ and to prepare themselves to meet God in eternity – after they died. But none of the***

***many immediate family members (or extended relatives) responded to their appeals to accept the Savior, (as far as Rocky and Lu could observe).***

***I don't know if the life that Rocky and Lu lived, in their earlier years (i.e., during their Before Christ Life – before they 'met Christ') - was a 'contributing factor' to their premature deaths. Both died when they were in their 50's. Rocky was a Christian for only a few years before he died, but he lived a very dynamic, joyous, positive, Christ-centered, Spirit-filled life during those few years, following his dramatic conversion.***

***Lu was 'lost' after Rocky died, and (as I shared in my brief 'sketch' regarding her, in this book) she faced some difficult times as a widow. Rocky was like a 'rock' to her, and great was her grief for three years following Rocky's death, at which time she was reunited with Rocky!***

***The Bible says, "For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." (Psalms 103:13-15)***

***"When as a child, I laughed and wept,***
***Time crept;***

***When as a youth, I dreamed and talked,***
***Time walked;***

***When I became a full-grown man,***
***Time ran;***

***When older still I daily grew,***
***Time flew;***

***Soon I shall find in travelling on***
***Time gone.***

***(Author Unknown)***

*The Bible says, "It is appointed unto man once to die." (Hebrews 9:27a) "Death is the one certain fact. Philip of Macedon had a slave to whom he gave standing order. The man was to come in to the King every morning of his life, no matter what the King was doing, and to say to him in a loud voice: 'Philip, remember that thou must die.'…Death is the only prediction which we can make about human history with absolute certainty." (Whale; pg. 172) Death is the common Denominator of life.*

*"For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." (James 4:14)*

*"As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." (Psalms 39:5)*

*The Scripture reading tells us that, in spite of all the troubles of life, there can be victory and happiness. The secret of a happy and meaningful life is to allow Christ to control your life and enable you to cope with life's problems.*

*I trust that all here today will realize that the glorious power that was within Rocky (as he was affectionately known by all of us) was from God. Everyone present today knew Rocky quite well – some of you for a long period of time and some of you for a shorter period of time. Allow me to share with you my first contact with Rocky Bell. It was four years ago this past June. One of Rocky's relatives asked if I would visit in the home of Rocky and his wife. I did. I sensed a spiritual hunger in their lives. After sharing God's simple plan of salvation with Rocky's wife, she wonderfully invited Christ into her life. Because Rocky was not home that day, I returned the following day and shared Christ with Rocky and he also simply and wonderfully accepted Christ as his personal Saviour.*

*Four years ago was the beginning of a whole new life for Rocky and Lou Bell who grew fast in their faith and knowledge of Christ. I had the joy of spending many hours with them, studying the Bible, and answering many questions. Their relationship with Christ deepened, and the circle of their friendship with fellow Christians in the Church broadened greatly. Their interest in learning was great, as evidenced by diligent study of the Scriptures and extensive reading of devotional and missionary literature. Rocky soon found opportunity for service and work in the Church, which he enthusiastically involved himself in. Only two weeks before he passed away, he was still joyfully at his 'post of duty' in the Church. Rocky was one of the most positive and forward-moving persons that I have ever known. He always thought that a task that appeared impossible, could be accomplished.*

*Even during the last week before he died, I sensed a strong and radiant faith shining through. The last time I visited with him, he shared that his only regret was that he waited so long before he became a true follower of Christ. He said he only wanted God's will in his life – whether that meant further life on this earth or not. The radiance of his faith combined with the submission of his will to God was beautiful and inspiring to behold. Rocky recognized that to live would be Christ and to die would be heaven – so he was a winner either way!*

*You who knew Rocky for many years know that Rocky was not always this way. Everyone should see that the glorious power within Rocky must have been from God and not his own. How else can you explain the wonderful change in Rocky's life the last four years? Rocky confessed his sins to Jesus, believed in Christ with his entire being, and accepted Christ into his life as a daily companion and friend. Rocky daily prayed and his faith grew mightily. He was faithful in Church attendance and in CHRISTIAN service. He cared for others and was interested in having Bible Studies in the homes of his friends. The deepest desire of his life was that all of his loved ones and family would turn their lives over to Christ's control and experience the joy and peace and forgiveness, which he experienced. He prayed night and day for this to happen.*

*Today I stand before many of Rocky's large and wonderful family. My question to you is simple: "Will you accept Jesus into your heart and life and receive forgiveness and new life and new hope?" All you need to do is to genuinely repent of your sins and accept Jesus into your life, and then daily follow Christ by reading the Bible, praying and fellowshipping regularly with Christians at Church.*

*Amidst the sorrow, which she felt, Rocky's wife shared with me her gladness that she and Rocky gave their lives to Christ four years ago. She expressed gratitude that God gave them those four happy years, together. Seldom have I seen a couple who were more happy than Rocky and Lou Bell during these last four years. And may I add that they experienced great joy in spite of the many problems, which they faced. Their joy was found in their loving relationship with their Lord and Saviour, and in their loving relationship with their many friends and loved ones in their Church.*

*Paul wrote: "We are pressed on every side by troubles but not crushed and broken. We are perplexed because we don't know why things happen as they do, but we don't give up and quit." (v. 8)*

*Rocky too was pressed on every side by troubles, but not crushed and broken. He was perplexed because of life's happenings, but he did not give up and quit. Rocky was not without his troubles – physically and financially, but he was not crushed. He*

***maintained strong faith in his Lord. He was perplexed because of life's happenings at times. But even when he could not understand with his reason, he trusted God with his heart. "There are times when a Christian has to learn the hardest lesson of all, the very lesson which Jesus Himself had to learn in Gethsemane; he has to learn how to accept what he cannot understand. There are times when things happen that he cannot understand, but he can still say, 'God, Thou are love; I build my faith on that.'" (Barclay's I Corinthians, pgs. 222, 223)***

***Amidst all the changes and chances of life, Rocky maintained a faith and trust in his wonderful Lord. Even when Rocky was 'knocked down' (v. 9) with the disease of cancer, he got up again and kept going. When he first found out of the presence of cancer in his body, Rocky told me he went into dark depression for a short time. However, he said that he prayed and committed himself to God and soon found God's light shining again in his soul. Rocky remained faithful to the end. In the Bible, it is recorded that God said: "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life". Rocky is enjoying that crown of life today.***

***Rocky looked forward to the joys in heaven which he is now enjoying. The Bible tells us that "the same God who brought the Lord Jesus back from death will also bring us back to life again with Jesus." (v. 14)***

***"I tell you this, my brothers; an earthly body made of flesh and blood cannot get into God's kingdom. These perishable bodies of ours are not the right kind to live forever. But I am telling you this strange and wonderful secret: we shall not all die, but we shall all be given new bodies! It will all happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For there will be a trumpet blast from the sky and all the Christians who have died will suddenly become alive, with new bodies that will never, never die; and then we who are still alive shall suddenly have new bodies too. For our earthly bodies, the ones we have now that can die, must be transformed into heavenly bodies that cannot perish but will live forever." (I Corinthians 15:50-53, Living Bible)***

***"No, not cold beneath the grasses,***
***All forgotten in the tomb;***
***Rather, in my Father's mansion,***
***Living in another room."***

***"Living, like the one who loves me,***
***Like yon child with cheeks abloom,***

*Out of sight, at desk or schoolbook,*
*Busy in another room."*

*"Nearer than the youth whom fortune*
*Beckons where the strange lands loom;*
*Just behind the hanging curtain,*
*Working in another room."*

***It is true that Rocky's body no longer functions, but Rocky himself is alive and well and now working in the very presence of our wonderful Lord. Christ said, "If a man keep my saying he shall never see death." (John 8:51) "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." (John 11:26) "Can these words possibly bear any other interpretation – that death as an experience does not exist at all for the man whose life is entrusted to Christ." (Phillips' Good News; pg. 196)***

***If you are in Christ and are a true believer in Christ – your body will cease its functions someday, but you yourself will never die. You will live forever with the Lord. Come then today to Jesus who is the Source of eternal life. Someday we will meet our beloved friend – Floyd (Rocky) Bell – face to face, and rejoice together forever and forever. Let all come to Christ, and faithfully live for Christ daily.***

***This poem was requested to be read by Rocky's Sisters-in-Law. (Doris and Gladys)***

*I'll lend you for a little time*
*A child of mine, he said!*
*For you to love the while he lives*
*And mourn for when he's dead!*

*It may be six or seven years,*
*Or twenty-two or twenty-three, but will you,*
*'till I call him back,*
*Take care of him for me?*

*He'll bring his charms to gladden you,*
*And should his stay be brief,*
*You'll have his lovely memories,*

*As solace for your grief.*

*I can not promise he will stay,*
*Since all from earth return.*
*But there are lessons taught down here*
*I want this child to learn.*

*I've looked the wide world over*
*In my search for teachers true.*
*And from the throngs that crowd*
*Life's lanes - I have chosen you.*

*Now will you give him all your love?*
*Think not the labor vain*
*Nor hate me when I come to call,*
*To take him back again.*

*I fancied that I heard them say,*
**Dear Lord, thy will be done,*
*For all the joy thy child shall bring*
*The risk of grief shall run .*

*We'll shelter him with tenderness,*
*We'll love him while we may,*
*But should the angels call for him,*
*Much sooner than we'd planned.*

*We'll brave the bitter grief that comes*
*And try to understand!*

# REMEMBERING
# MEL DOUTHIT - 1992

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***I remember yet the evening in his home, where Mel Douthit and his wife (Lois) - many years ago now – prayed the "Sinner's Prayer". After that night, this couple became heavily involved in ministry (service) in the Church where I served as pastor. Both were so enjoyable to work with – so sincere and positive and loving and enthusiastic. By temperament, Mel was a 'perfectionist', and he demonstrated this (humbly) by his excellent craftsmanship, which he used to do various repair and maintenance jobs at our Church. He was always a willing and glad volunteer at the Church, working joyously "behind the scenes" with no "fanfare". Always available when he was needed by the Church staff! Unfortunately, he developed cancer in his early 50's, and he died within a few months, leaving his widow to live without him for many years afterwards. This loving CHRISTIAN, like as is true of all believers, was not without his "faults". Shortly before he died, he came into the room where I was holding a Church membership class, and he said to the adults in the class: "I wish I would have quit smoking ten years ago!" It is possible (probable?) that his lung cancer was caused by his long-time smoking! But, even if his was a "premature death", by grace he is now safely in the loving arms of Christ.***

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

***Mel was loyal to his country, proud to be an American, grateful that he could fight for the cause of freedom. A proud Navy man! Proud to display the American Flag. Thankful for his freedom as a citizen of the United States, and willing if necessary to die to preserve that freedom for future generations.***

***Mel was conscientious in his commitments. A man of his word, trustworthy in every way, dependable in his work, loyal in his friendships. Mel was a real friend indeed, unpretentious, open and vulnerable, without guile or deception, sincere through and through.***

***Mel was a true friend whose commitment was deep and whose generosity was very evident. He loved to visit and he loved to talk about the simple and ordinary events of life – especially Country events. A very likeable person, down to earth, good humored, friendly, unselfish, generous, and uncalculating. He loved his native state of Nebraska, and he often was filled with nostalgia when recalling his country life as a youth.***

***Mel was strong in his convictions, with a keen sense of right and wrong. Frank, to the point of being almost blunt at times, he nevertheless sought to be tolerant of others without compromising his basic convictions regarding social justice and moral integrity.***

***Mel was close in his family ties. He deeply loved his wife and four children, his parents and his brother and sisters. He was not ashamed to weep during times of loss. I saw him openly weep as he recounted his mother's death. He was proud of his children, and sought to share Christ with them in special ways recently when they came here from other states to visit him. He spoke with great pride regarding his heritage and he was so grateful for his parents and siblings. He cherished his wife and sought, to the very end, to exercise strong leadership as the head of his home.***

***Mel loved his Church and his fellow members, and he consistently for 10 years participated in the weekly Church services. He was Sunday School secretary, and kept careful records of attendance and Sunday school offerings. He deeply appreciated his friends in his Church, and often spoke of the love and loyalty, which his friends in the Church demonstrated, to him. He testified recently before a small group of adults that he counted it a privilege to tithe to the local Church. With tears welling up in his eyes, he expressed deep gratitude for his friends and for the love, which he had received from friends in his local Church. He looked forward to his Growth Group Meeting on Wednesday nights. This group met in his home on Wednesday nights.***

***Mel was a most skilled welder, perfectionist in his labors, with a high standard of performance for both himself and for others.***

***Mel was a sincere believer in Christ, full of gratitude to God for salvation, tender in his empathetic feelings for people, faithful in his attendance of Church services, bold in his witness to unbelievers, humble in his attitudes toward himself. He felt unworthy of***

***God's forgiveness, but nevertheless deeply grateful for forgiveness. He was glad to "stand up for Jesus", especially during the last few months when friends would come to visit with him. His faith in God became greater and greater, the closer he drew to the time of his death. He died with victory in his heart, with a deep assurance of forgiveness of his many sins, with joy in his anticipation of heaven's glory. He faced the fact of his death very realistically, but he talked about heaven with such ease and with even a sense of excitement. He loved this physical life and wanted to live longer, but when he knew that he was going to die, he seemed to be preparing for his new heavenly home with great naturalness.***

***Notes E. Stanley Jones, "Physical death to those who are in Christ is not a calamity but opportunity. It is a part of redemption – the redemption of our bodies. It is a sowing – a sowing of a mortal body and reaping an immortal body; it is a sowing of a diseased, broken-down body and the reaping of disease-free, death-free, decay-free body; death is the anesthetic that puts me to sleep while God changes my mortal body to immortal". (In Christ; pg. 71)***

# REMEMBERING
# JACK WEBB – 2001

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***After I had the privilege of leading Jack and Audeen Webb to Christ in their home (through the use of an illustrated Bible study that carefully shared "The Plan of Salvation"), this couple became very serious about their need for Christian Growth. They expressed a desire for me to study with them an entire series of "follow-up" lessons. Consequently, I went to their home, once a week, for probably at least one year! Throughout my 27 year-long ministry, at the Fort Collins Free Methodist Church, I never spent more time in personal home Bible Study with any couple, as I did with this couple! They were so eager to grow, and they had so many relevant and sincere questions. Very warm and hospitable! Their lessons were carefully prepared! A pure delight to be with them! I looked forward each week to their fellowship! As a young pastor (of a small church), I "poured myself into them", and I sympathized with any "hurts" which they were experiencing! Occasionally, at the time we met, I would see and briefly visit with their two sons and one daughter (all respectful and gifted children).***

***Jack was strong physically and he was alert mentally. As a skilled bricklayer, he often traveled out-of-town for several days at a time, to work on major commercial buildings. Seldom can one find a job that requires more physical stamina and strength as that in the brick laying business. Of course, this type of job requires precision and perfection, and Jack met those criteria for sure. He was a perfectionist, by temperament. He wanted everything he did to be done "right", "properly". But, he was not (as a perfectionist) difficult to get along with. He was friendly, approachable, conversational, empathetic, companionable, and hospitable. A very likeable person! Sometimes, after a long day of work, he would come home, and he would (in his very neat garage) set up a small table and a few chairs, and he would invite a few friends to***

*come and to sit and to visit with him in the comfortable atmosphere of his garage! Yes, he was a unique type friend! What he and his male friends drank in that garage, I am not sure. Perhaps coffee and soda. But, likely, something stronger than these "innocent beverages".*

*As great a man as Jack was (and, indeed I esteemed him highly, in his house and as he and his lovely wife and three children all sat together in the second pew each Sunday in our Church's small sanctuary), there was one "besetting sin" in his life – the devastating habit of excessive alcoholic drinking. Even though Jack had consistently worked very hard during the many years of his marriage, and had faithfully provided food and shelter for his family, apparently this problem with alcohol had been an ongoing problem for most of his adult life. The problem was not evident to persons like myself, and his committed (lovely) wife never expressed this problem to me, even though I spent considerable time in their home, sharing Bible Studies. (Also, Jack's wife had a beauty shop in their home, and, for many years, she cut my hair).*

*After I retired from pastoring that Church where they attended for many years, I did not "keep in contact" with Jack. Finally, I learned that (after many years of marriage ) Audeen divorced Jack. A few years after this divorce, Audeen called me and she asked me if I would perform the wedding ceremony for her and the man she dearly loved (a second husband).*

*I consented (even though I still felt 'pain' in my heart that she no longer was united to Jack as her husband). I thought that Jack's problem with alcohol was probably the main contributing factor to their "break-up". Since Audeen's new husband greatly enjoyed "Square Dancing" as a recreation, Audeen had also taken up this activity. Because this sport brought both of them great enjoyment, Audeen and the new man in her life wanted me to perform their wedding ceremony, in the context of them and their friends doing "Square Dancing"! (this was the most unique setting that I have ever experienced, to perform a wedding ceremony – but it was done amidst so many colorful and happy participants and "witnesses"! Ha!)*

*Jack, for several years, ended up living as a single, in a neat little apartment. Audeen with her new husband, moved to Wyoming. I lost track of Jack. I did not see him for several years. And then, one day I got a call from one of his sons, informing me that his dad was in the community hospital, very ill and near death, with cancer taking its toll on his body. Would I go to visit their dad? I went immediately, not knowing what I would see. Before entering his hospital room, I prayed in my mind (as usual) that God would give me wisdom to know what to say and how to respond to this very ill man (a man who once was so strong and vital). God answered my prayer! Jack, who was*

*obviously suffering greatly from the deterioration of this dreadful disease, reached his hand out to my hand and he expressed (as best as he could) his love. I told him how much he had meant to me, for so long, and I told him that God loved him so very much. I asked him if he wanted to pray a prayer for renewed assurance, expressing his faith anew in our wonderful Savior. He prayed a prayer of renewed commitment, for renewed assurance. After (inadequately) expressing my love to Jack, and my appreciation for his long-time friendship, I soon left the room.*

*In the hallway, outside his room, his son asked me if I would preach his funeral sermon. Because brick laying was their dad's lifetime career, Jack's children did something very unique. They arranged on the platform of the funeral chapel (near to where I was preaching), several tools, and a rough looking table (all items which their dad had often used while he diligently worked on his project sites). God was preciously near and dear during that service! Jack was my friend, not just a parishioner!*

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

*It has been my great privilege to be a friend of Jack Webb. I first met Jack when he first moved to Fort Collins in the early 1970's. I was his pastor for several years, when he regularly attended the Fort Collins Free Methodist Church. I grew to love and to cherish him and his precious family. I would like to share a few thoughts, which I have cherished regarding this fine person, and also to share some thoughts regarding the hope, which he had, and which you and I have, as a result of faith in Jesus Christ.*

*First, I can say that Jack Webb was a sincere and earnest person, regarding spiritual matters. It was my privilege to pray with Jack and his wife in their home, when they first moved to this city. They accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, and I spent about one year in their home on a weekly basis, sharing Bible lessons regarding Christian growth. In my 27 years as the pastor of the Fort Collins Free Methodist Church, I spent more time leading 'follow-up' Bible studies in the home of the Webbs than in any other home! Jack and his wife were so eager to learn about God! They always warmly welcomed me into their home, and we together shared many biblical truths together. I often saw Jack and his lovely family in the church worship services, and he listened so attentively to hundreds of my sermons. He liked to read his bible. He sought to be kind in his treatment of people. Just two days before he died, I had the privilege of hearing Jack pray a prayer of recommitment to Jesus Christ. He assured*

*me that he loved the Lord. I assured him that God loved him as one of His children, and that God had a wonderful place prepared in heaven for him.*

*Second, I can say that Jack's love for his family persisted until the very end of his life, as evidenced by the loving communication between him and his children at his bedside during the last days of his life. Jack would never have claimed to have been a 'perfect' dad, but it was so obvious that he deeply loved his family.*

*Third, I can say that Jack was a very hard worker – a skilled bricklayer, a perfectionist-minded craftsman – who performed his tasks with great conscientiousness. His attitude was "If you don't do it right then don't do it at all!' He was proud of the quality of his work. He took his work seriously. He worked hard, long days, often having to be out of town for distant jobs. Many of the buildings in this local community – like high schools and several commercial buildings – are the results of the works of his hands! Jack Webb worked with his hands. When I talked to Jack on Friday (before he passed away on Sunday), I took his hands into my hands and I commented to Jack that those hands of his had laid countless bricks. What skilled hands! And how thankful I am that I got to shake those hands hundreds of times in his home and at the Church where he often attended!*

*Fourth, I can say that Jack Webb had a host of friends, for he was outgoing and friendly and he was a loyal friend to many, far and wide. He was a very likeable person.*

*Fifth, I can say that Jack Webb was no stranger to suffering and loss in his life. He was injured as a result of a fall on his job, several years ago, resulting in his having to discontinue his heavy involvement in the profession in which he was so skilled – bricklaying. Not only did he experience great suffering as a result of physical injury, but he at times experienced considerable mental suffering in his battle against certain personal habits, which were so hard to 'break'. And, during the last few months, he struggled heroically against the fierce enemy of cancer. Even though he lost this last battle with cancer, he remained courageous until the end!*

*With these several thoughts in mind, regarding the life and legacy of Jack Webb, allow me to share with you a few thoughts regarding the hope and the comfort which those who love God have a 'right' to claim during life's losses.*

*Nearly a hundred years ago, before Norman Vincent Peale preached his first sermon as a young man, he came to his preacher father and asked, "Dad, what in the world am I going to say to the people?" Replied the wise father, "Just tell them that God loves them".*

***What else is there to tell, and what better news is there to share than this? And that is the heart of the Bible: God loves you and He will see you through and will take care of you all the way throughout life.***

***A great theologian (Bible teacher) was one time asked what was the greatest and most profound truth in theology that he had discovered. Replied this brilliant theologian: "'The greatest fact in all theology is this: 'Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.'"***

***One little frightened girl in a dark room, cried out to her mother to come to her. The mother reassured the daughter that God would take care of her. The little girl replied: "But God has no face".***

***I am glad to tell you that, although you can't visibly see the face of God today, God does have a face. It is the beautiful face of Jesus Christ.***

***A small boy was gazing at a picture of his father who was away for several months. Explained the boy: "I wish daddy would step out of that picture and be really with me in person just now."***

***That is what God did! He stepped out of the Universe and He became a real man with a real human face! Jesus gave God a face. Jesus is the God with a Beautiful Face. "Jesus is God approachable, God available, God loveable, God simplified." (E. S. Jones) "Transfer every characteristic of character from Jesus to God, and you do not lower your estimate of God – you heighten it". (Word Became Flesh; pg. 37)***

***One woman who was struggling to make a surrender to God was making little progress. The very thought of God terrified her. Finally a friend said, "If you were asked to make a surrender to Jesus, would that be difficult?" "Oh, no" replied the woman. "Jesus is so beautiful, I could easily surrender to Him." The beautiful face of Jesus is the very face of God. What Jesus was, God has always been for all eternity!***

***Jesus really cares when we humans suffer. He identifies with our sorrows and even shares in those sorrows.***

***"Jesus, thou art all compassion,***
***Pure, unbounded love Thou art;***
***Visit us with Thy salvation,***

*Enter every trembling heart."*

***There is never a sorrow that He doth not share, nor a woe that He does not feel. But the greatest thing of all is this, that when you see this compassionate Christ, you are seeing God. Jesus reveals to us that God is a very compassionate and caring God!***

***Jesus shares in the sorrow of our sins as well. Jesus took our sins and the punishment of those sins upon Himself. He died in our place. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord laid on him (Christ) the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6)***

***There is an old song, which, as a child, I used to often sing in the little Church where I regularly worshipped. It is entitled 'Does Jesus Care?' Here are the words of the last stanza of that song:***

***Does Jesus care when I've said "good bye"***
***To the dearest on earth to me,***
***When my sad heart aches till it nearly breaks***
***Is it ought to Him, Does He see?***

***O yes, He cares; I know He cares,***
***His heart is touched with my grief;***
***When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,***
***I know my Savior cares. He cares.***

***It is said of Jesus that He was a 'man of sorrows and acquainted with grief'. When Lazarus, the closest earthly friend of Jesus died, the Bible says that 'Jesus wept'. Jesus is no stranger to sorrow. Jesus really cares when our hearts are broken.***

***In this sin-cursed earth, where every human being is a member of a fallen race and where disease is rampant, even the best of Christians sometimes die prematurely. God is not the author of death, and God is also grieved deeply when one of His choice children are attacked with a disease. There is no sorrow too deep but what God can feel it, for God was once a man and therefore He understands everything we humans experience. Our loving Heavenly Father is the greatest Comforter we have!***

***Just before Jesus' crucifixion, He spoke these words to His disciples (and He intended these words for you and me as well): "If you love me, obey me; and I will ask the Father and he will give you another Comforter, and he will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit who leads into all truth…No, I will not abandon you or leave you as orphans in the storm, – and I will come to you." (John 14, Living Bible)***

***When sorrows 'like sea billows roll', the Comforter – the blessed Holy Spirit – will be with you!***

***Shortly before His death, Jesus said: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansion: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14: 1-3)***

***Death may be filled with mystery and clouded with uncertainty, but for the Christian the sting of death is removed. Because Christ trod the terrifying road of death, His followers may now travel the road of death without fear and without terror. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." (Psalms 23:4)***

***The Bible tells us that it has not even entered into the mind of man what God has prepared for those who love Him! Heaven is a place of indescribable joy and beauty!***

***This life here on earth is like the prelude to a song, like the introduction to a book, like the front porch of a house. Real life begins in heaven! As important as this earthly life is, it is only a 'dressing room' for the real celebration, which is in heaven!***

***"When we've gone the last mile of the way,***
***We will rest at the close of the day,***
***And I know there are joys that await me,***
***When we've gone the last mile of the way!"***

***"Onward to the prize before us!***
***Soon His beauty we'll behold;***
***Soon the pearly gates will open,***
***We shall tread the streets of gold."***

***"When we all get to heaven,***
***What a day of rejoicing that will be!***

*When we all see Jesus,*
*We'll sing and shout the victory."*
*"When all my labors and trials are o'er,*
*And I am safe on that beautiful shore,*
*Just to be near the dear Lord I adore,*
*Will thorough the ages be glory to me."*

*"O that will be glory for me,*
*Glory for me, Glory for me;*
*When by His grace I shall look on His face,*
*That will be glory, be glory for me."*

***There is within the bosom of every person a longing for immortality. Man is born with a thirst for infinity – for eternity! Man is overbuilt for this world, and his aspirations call for a fulfillment that is beyond the scope of time. Because of what God has accomplished through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we can be assured that a believer's aspirations for immortality will not be frustrated, but that a believer's deepest aspirations will be fulfilled!***

***Death is simply a bridge that spans the gulf between time and eternity. One who is a true believer in Christ goes over that short bridge into the nearer presence of Christ. For all eternity the believer will praise and glorify Christ. Heaven is a place of indescribable joy, as all the hosts of heaven join in corporate praise to God. The apostle John had a vision of heaven: "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb (Jesus Christ), clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." (Revelation 7:9, 10)***

***Do you wish to go someday to live in that beautiful heavenly home? You can, when you die, if you put your complete trust in Jesus Christ to be your Savior, and if you turn away from all known sin in your life and allow God's precious Holy Spirit to live in your heart and mind and spirit each day. "For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life." (John 3:16) Some of the very last words of the Bible are these: "I (Jesus Christ) am both David's Root and his Descendant. I am the bright Morning Star. The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come'. Let each one who hears them say the same, 'Come.'***

***Let the thirsty one come – anyone who wants to; let him come and drink the Water of Life without charge." (Revelation 22:16, 17, Living Bible)***

***Come to Jesus Christ today. Tell God you are very sorry for your sins and that you confess them all to Him. Believe with all your heart that God loves you and that Jesus died on the cross for you, in order to make your forgiveness possible. Then, open your heart to Jesus Christ and allow Him to come into your heart and mind and spirit and life. Begin talking (praying) to God every day, and let God be your 'senior partner' in every decision of your life. Learn to know him better and better each day, and start reading your New Testament, which tells you how much God loves you and how God wants you to live! Decide to find a good Church to regularly attend – a place where you can be encouraged and supported by fellow believers and where you can learn the 'ways of Christ'. If you respond positively in these simple ways, then you someday will also find yourself rejoicing in heaven forever!***

# REMEMBERING

# GLORIA JOHN – 2000

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***As a pastor of a rather small, but growing, local Church, it was my desire "to reach out in love" to new persons in the community and to unchurched persons in the community. I did not want to be involved in "Sheep Stealing". That is, courting and enfolding members from other community Churches to become a part of my Church. It was not a very "fruitful" or a "fast" way to reach new people and to increase the size of our local Church, but at least it was a way to show newcomers that we are in the city (as a Church) to share the "Good News of Christ" and to offer a "Church home" for persons who had needs for new spiritual life and for meaningful Church fellowship. What was the method that I tried for several years? It was reaching out (by phone) to a few hundred new families each year, as a result of "The Welcome Wagon List" (list of all newcomers). I had many delightful conversations with new persons, by using that list of newcomers, which I received once a month. There were a few noticeable exceptions, but most new families did not seem very "receptive" to my invitation that they visit our Church, or that I visit them in their home. But, persistent as I sometimes can be, I continued to make my calls each month. Maybe there would be a "pearl" or a "diamond" amidst the long list of families, if I simply kept trying!***

***Well, God does honor honest attempts to "reach out in love" to newcomers! Perhaps not 'how' or 'when' we would desire, but the love of God (expressed through "simple vessels" like myself) will eventually have some affect in some lives!***

***One Saturday evening (the most unlikely time to call anyone, for I usually was "doing the last minutes" preparation for Sunday services) I decided to call a new name on my "Welcome Wagon List". God rewarded me (beyond my wildest dreams) when I called a man by the name of "George John". One of the most friendly persons I ever talked to!***

*He and his wife (Gloria) had just moved to Fort Collins from Texas. Probably in their early 60's. When I invited them to visit our Church, he immediately responded: "It is interesting that you called! My wife and I had already planned to visit your service tomorrow!"*

*We had three worship services, and George and Gloria came early to the first worship service! So early, that there was no one else in the sanctuary when they arrived! I, of course, had a chance to visit with them. They were very responsive to our church, the people, etc. They began to come regularly to the services. John and Gloria were very outgoing, and our people "took to them easily."*

*As was my practice throughout most of my long-term pastorate, when a newcomer came to Church, I would try to be in their home soon afterwards. When I first went to their home, I would propose to newcomers the offer of a "Home Bible Study" (which I called "Salvation By Appointment"). Most times newcomers would say "Yes"! George and Gloria John gladly invited me back to their home (after my initial visit with them in their home), and when I went through the detailed "Plan of Salvation" presentation, and then asked them if they would like to pray the prayer for salvation, Gloria was ready but George said he was not quite ready. Out of respect for George, Gloria decided not to pray the "Sinner's prayer". George said to me, "I am not quite ready." Most respectfully, he said, "Pastor Ron, when I am ready, I will call you". George and Gloria continued weekly to come to the worship services. About a month passed, then one day George called me and he said, "Pastor Ron, I am ready! Come to our house as soon as you can." Of course, it did not take me long to get to George's house! When I sat on the couch (in their beautifully-decorated, neat house), trying to be "proper" and "friendly", George soon spoke up with the tone of certainty and definiteness: "Well, we are ready!" (God's timing is not always our timing). The fruit had ripened, and it must, for Jesus' sake, be harvested! It took only a few minutes for them both to claim "Victory in Jesus" as a result of earnestly praying "The Sinner's Prayer"!*

*For several years, George and Gloria were very active in the Lord's work, and through the ministries of the Fort Collins, Colorado, Free Methodist Church. As mentioned in the enclosed tribute, Gloria had the 'gift of hospitality". George was a "natural leader", and he soon became the leader for the senior citizen's group in the Church. Everyone loved this most delightful couple!*

*I was with both of them as they were dying! Both loved the Lord so much! They were radiant Christians, till the very end! Gloria told my wife, just before she died, that she had no fear of dying! A most dignified and vibrant and Christ-centered woman.*

*George told me that he wanted me to be with him as he was dying. I granted his request.*

*Both died as a result of cancer. George outlived Gloria by four years, but before Gloria died, this vibrant and loveable couple celebrated their "Golden Wedding Anniversary" (even though Gloria, at the time, was very ill).*

*Gloria loved to cook! To make her cooking more interesting, Gloria had a hobby of collecting literally hundreds of recipes! George, as a close partner with Gloria (the woman he greatly admired and loved), participated with Gloria in the enjoyment of cooking. George 'loved' a good meal and he had so much fun with Gloria as she would 'try' different recipes. Gloria told George to give his evaluation of the countless different recipes that she was adventurous enough to try. George and Gloria were 'close' with one another, and they were very courteous with one another, but they were, nevertheless, generally quite 'honest' with each other, regarding their individual 'feelings' and 'viewpoints'. If George really liked a new recipe, he would (after their meal together) enthusiastically declare: "That's a Keeper!" (Or if he didn't like the recipe, he would simply and honestly say "That's Not a Keeper!") Not only was "the keeper" delicious and appealing, but it was a recipe that, of course, he (as her husband) would want her to "do again"! George and Gloria both had "fine tastes" for "good food".*

*They often had friends come to their home, for good food and fun and fellowship. George was, like Gloria, a perfectionist. While she made it clear to George that the kitchen was "her kitchen" (her domain), George made it clear to Gloria that the yard was his domain! And what a well-kept yard! Every flower and bush was in the 'right' (artistic) place, and the lawn was like a "golf course"! He took great pride in the way he kept his yard. He enjoyed taking me (and others) around his yard to tell me about the details (and history) of the various planting areas, etc.! Both inside and outside, the artistic "fingerprints" of this couple could be seen! Their house was like a "show house" - a house (inside and outside) that they took pride in, but both of them were gracious, modest, humble and appealing in their decorum and attitudes and speech. No braggarts! Just a confident couple!*

*One time George and Gloria invited me and my dear wife (Venita) to their home for a "Greek Meal" (since George took great pride in the fact that he was "full-blooded Greek"). I have never eaten more food in all my life, at one meal! I was totally "stuffed" at the end of the meal! Each of the five courses in the meal was so delicious (food I had never eaten before), but it seemed to me that each of the five courses could easily have been a meal within itself! George and Gloria had all the 'finesse' and 'grace' and*

*'propriety' that any could have! Obviously my wife and I did not want to "hurt their feelings" by turning down any of their "liberal portions" of food (but I thought my stomach would "pop" before I finally left this gracious couple on that memorable and enjoyable night). I have never "known" a couple quite like George and Gloria John! They could not have been more friendly to Venita and to me (during our own "ups and downs" – including our experience of the murder on our Church parking lot, described in the tribute to Valerie Miller).*

*As Gloria John was dying, she told Venita and me that, when she got to heaven, she hoped that God would give her a job to do, for she said she certainly did not want to be idle in Heaven. Because her gift was the "gift of hospitality", she said that perhaps God would allow her "to serve others" in heaven! Gloria – the beautiful lady who "loved to serve"!*

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

*You who knew Gloria the best knew that she was one of the most gracious and outgoing and hospitable Christian ladies whom you could ever meet! My wife and I (who served as her pastor for several years) knew her to be a warm and friendly and caring person – ready always to offer a word of encouragement to discouraged persons and glad always to share a delicious home-cooked meal around her table. She and her beloved husband were most exemplary in their lifestyle of hospitality.*

*Probably the 'gift of hospitality' topped the list of Gloria's many wonderful attributes. Her kitchen was her 'domain', and she doubtless had collected and filed one of the largest libraries of fine recipes that can be found in any average American home. By the way, Gloria not only collected hundreds of recipes, but she and George often tested and tried scores of those recipes. My wife and I (among a host of their many other friends) were firsthand 'recipients' of many of those delicious meals! She was truly one of the best cooks that could be found anywhere. She brought dignity to the life of a homemaker. She thoroughly enjoyed her role as a hostess to countless persons during the 50 years that she and George were happily married. She served meals with the touch of 'grace, dignity, charm, and finesse'. She and George 'set a table that was fit for a king'! She was always ready to entertain, to make people feel welcome in her home.*

*Unfortunately, sometimes hospitality is not seen as an especially 'spiritual' trait. Sometimes hospitality is seen as rather inferior to some of the other spiritual gifts like preaching, or teaching, or evangelism, or prophesy, or healing, or miracle working.*

***But should we not remind ourselves that the Bible places an important emphasis on hospitality? All Christians are called to be 'hospitable', but some believers (like Gloria) are especially endowed with the 'Gift of Hospitality'. Wrote Paul to the Roman Christians: "When God's children are in need, you be the one to help them out. And get into the habit of inviting guests home for dinner or, if they need lodging, for the night." (Romans 12:13, Living Bible)***

***Do you realize that one of the requirements (in the Early Church) to become a pastor was the characteristic of 'hospitality'? Wrote Paul to Timothy: "A pastor must enjoy having guests in his home." (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8, Living Bible) Gloria was not an ordained minister, but she did enjoy having guests in her home. In that sense, she was a 'true minister' of the Lord God!***

***To observe Gloria and George in their delightful lifestyle of hospitality, you might think that they had sat under the pastoral instruction of the apostle Peter, for Peter wrote: "Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay for the night". (I Peter 4:9, Living Bible) The author of Hebrews wrote: "Don't forget to be kind to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it". (Hebrews 13:2, Living Bible) During the last couple of years, George and Gloria found great delight in delivering their well-prepared meals to certain needy families in the community – persons who were almost like strangers to them but people for whom they cared!***

***As exemplified by Gloria, we all (as followers of Christ) are challenged anew to become hospitable – to have our arms open to receive others into the 'circle of our own fellowship' – to exclude no one, to be friendly to all persons!***

***Yes, the Bible teaches that 'hospitality' is a spiritual virtue – not just a 'social nicety'. Biblically speaking, hospitality means welcoming others, making others feel comfortable, a generous spirit, even accepting strangers. Expressing hospitality in the name of Christ is definitely a 'form of worship', bringing great pleasure to the Lord of Life who is the most hospitable of all persons! Think of it! Gloria's hospitality was a REFLECTION of the very hospitality of Christ Himself! Hospitality, which is 'distinctively Christian', means receiving one another even as Christ received us! To understand anything about the hospitality of God is to understand something about the 'grace of God'. God is hospitable, for God says to all persons: "Come to me, just as you are; I want to be in relationship with you!" God welcomes all persons to sit at His banquet table of grace – His table where He serves forgiveness and healing and comfort and companionship!***

***On earth, Gloria cheerfully and lovingly welcomed many persons into her life, through the 'channels' or 'means' of her wonderful gift of hospitality. Now, in heaven, God – who is the Greatest Host of all – is now welcoming Gloria to sit at His banquet table. God is now welcoming her – "Come on in, Gloria! Welcome to the glories of heaven! Come into my home, which is now your own eternal home. You shall never hunger or thirst again, for I have heavenly food and drink prepared for your eternal enjoyment!" O yes, according to Psalm 23, Gloria can now confidently testify; "You, O God, prepare a table before me. I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever!"***

***I can't help but imagine that Gloria John, who took great delight in showing hospitality on earth by serving others so generously around her table, will now have even greater delight in loving the heavenly citizens through her special 'touches of grace and hospitality'. Would you not agree that Heaven is the 'most hospitable place in the universe'? A place where Jesus delights in being served, but where He delights even more in serving – in showing hospitality to all the saints of the ages – including Gloria John!***

# REMEMBERING

# MARGARET WILSON - 1989

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***The year was 1861, the first year of the famous bloody Civil War – the war between the North and the South, and the war that finally concluded in 1865, with Abraham Lincoln freeing all Black Slaves, just before Lincoln was assassinated. It was this year (1861) that dates the birth of my great grandmother, born in a covered wagon to a woman who died during childbirth. I have been told that my great grandmother (Irene Benedict) was the "first white child born in El Paso County" (where Colorado Springs and Fountain are located). I presume this sparsely populated area, at that time (before Colorado had been made an actual 'State'), was inhabited primarily with American Indians. I was told by certain family members (who enjoy studying genealogical history) that my great grandmother's father felt he could not care for this newborn child, so he looked for a couple who would be willing to take (adopt) the child. Providentially, God led that non-believer (a man whom my family member deemed an "atheist") to find an outstanding Christian couple, to become the recipient of this beautiful newborn baby! Most of Irene's descendants became Christians. If she would have been raised by an atheist, she might never have become a Christian and perhaps few or none of her descendants would have become followers of Christ! Influence is Powerful!***

***To make it more 'personal', because Irene was raised to be a God-fearing person by a loving couple (her adoptive parents), she became a very godly lady, and one of her children was my grandmother (herself a godly lady), and Irene's grandchild was my mother (who was one of the most godly ladies I knew), and I (her great grandchild) have been following the Lord also!***

***When she became a young adult, my great grandmother (Irene) married a godly man, and they were eventually blessed with seven children. One of those children (of course)***

***was my grandmother, Edna (Benedict) Van Dusen (of whom I wrote a tribute, which is included in this book). Another child was Margaret (Benedict) Wilson.***

***Margaret Wilson (sister of my grandmother) was, of course, my great aunt. She was a very 'close' sister to my grandmother. For several years, they lived next door to each other. They visited often. They attended the same Church for many years (the small Free Methodist Church in Fountain, Colorado, which was founded in the 1880's by some of my grandmother's ancestors).***

***Margaret Wilson, herself a mother of six children, was a very godly woman. She experienced both get joys and great sorrows throughout her life. She worked hard as the wife of a farmer, while she raised a large family ("the old fashioned way"). Without the enjoyments of countless conveniences which modern-day couples - with few children – enjoy in our modern times. She was a devout lady, but she did not believe that devotion to God excluded laughter and fun and humor and joking and "holy levity"! Quick witted and able to have a "good time", amidst long days of work on the farm.***

***She often saw "the funny side of life". Unlike my grandmother (who, although she was not formally educated, was nevertheless well read and studious), Aunt Margaret was not given to studying and to reading as much, and she did not feel that she had the "spiritual gift" of teaching, as my grandma had. Aunt Margaret was a woman who worked hard, but she took time to laugh and to have a "good time" on the farm, with her large family. Lots of laughter could be heard by all her children – some of whom, like her, were rather 'witty and good humored'!***

***Yes, it is true that Aunt Margaret knew how to laugh and to relax amidst her long days of hard work. However, what greatly defined her life was her experience of a loss and a tragedy in her life, that threatened to tear her up emotionally and to impair her mentally! When she got word on January 10, 1945, that her youngest son (Eugene Wilson) was "missing in action" (World War II) as a navigator, she was "crushed" in spirit. The young man (unmarried, about 20 years old) was her youngest child, and he was very well liked in his community! In fact (just before I was to be born on January 20, just 10 days after Eugene was reported as "missing in action" my parents gave me Eugene's name, as my middle name (Gene). It was on January 30 (10 days after I was born) that Eugene was reported as 'dead'! To this day, it is not known, for sure, what happened to him. It is supposed that, as a navigator on a fighter plane, his plane was shot down by the German enemy, perhaps over the North Sea!***

*My mother (niece of Aunt Margaret) spoke to me several times through the years as I was growing up, about the difficulty that Aunt Margaret had, trying to recover from the shock and grief and loss, which she felt as a result of losing a son that she felt so close to. Even though she was a deeply committed Christian, there were times that she felt she was going "to lose her mind" because of the heart-wrenching sorrow she felt! She tried to pray, and many prayed for her! Her faithful husband tried to comfort her, as well as her several loyal children (siblings of Eugene). For many years she felt the loss, and (if the full truth were known), Aunt Margaret probably felt the "wound" till the day she died. She was a woman who possessed deep feelings, and undying loyalty for all her children! A very close-knit family, for all time! Time has passed, and, of course, Aunt Margaret and her husband and the other children (besides Eugene) are all in heaven with Eugene.*

*The Bible says that we "have" this treasure (the presence of God) in "earthen vessels" (weakened bodies and weak physical constitution). Even though we claim to love God truly, nevertheless we humans are subject to all kinds of affliction. The person (Christian) whose heart is pure and who is fully devoted to Christ, is still subject to great grief and deep feelings of terrible loss – losses of all kinds, including the heart-breaking loss of loved ones! "Does Jesus care when I've said 'goodbye to the dearest on earth to me? Oh yes, He cares, I know He cares! His heart is touched with the grief of my heart!"*

*My mother told me that Aunt Margaret would "shutter" and be "upset" when she would hear the loud bang of a door shutting – for it reminded her of what she thought exploding bombs would sound like. (It reminded her of the horror of war times). Aunt Margaret did not want to view a parade, for there were (again) too many reminders of the advances of marching soldiers, etc.*

*My great aunt (Margaret Wilson) was again filled with sorrow – when she attended the funeral for her beloved sister (Edna Van Dusen – my grandmother). Even though she had 'joy upon joy' during her long life, she also experienced 'sorrow upon sorrow", with her sister's funeral perhaps being the last great heartbreak before she herself died!*

*Not too long after her sister's funeral, her own funeral was conducted, and I had the honor of being a part of the occasion (which was really a 'celebration' of Margaret Wilson's 'victory in Christ'). The "former things are all passed away" for Aunt Margaret, and, behold, all things are now new! No more tears! Joy forevermore, with her Lord, and with the innumerable company of saints and angels!*

*Welcome home, Aunt Margaret Wilson!*

# FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

***How can one describe a great woman and a long life in a few brief time? Only eternity's evaluation is accurate and complete. For only in eternity will the thoughts, intents, and aspirations, as well as the actions, of a person's life be fully revealed.***

***How can Margaret Wilson's life be described? Each one would describe it differently. I can only describe it based on my personal involvement with her for several years of my life.***

***Margaret Wilson was a steadfast wife and a loving mother. Through the many changes and chances of life, she remained a pillar of strength and a tower of hope. Her large family can only rise up and call her 'Blessed". She toiled long hours, in sometime difficult circumstances, to raise a large family. Her wit and humor added delight to the days and to the years. She could laugh heartily and she could add lightness and delight to anyone's day. She saw life seriously but she could see humor in even the perplexing problems of life. Her home was the center of joy and love and peace. She lightened the burdens of life for many people.***

***Margaret Wilson was a lover of life and a lover of people. She was a lover of nature, with its changing hues and its multiple seasons. Her love of country living, included cooking for big harvest crews, including the long summer evenings when the children would play, including the glistening of the early morning dew, including the smell of freshly cut alfalfa. She loved the changing seasons and she saw God's handiwork everywhere. Even during old age, her love of evening rides to see the scenery, was a delight to her.***

***She was a faithful friend to many. She was loyal during adversity and a comfort during sorrow. Margaret Wilson was no stranger to sorrow. Many were the loved ones who died before her. She was the last of her parent's large family to die. It was her lot to bereave the death of her parents and all of her brothers and sisters. She was called to go through the deep water of sorrow, when she tragically lost her youngest son during the last World War. I some way personally feel close to that loss, since ten days before she learned of that loss, I received my middle name in honor of that son.***

***But Margaret Wilson – fully experiencing human sorrows – learned a most important lesson in life. She learned that she could rejoice in spite of life's tragedies. She learned that God is Sovereign, that God has everything under His control. She did not deny or suppress her sorrow or her honest human doubts. But she learned that even though***

***human suffering cannot be explained or explained away, that God could use even human suffering to perfect her character. She learned the secret of total surrender to the God of love.***

***She learned perhaps the hardest lesson of all, the very lesson which Jesus Himself had to learn in Gethsemane – to accept what one cannot understand. There were times when things happened that she could not understand, but she won victory over despair, and she was able to say, "God, Thou art love; I build my faith on that".***

***Why was she able to submit to God so well and for so long in life?***

***I believe it was because she believed in God so well. I believe her life stood the test of time and the test of trials, because she knew God so well.***

***She believed that God was all-wise. She believed that God knew what was best for every person.***

***She believed that God was all-loving. God not only knew what was but for all persons, but God wanted to give what is best for all persons. God never allows his children to shed needless tears.***

***Third, she believed that God not only knew what was best and not only wanted to give what was best, but that God was all-powerful and thus able to give what was best.***

***Thus, confidence in a God who is all-knowing, all–loving, and all–powerful, sustained her in her darkest hours, as well as added joy to her brightest days.***

***Margaret Wilson not only accepted Jesus as Saviour, but she submitted to Him as Lord. She was saved by faith and she lived by faith. Her faith was not abstract and complicated, but concrete and simple. The degree of her commitment was clearly evidenced by the extent of her faithfulness to the church. As a child growing up, I was deeply impressed by her unconditional commitment to her local Church. Seldom did she miss a Sunday Morning Service, Sunday Evening Service, or Wednesday Evening Prayer Meeting. Rain or shine, summer or winter, decade after decade she was faithful to her Church. Sacrificially she gave of her time, talents, and money to God and the Church. Morning after morning she experienced fresh mercies from the Lord, as she regularly read her Bible and faithfully prayed.***

***Her life was sweet, her care was genuine, her friendship was deep, and her humor was enjoyable. She was a most rare woman – a woman who for years was a very dear friend and loving great Aunt to me.***

***Saith the Scriptures, "Be thou faithful unto death and I (Jesus) will give thee a crown of life". Margaret Wilson was faithful in life and in death. To her has been given the 'Crown of Life.' "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the mind of man, what God hath prepared for them that love the Lord."***

***Great is the reward of Margaret Wilson, not because she was inherently worthy, but because she believed the promises of God, and held onto those promises until God called her home.***

# REMEMBERING

# BARBARA KING – 1989

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***Barbara, as a middle-aged, beautiful lady, suddenly and unexpectantly died when she was only 55 years old, leaving behind a dedicated husband and three married children and one teenager! Our entire local Church "family" was, of course, shocked when we heard of her death! Barbara was a fun-loving person, using her gift in organizing "youth parties" at our Church, to good advantage! The young people enjoyed her creative ideas and her ability to make them laugh and to have a good, wholesome time! Her family knew her to be most conscientious in the expression of her many domestic skills – cooking, sewing, house cleaning (to the "point of perfection"). She was an excellent "communicator" on the phone, or in person! She was given "to detailed-planning" when it came to Church programs (like Christmas plays, etc). Precise, accurate, perfectionist, orderly, and tireless in carrying out assignments. Very creative! Very articulate in speaking! But sometimes she had a tendency to worry and to fret, because she had concerns regarding her family matters, or because of problems others were facing. A very caring person, who probably was over-conscientious regarding her own performances (a recognized fault of a perfectionist).***

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

***As most of you know, Barbara King was a real friend to many in our Church. She was so interested in people generally, and in children specifically. She and her wonderful husband were greatly admired and loved by the many pre-school children in our Church. She and her husband had planned to teach the 3-year-old class on Wednesday evening during Summer Vacation Bible School. The first night of VBS was last***

***Wednesday night. Children gathered around her and Everett, each receiving their goodnight hugs as they ended the first night.***

***Everett and Barbara faithfully attended their Christian Growth Group on Wednesday Evenings. Several of the pallbearers attended that same Growth Group. Valarie Channel – who is singing for us today – mentioned to me just yesterday, how Barbara conscientiously called her if there was a time when she could not attend her Growth Group.***

***Barbara was one of the most skilled workers with her hands that I ever knew. Her cross-stitch work was widely recognized in several craft stores and at well-known craft shows. She warmed the hearts of many through that great artistic ability.***

***Barbara was a naturally beautiful woman. Her beloved husband, with great pride, shared with me that when Barbara was still a teen, she was crowned the queen of her high school, in Newman Grove, Nebraska.***

***Just yesterday her beloved husband (Everett) wrote these words: "She was a devoted wife and mother to her family. They always came first in her life."***

***None of us can claim that we are without faults, and that is true even of Barbara King. But, God looks on the heart of a person. God knows our activities, our intentions, our desires. God loves us unconditionally and He accepts us even with our faults and shortcomings. Jesus is the true treasure of our lives. This treasure (Jesus) is contained within 'earthen vessels'. These 'earthen vessels' are weak and fallible, but God loves us even in our weaknesses and failures and shortcomings. God is slow to judge us, and He is quick to forgive us, and always constant in loving us! Wrote the Psalmist: "The loving kindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, to those who reverence him: his salvation is to children's children of those who are faithful to his covenant and remember to obey him!" (Psalms 103:17, 18; Living Bible)***

***During a time like this when a loved one is taken from us so suddenly and unexpectantly, we are all shocked and saddened, of course. God is never taken by surprise, (but we mere humans often are taken by surprise). We can never understand all the mysteries of this present life, but we do know that God is all-loving (i.e., he wants what is best for us). God is all-wise (i.e., He knows what is best for us), and God is all-powerful (i.e., He has the ability to give what is best for us).***

***On this earth, we see through a glass darkly now, but in eternity we shall see clearly and understand well.***

***In a time of great sorrow, there are some truths that we must together reaffirm and acknowledge.***

***First, the Brevity of Life. Some die in old age, others die in mere youth, and others (like Barbara) die in middle age. But, regardless of how long we live, we know that this mere human life is very brief.***

***"For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." (James 4:14)***

***"As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so we flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." (Psalms 103:15, 16)***

***"When as a child, I laughed and wept,***
***Time crept;***

***When as a youth, I dreamed and talked,***
***Time walked;***

***When I became a full-grown man,***
***Time ran;***

***When older still I daily grew,***
***Time flew;***

***Soon I shall find in traveling on***
***Time gone.***

***(Author Unknown)***

***Second, The Certainty of Physical Death. Death is the one certain fact of life. The Bible says, "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death". (Ecclesiastes 8:8) Sooner or later, we will all die. There is no exception – except in the case of those who are still living when Jesus shall come in the Rapture!***

***Third, The Understanding of Jesus.***

*"Does Jesus care when I've said 'good-by'*
*To the dearest on earth to me.*
*And my sad heart aches till it nearly breaks,*
*Is it ought to Him? Does He see?*

*Oh yes, he cares, I know he cares,*
*His heart is touched with my grief:*
*When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,*
*I know my savior cares. He cares.*

***Jesus was a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief". He knows what we go through when we lose a loved one. There is no one who cares for you more than Jesus, and no one understands you better than Jesus. Jesus, too, wept when he lost persons who were close to Him – like John the Baptist and like Lazarus (his close friend).***

***Fourth The Mercy of God. When each of us dies, it is God's merciful treatment of us that we will need - not God's strict just treatment of us. If we received strict justice from God, none of us could make it to heaven. We would all be lost in our sins. But God gives us mercy, not strict justice. That is, God forgives us of our many sins and shortcomings and human faults. Hear what the Psalmist says about God's merciful treatment of us fallible human beings:***

***"He has not punished us as we deserve for all our sins, for his mercy toward those who fear and honor him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our sins as far away from us as the east is from the west. He is like a father to us, tender and sympathetic to those who reverence him. For he knows we are but dust, and that our days are few and brief, like grass, like flowers, blown by the wind and gone forever." (Psalms 103-10-16; Living Bible)***

***Fifth, The Sovereignty of God. God is sovereignty – i.e., God is in total control of all happenings in our personal life. He respects our human will and choices, but God is the one who uses all experiences in life (the good and the bad alike) to ultimately glorify Himself. God makes even the wrath of men to praise Him!***

***It is comforting to know that everything that happens to the Christian can be used for good ultimately. Wrote Paul, "And we know that all that happens to us is working for our good if we love God and are fitting into his plans". (Romans 8:28)***

*We will never fully understand why some things happen to us, but we can rest assured that God is in control and that He is committed to our ultimate good. Someday we will understand. Our many 'question marks' in life will someday be straightened out into 'exclamation marks' in eternity. Even though it seems so dark now, we can be assured that eventually the light and sunshine will return, and return with greater glory than ever before.*

*Think of Job. After unbelievable hardship and trials and loss of many loved ones through tragic and unexpected deaths, the last chapter of the book has these words recorded: "The Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first." (42:12) In other words, the future is bright for the person who loves God, even though the present may be very dark.*

*Sixth, The Comfort of the Holy Spirit During Sorrow. Among the many titles given to God's Spirit is the title of Comforter. Wrote Paul, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God". (2nd Corinthians 1:3, 4)*

*It is a great comfort to know that when our loved ones die that they are with the Lord and that they will return with the Lord when the Lord comes back the second time to this earth. Wrote Paul, "And now, dear brothers, I want you to know what happens to a Christian when he dies so that when it happens, you will not be full of sorrow, as those are who have no hope." (I Thessalonians 4:13, Living Bible)*

*Seventh, the Glorious Destiny of Believers. Said Jesus, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believes also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:1-3)*

*Heaven is the ultimate destiny for Christians! Note J.B. Phillips, "'Heaven' is the continuation and expansion of a quality of life which begins when a man's central confidence in transferred from himself to God-become-man. This 'faith' links him here and now with truth and love, and it is significant that Jesus Christ on more than one occasion is reported to have spoken of 'eternal life' as being entered into NOW, though plainly to extend without limitation after the present incident that we call life. The man who believes in the authenticity of His message and puts his confidence in it already possesses the quality of 'eternal life'. (John 3:36, 5:24, 6:47, etc.). If we accept this we shall not be too surprised to find Christ teaching an astonishing thing about*

***physical death: not merely that it is an experience robbed of its terror, but that as an experience it does not exist at all…Said Jesus, 'If a man keep my saying he shall never see death' (John 11:26) It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the meaning that Christ intended to convey was that death was a completely negligible experience to the man who had already begun to live life of the eternal quality…Wrote Paul, 'Jesus Christ hath abolished death'." (The Newborn Christian; pgs. 211-213)***

***Death is simply the 'discarding of a temporary machine adapted only for a temporary stage.' (J.B. Phillips)***

***This earthly existence is only a shadow of the true reality, which is Heaven. Like a porch compared to the actual house, like an introduction compared to the actual chapters of the book, and like a prelude compared to the actual song, so is this life on earth compared to our real life in heaven.***

***What is heaven like? Heaven is so wonderful that no human words can be found adequately to explain the glories of heaven. The Bible says that it has not even entered into the mind of man what God has prepared for those who love the Lord. Beyond our highest thoughts and greatest imaginations!***

***Safely Home***

***I am home in Heaven, dear ones;***
***Oh, so happy and so bright!***
***There is perfect joy and beauty***
***In this everlasting light.***

***All the pain and grief is over,***
***Every restless tossing passed;***
***I am now at peace forever,***
***Safely home in Heaven at last.***

***Did you wonder I so calmly***
***Trod the valley of the shade?***
***Oh! But Jesus' arm to lean on,***
***Could I have one doubt or dread?***

***Then you must not grieve so sorely,***

***For I love you dearly still;***
***Try to look beyond earth's shadows,***
***Pray to trust our Father's Will.***

***There is work still waiting for you,***
***So you must not idly stand;***
***Do it now, while life remaineth--***
***You shall rest in Jesus' land.***

***When that work is all completed,***
***He will gently call you Home;***
***Oh, the rapture of that meeting,***
***Oh, the joy to see you come!***
***- Author Unknown-***

# REMEMBERING AUDREY TILTON – 1987

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***Audrey Tilton certainly was not a highly educated person (in terms of "formal education"), but she was: "educated by the Spirit", and certainly she was educated "in the school of hard knocks"! Her husband left her when she was a young lady, and she was left to raise three small children on her own. She worked very hard, doing menial tasks, and she knew firsthand the challenges of poverty, at various levels, in her earlier life. She was, however, a woman of dignity and pride, and she kept her poor economic plights to herself on many occasions. Once she told me that, because she had a very limited food supply in her home, she used the food to feed her children (as a good mother would do), while she herself went without much food. She knew the meaning of "hunger pangs" more than once! But, through all her adversity in life, she learned to lean on God her Heavenly Father. Through the many years of trials and tests, Audrey Tilton developed a deep and vibrant and loving relationship with Christ her Savior and Lord.***

***And, talking about the "Lordship of Christ", this was (from my perspective) the "keynote" and "major theme" of her life. As a long-time member of "The Salvation Army" and later "The Free Methodist Church", she strongly and personally believed what these Holiness Denominations taught – namely, that it is possible and it is important for believers to be "Entirely Sanctified" (I Thessalonians 5:23). When I often visited with her (including the many times I gave her a ride to church or to the weekly "Cottage Prayer Meeting"), she loved to manifest the "joy of the Lord" and the fullness of the Spirit as a result of the glorious experience of "Entire Sanctification"! She did this unconsciously and spontaneously! She emphasized the work of the Spirit in her own life, as she testified to me that many years before the Lord had cleansed her heart of all sin! I have heard many Christians (during the last 50 years of my life) talk about***

***various dimensions of the Christian Life, but I have never heard any believers like Audrey Tilton emphasize with greater urgency the need for Entire Sanctification (an experience that enables a believers to enjoy personal spiritual victory).***

***If "Entire Sanctification" means, not only a cleansed heart, but, most importantly, a life of overflowing love (supreme love for God, and sincere love for others), then Audrey Tilton herself was a truly Spirit-filled (Entirely Sanctified) person! She was one of the most loving, kind, thoughtful, caring, joy-filled, good-natured, laughing, generous, patient, prayerful, discerning, personable believers I have ever known.***

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

***Audrey Tilton was a woman who was an unusual mother, and a person who deeply loved her children and her family.***

***Motherhood was, to Audrey Tilton, the greatest opportunity of her life. She tenderly loved her children; she sacrificed so much to raise them in the ways of Christ; she kept them in Sunday School and Church; she gave up her own convenience to provide basic necessities for her children within the midst of hardships and even poverty; she believed in wholesome discipline and she cultivated great respect for authority within her dear children.***

***Audrey Tilton took great and legitimate pride in her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. She loved to talk about the joys of past days – celebrations and holidays and birthday parties. Audrey Tilton was always known as a woman of good cheer, joyful conversations, light-hearted humor, and positive affirmations. All of her family loved and admired her, and they sought out her wise counsel and her warm-hearted presence. I believe the popular words of Proverbs 31:24-31 well describe the goodly and godly woman that Audrey Tilton was.***

***Audrey Tilton was a woman who was favored greatly by her many friends. The Bible says, "He who wishes to have friends, must show himself friendly!" Audrey Tilton was so likeable, so easy to enjoy, so wonderful in her qualities of companionship. Loyalty to God was coupled with devotion to her friends.***

***The Bible says that he who loves God must love his brother also. "If a man says, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (I John 4:20)***

***Audrey Tilton's love for people was so evident and practical. She was careful not to judge others. She was charitable in her evaluation of others. She listened to others' troubles with great sympathy. She counseled others with great wisdom. She was loyal to her friends and family, through the 'ups and downs' of life, amidst all the changes and the chances of daily life, in spite of all he challenges and the conflicts which her friends went through.***

***Perhaps the reason she was so understanding of others when their hearts were breaking, is because of the burdens, which she herself bore so courageously, and because of all the heartbreaks, which she experienced throughout her long life. She was no stranger to trouble, to suffering, to financial strains, to domestic responsibilities. She had to raise her own children without the presence of a supportive husband, and she knew what it was to sacrifice personal pleasures to support her small children.***

***Yes, Audrey Tilton knew the comfort, which only the Holy Spirit can give amidst life's adversities, perplexities, and sorrows. Because she was comforted in all her tribulations, she was able to comfort those, which were in trouble by the comfort where with she herself was comforted by God. (Note II Corinthians 1:4)***

***Mrs. Audrey Tilton's qualities were qualities of true greatness, qualities that made her a dear friend to so many. I can personally testify to the fact that "Sister Tilton" (which I affectionately called her) was a precious friend to me. We spent many hours together during the last 20 years – praying, visiting, reading the Scriptures, and laughing together. I particularly enjoyed the many years we spent together in the older folks' "Cottage Prayer Meeting". I loved to hear Mrs. Tilton pray. She touched heaven when she prayed!***

***She experienced hardship with cheer; she loved people practically; she lived daily without indulgence or selfishness, thinking more of others than she did of herself; she laughed heartily and joked wholesomely. A woman of unusual wit and good humor, she brought laughter to scores of people. Especially during her younger years, she was the 'life of the party'. She believed in having wholesome fun, and she often saw the 'funny side of life.' She knew that a life of joy in the Holy Spirit must be evidenced by her cheerful countenance, her charitable attitudes, and her contagious laughter! It is no wonder that she was a friend to so many, for, in spite of all her personal hardships, she refused to indulge in self-pity and negative speech. Her pleasant looks, her positive life, and her charitable words all combined to produce a powerful witness to everyone with whom she related. She refused to be negative, in spite of adverse circumstances.***

*Audrey Tilton was a woman of dynamic faith and unusual godly character. Time would not permit me to enumerate the multi-dimensional features of Audrey Tilton's godly character. If all of life is simply the 'training ground' for eternity, then Mrs. Tilton was well trained! 'Character perfection' is the ultimate goal of life – and Mrs. Tilton's godly character evidenced the great grace of God that operated long and deep in her life. The fruit of the Holy Spirit was so abundant in her life – love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (Galatians 5:22-23).*

*She was a woman who carefully sought to obey God's laws, and who practically sought to apply God's laws in the realm of practical human relationships.*

*Why was Mrs. Audrey Tilton so unusual? She knew God intimately because of personal faith in Christ whom she claimed as her only Saviour. Mrs. Tilton loved to talk of God's mercy, which sought her when she was lost and undone and full of guilt. She talked about being saved from sin, and she gave God all the glory for her life, which so many felt was so great and noble. 'To God be all the glory' was the theme of her life!*

*She talked to God regularly, and she addressed God as her greatest Friend. Without ever sacrificing reverence, she was nevertheless intimate in her conversations with God. She spent sleepless nights talking very naturally to her God, and she believed in sharing even the specific and the small details of her life with her dear Heavenly Father. She believed in the power of prayer. She must be considered to be one of the great Prayer Warriors of our Church. I often took her hand in mine, and we together would pray earnestly for special needs. The greatest desire of her life was the salvation of all her children and her grandchildren and her friends. One of the great joys of my life, as Mrs. Tilton's pastor for 20 years, was to claim her as one of my dear 'prayer partners'. I knew she faithfully and daily prayed for our Church.*

*Not only was Mrs. Tilton a great prayer intercessor, but she was also a lover of God's Word. When she could see, she was still reading her Bible, even when she had to use a 'magnifying glass' to see.*

*Mrs. Audrey Tilton was a loyal member of the Free Methodist Church. She often reminded me that she was a member of our Church and, even when she could not attend regularly, she always sent her monthly tithe to her beloved Church. She wanted her Church to grow, and she was most interested in the conversion of the lost. She loved sinners, and she prayed for the Home Bible Studies. Nothing delighted her more than great revival services when people would find their way to an altar of prayer, or to a mourner's bench, as the altar was called in the so-called good 'ole days! She*

***prayed at the altar with the lost, and she rejoiced exceedingly in the salvation of sinners!***

***Audrey Tilton put her 'Christianity' into practice. She 'fought the good fight of the faith', 'enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ'. She never abandoned the faith, even though she was often pressured by adverse circumstances from without and by hard temptations from within. I often heard her talk about 'fighting the devil' and putting the 'Evil One' to flight through resistance. She knew the truth of James 4:7, "Resist the devil and he will flee from thee". The spiritual realm of both the Lord and of the devil was very real to Mrs. Tilton. She often spoke of 'spiritual victory', and of winning the fight against evil.***

***However, Mrs. Tilton was not so spiritually-minded that she was of no earthly good. Her love for people was so practical. Wrote Jesus' disciples, John, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." (I John 3:18)***

***"In deed and in truth" – that is how Mrs. Tilton loved people. As a single parent, she worked with her hands to provide the necessities of life for her small and growing children. She worked for years as a nurses' aid in a nursing home, tenderly caring for the elderly. She worked selflessly in 'The Salvation Army' for years, giving gifts to the poor, visiting shut-ins, witnessing to the lost, and cheering the faint-hearted and discouraged. She cared for her elderly single brother who lived with her for several years, late in her life.***

***She loved to hand out salvation tracts, and she gave a listening and sympathetic ear to many during her 'personal work' with outcasts. She was zealous of good works and full of good deeds! As a woman of dauntless hope and persevering faith, she maintained hope amidst despairing circumstances, and she maintained faith in the very people who tended to lose faith in themselves! As someone once said, "There are no hopeless situations in life; there are only people who have grown hopeless". Mrs. Tilton was one woman who refused to lose faith in people and to lose hope in God! She often spoke of 'God's enduring promises.' She affirmed the fact that God never breaks His eternal promises! Her unselfish service, tender mercies, abounding compassion, and non-judgmental attitudes all suited her perfectly to be a 'personal worker' with people. She loved children, and found joy in teaching classes for children. Even though she did not have the opportunity to gain a college education, she was self-taught and most practical in her love, refreshingly simple in her faith, astonishingly deep in her insights, and wonderfully attractive in her spirituality.***

***Even though she was strong in her convictions and bold in her witness, she was not forbidding or negative or inflexible or intolerant. Instead, she was most loving in her approach to people, withholding judgments, and extending mercy and understanding in her personal relationships with everyone. It was her belief that if we would all criticize less and pray more for people, that our world would be much better and that God's grace would be more readily manifest in its transforming power in the lives of 'broken people'.***

***Mrs. Tilton's lifetime quest can be described as a quest for Christlike character, and she described that quest in terms of holiness or 'entire sanctification'. She believed strongly in what she called 'the second work of grace'. Sanctification, to Mrs. Tilton, meant 'heart purity' - i.e., motives made pure by the cleansing blood of Christ and actions motivated by love because of the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit! She believed that the experience of entire sanctification was indispensible to consistent spiritual victory!***

***One Scriptural concept, which Mrs. Tilton believed in with great conviction, was as follows: "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." Yes, Mrs. Tilton believed that it was possible for a Christian to backslide. She knew it was important to be steadfast and watchful and prayerful and enduring in her faith. "Keep on keeping on till Jesus comes" was perhaps the phrase that she most quoted in her letters, to friends. When she lived out of town and sent her monthly letters (including her tithe) to me, she usually included something like this: "Son (addressing me affectionately and in a spiritual way), keep on keeping on till Jesus comes."***

***Mrs. Tilton did maintain her faith till the very end of her long life! During the several years she spent in the homes of her two daughters, and during the last several months in a Nursing Home, people found her always ready to praise God and to pray for or with others. She was, indeed, one of the greatest saints I ever knew!***

***As she came to the end of life, Mrs. Tilton could easily have identified with Paul's last words: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing." (II Timothy 4:7, 8; RSV)***

***When talking to Laura Jean Wunch on the day of Mrs. Tilton's death, Mrs. Tilton's daughter said something like this to me: "She was such a godly mother and one who was a true saint of God. She never owned her own house down here on earth, but I***

***believe that God has now given her one of the biggest and the most beautiful mansions in heaven!"***

***The moment Audrey Tilton died, I believe she heard something like this from the lips of her Heavenly Father, whom she loved for so long: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful in little things, I will now make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou the joy of thy Lord!"***

# REMEMBERING

# LAWRENCE VONDY –1978

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***I long admired and respected and loved this gentleman, who was raised on a ranch in eastern Colorado, one of 17 children in his family. He talked about the years of his own ranching in eastern Colorado. The harsh winters and the windstorms, and the multiple "challenges" of "making a living" in a rather barren part of the otherwise "colorful Colorado". He shared with me that he finally had to leave his ranch (farm), because of the great economic loses he sustained as a result of being "hailed out" – three years in a row.***

***Lawrence, before he died, asked his wife (Ollie – one of the "pillars" in the Free Methodist Church) to forgive him (apparently) for his not being as good of a husband as he should have been! Ollie (a very different temperament than Lawrence) was an only-child, was very extroverted, was very talkative and opinionated, and was very dominate in personality. Yes, very different than Lawrence, but I saw them, nevertheless, a very happily married couple. Lawrence himself had strong convictions. He was a very hard worker, he was very unpretentious, and he was very frank and straightforward. He was very honest and upright, but rather quiet and contemplative. And another big difference – Lawrence (even though he was raised by dedicated Christian parents) never attended Church services (except maybe Easter and Christmas). But his wife had assurance that toward the end of his life, he definitely made peace with God. Great is God's mercy!***

# FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

***Lawrence was respected and loved in his home. As a husband, Lawrence loved and was loved by his wife. Lawrence and his wife, Ollie, trod life's pathway together in mutual love and with courageous endeavor. Together they experienced the joy of establishing a home in which each member mutually cared for each other. Together they labored hard, sometimes during hard times, to find and keep the noble and worthwhile things of life. As the head of his home, Lawrence was the object of affection, respect, and admiration by both wife and children. Lawrence's life was greatly enriched by having wonderful grandchildren and great-grandchildren. As a family man, and as a hard worker, Lawrence was unpretentious and matter–of-fact and faced life in a very realistic way. He was the source of joy and laughter to many. He was a real friend.***

***Lawrence was a real man who was no stranger to work. Lawrence was a hard worker, a patient and persistent man who weathered many hard times. He was no stranger to work. He enjoyed, and was active in, work, well into his late seventies, and even early eighties. Fulfilling his tasks faithfully, thoroughly, and conscientiously, Lawrence gave dignity to work. Lawrence was creative and dexterous and went about his labors with a business-like concern. He knew many work friends and he knew how to recount the most interesting stories of early homesteading days on the eastern plains of Colorado. He had an appreciation for the simple way of life.***

***Lawrence was recognized as a real gentleman and understanding friend within his neighborhood. Over the long span of his life, Lawrence made many friends, some passing and some close and faithful. He seemed to combine the qualities of ruggedness and tenderness, impetuousness and patience, forwardness and reservation.***

***Lawrence became a tenderhearted man and one who came to love God. Lawrence Vondy was not always known as a Christian. It was because of many prayers, much love from wife, family, and friends, and because of personal response to God - that Lawrence Vondy found himself as a tenderhearted and humble believer in God at the end of his life.***

***I have only known Lawrence for about 11 years, as his pastor. During these several years I have had several occasions when I talked alone with Lawrence about spiritual matters. During the first years of my acquaintance with him, I sensed some spiritual resistance on his part, but as the years came and went, I noticed a mellowing and a new responsiveness to spiritual things in him. I saw him unashamedly ask for prayer, and his wife saw many changes in him. He definitely made it known that he had***

***accepted Christ and that he was ready to meet God in peace. He gladly accepted my presence and my prayers, and we enjoyed sweet fellowship, and easy conversation. During the last several months, while he suffered so greatly, he was soothed and comforted by listening to records of religious music in the evenings.***

***Birth, Childhood, Adolescence, Adulthood, and Old Age – these are the passing stages of life. One may be abruptly introduced to the next stage, but more often, one enters the next stage gradually and slowly. The tenderness of Spring, gradually changes into the fragrance of Summer, followed by the ruggedness of Fall and the aging of Winter. So each of life's stages is followed by a more mature and experienced stage. Death signals finality for this earthly realm of existence, but out of the darkness of death comes the dawn of eternity. Death seals the end for one realm of existence, only to introduce an infinitely more glorious realm of existence.***

***Death may be filled with mystery and clouded with uncertainty, but for the Christian the sting of death is removed. Because Christ trod the terrifying road of death, his followers may now trod the road of death without fear and without terror. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." (Psalms 23:4)***

***Lawrence Vondy has trod the road of death and has landed in that beautiful land where the sun always shines, where the flowers perpetually bloom, where the angels beautifully sing, and where the glory of Christ dwells. No longer is Lawrence bowed down with the care of life. His tears are dried and his countenance is radiant. He has the glow of eternity on his face. Because Lawrence was faithful, even unto death, he now wears the crown of eternal life. He shall eternally rejoice in the presence of his Saviour, Jesus Christ.***

# REMEMBERING
# BARBARA PEREGOY - 2000

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***Barbara Peregoy was no stranger to hardship and loss and physical pain. She prayed often for her children whom she wanted to draw near to Christ. She worked very hard and precisely and tirelessly on an "assembly line", putting together small parts, for many hours daily! Whereas most persons would either be bored or irritated or exhausted with such a tedious job, it seemed that Barb was most grateful and honored and excited to have her job (where she worked for many years).***

***Barb was not only skilled in workmanship, but she was most creative in the planting and the nurturing of hundreds of houseplants (and some of these plants were 'exotic' and 'rare' and most 'interesting' – like the 'resurrection plant'). Barb was also most hospitable and I can testify to that fact, for my occasional visits in the home of Barb and Gene (her husband whose tribute also appears in this book) were met with "showers of complimentary words toward me", and were also met with questions that Barb (and her husband) needed to have answered.***

***Of the many qualities (virtues) I recognized in Barb's life, one of the greatest traits is the trait of Christian kindness! What a kind lady she was! I always left the home of the Peregoys (after we had prayed together) feeling fortunate to claim them as fellow servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.***

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

***I had the privilege of meeting Gene and Barbara Peregoy nearly 3 decades ago. It was my privilege to witness their exchange of wedding vows 28 years ago today! For***

***several years after they were married, they and their four children attended the Free Methodist Church where I served as their pastor. It was a joyous experience for me to talk and to laugh and to pray with them many times, when I shared the warmth of their hospitality in their home. Both Gene and Barbara found a special place in my heart and I learned to love them as members of the Family of God – the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

***After they left Fort Collins several years ago, I no longer had frequent contacts with them, and I (of course) was shocked to hear of Barbara's sudden and unexpected death just a few days ago. As I sat quietly and thought about her, following my visits on the phone with her son and her dear husband, I recalled some of the wonderful characteristics, which made this lady truly remarkable.***

***Barbara, like all of us here today, was a so-called 'common person' – no great acclaims or great worldly accomplishments. But, in the 'eyes of God' it is what is in one's heart and spirit that determines whether a person is truly 'noble' or 'ignoble'. Only God truly can discern the motives and intents and desires and priorities of a person's heart and life, but from my limited perspective I can say that I believe Barbara Peregoy was a 'noble' and 'loving' and 'sincere' person.***

***Barbara Peregoy was a devoted wife. She loved her husband deeply, she cared for him wholeheartedly, she admired his abilities, and she wanted nothing but the 'best' for him. They together experienced, as husband and wife, many 'ups and downs', many joys and heartbreaks, many laughs and cries, many changes and adjustments. And, through all of life's changes and chances, Barb remained a faithful and committed wife to her beloved husband. I believe that Gene could say to his wife that was written about an honored woman of many years ago (as recorded in the book of Proverbs in the Bible): "She is a woman of strength and dignity…When she speaks, her words are wise, and kindness is the rule for everything she says. She watches carefully all that goes on throughout her household, and is never lazy. Her children stand and bless her; so does her husband…charm can be deceptive and beauty doesn't last, but a woman who fears and reverences God shall be greatly praised." (Proverbs 31) I believe this is a 'fit' description of Barbara Peregoy!***

***Barbara Peregoy was a loving mother. She was committed to raising responsible and honest children. She sought wisely to combine strong discipline with tender love, in her relationship with her children and in her treatment of her four children. It was her desire that her children love and serve the Living God, and she was desirous that they all have the chance to learn the 'ways of Christ', as taught in the Holy Bible. She wisely discerned the unique abilities and needs of each of her four children. She took pride in***

***her legitimate accomplishments, and she focused on maintaining a clear and loving communication with them. It was her desire that all of them live godly lives during their adulthood. Her children all grew to become adults, and during their adult lives, all of her children loved and cherished her deeply.***

***Barbara Peregoy was a hard and conscientious worker, one who took her job seriously and who worked very dependably and responsibly. She took pride in her work and she was strongly committed to accuracy and quality in her work output. Any employer would be thankful to have such a worker on his 'team'. She worked many years - about 30 years – for the same company (Teledyne or Water-Pik) – and it was not uncommon for her to work 10 to 12 hours a day. She was accomplished in her work, and she was both consistent and persistent in the way she performed on her job.***

***Barbara Peregoy was a lover of nature, especially of the beauty and variety of plants and flowers. Her home was 'graced' with a large number and a great variety of plants, which, because of her skill and her 'green thumb', were healthy and vibrant. It was a sheer joy when I was in her home, to have Barb share with me the many unique plants, which she nurtured. Plants, which I had never seen or heard of before! Plants like the 'Crown of Thorns' or the 'Resurrection Plant'. Barbara appreciated the variety and complexity of God's vast world of nature. She loved both her indoor plants and her outdoor flowers. She and Gene always made me feel so welcome and warm in their comfortable home. Hospitable and caring and loving folks!***

***Barbara Peregoy was a sincere Christian believer. She loved God deeply and she accepted Jesus Christ as her Savior. She was baptized in the Christian Faith. She was reverent in her attitudes, worshipful in her spirit, and she sought to be genuine and authentic and 'real' in her relationship with God and with others. She was (in my estimate) a person whose faith in God was simple and uncomplicated and effective and practical. She was quiet and respectful in her approach to her God and she loved her blessed Savior very much. She greatly honored the Holy Bible, and she worshipped wholeheartedly in the Church services where I also participated. It was my joy to conduct some 'Bible studies' with her and Gene, in their home, and I found both of them to be eager to learn, and open to share their insights from life's practical experience. Both Gene and Barbara experienced many trials and tests and temptations. Barb's faith and optimism and confidence in God's promises were exemplary. She was not only an unspeakable great blessing to her husband and her children, but also to her many friends. I found her to be a great inspiration and an incentive to my own faith in God. I loved her calm and deliberate trust in God, during times when the dark clouds of trouble surrounded her. Through all the challenges of her life, Barb seemed to remain***

***unmoved and calm and solid in her commitment to Christ. Now her trials are over and she has entered the City of God – the Home of the saints of all the ages!***

***There is an old song, which, as a child, I used to often sing in the little church where I regularly worshipped. It is entitled 'Does Jesus Care?' Here are the words of the last stanza of that song:***

***Does Jesus care when I've said "good bye"***
***To the dearest on earth to me,***
***When my sad heart aches till it nearly breaks***
***Is it ought to Him? Does He see?***

***O yes, He cares; I know He cares,***
***His heart is touched with my grief;***
***When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,***
***I know my Savior cares, He cares.***

***It is said of Jesus that He was a 'man of sorrows and acquainted with grief'. When Lazarus, the closest earthly friend of Jesus died, the Bible says that 'Jesus wept'. Jesus is no stranger to sorrow. Jesus really cares when our hearts are broken.***

***In this sin-cursed earth, where every human being is a member of a fallen race and where disease is rampant, even the best of Christians sometimes die prematurely. God is not the author of death, and God is also grieved deeply when one of His choice children are attacked with a disease. There is no sorrow too deep but what God feels it, for God was once a man and therefore He understands everything we humans experience. Our loving Heavenly Father is the greatest Comforter we have!***

***Just before Jesus' crucifixion He spoke these words to His disciples (and He intended these words for you and me as well): "If you love me, obey me; and I will ask the Father and he will give you another Comforter, and he will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit who leads into all truth…No, I will not abandon you or leave you as orphans in the storm, – and I will come to you." (John 14; Living Bible)***

***When sorrows 'like sea billows roll', the Comforter – the blessed Holy Spirit – will be with you!***

***Shortly before His death, Jesus said: "Let not your hearts be troubled, etc." (John 14)***

***Death may be filled with mystery and clouded with uncertainty, but for the Christian the sting of death is removed. Because Christ trod the terrifying road of death, his followers may now travel the road of death; without fear and without terror. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." (Psalms 23:4)***

***The Bible tells us that it has not even entered into the mind of man what God has prepared for those who love Him! Heaven is a place of indescribable joy and beauty!***

***This life here on earth is like the prelude to a song, like the introduction to a book, like the front porch of a house. Real life begins in heaven! As important as this earthly life is, it is only a 'dressing room' for the real celebration, which is in heaven!***

***"When we've gone the last mile of the way,***

***We will rest at the close of the day,***

***And I know there are joys that await me,***

***When we've gone the last mile of the way!"***

***"Onward to the prize before us!***

***Soon His beauty we'll behold;***

***Soon the pearly gates will open,***

***We shall tread the streets of gold."***

***"When we all get to heaven,***

***What a day of rejoicing that will be!***

***When we all see Jesus,***

***We'll sing and shout the victory."***

*"When all my labors and trials are o'er,*

*And I am safe on that beautiful shore,*

*Just to be near the dear Lord I adore,*

*Will through the ages be glory to me."*

*"O that will be glory for me,*

*Glory for me, Glory for me;*

*When by His grace I shall look on His face,*

*That will be glory, be glory for me."*

***The Bible tells us that 'to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord'. Just as soon as Barbara's spirit was released from the 'imprisonment of her human body', she entered the glories of her heavenly home!***

***Right at this moment, Barbara Peregoy is more alive than she ever was here on earth! Paul said: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain". "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." To the repentant thief on the cross, Jesus said: "Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise". In Paradise, Barbara is consciously alive and she is enjoying the glories of heaven – the fellowship of the heavenly saints of all the ages. She is worshipping and praising her Lord. Who knows? Maybe her joy is so abounding and her delight is so great that she is dancing with the holy angels! For sure, we know she is safely home – home with her Saviour and Lord. The sweetest words that anyone could hear from Jesus: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter the joys of thy Lord" Let's all prepare to meet our Lord and to someday see Barb!***

# REMEMBERING

# SHARON ATWOOD -1995

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***Sharon was a "champion" in several ways! She was a true Christian, but she, at her own admission, did not quickly or easily become a "victorious Christian". She had some "baggage" of resentment (from her 1st marriage) that hindered her in her spiritual development for several years. But, at a "Marriage Encounter" which she attended shortly after marrying her beloved second husband Stan, she found "glorious victory" over past resentments! Sharon was a woman who was "aglow" with joy and praise and thanksgiving, because of her love for God and for his people (church). She worked actively in the Church I pastored at the time.***

***A positive, cooperative, creative, energetic, fun-loving leader – that's what she was, and much more! Great sadness to our entire congregation when she died at such a young age – in her middle 50's! But she was a "champion" as she courageously fought the cursed disease known as breast cancer. She died victoriously! But, as a natural leader (administrator and Social Life Director of the local Church), she arranged for her own "funeral dinner" just before she died! One of the most beautiful, winsome, effective Christ-centered persons I ever knew! Now with her Lord!***

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

***Wrote Simon Peter, "Be beautiful inside, in your hearts, with the lasting charm of a gentle and quiet spirit which is so precious to God. That kind of deep beauty was seen in the saintly women of old who trusted God and fitted in with their husbands' plans." (I Peter 3:3-5) Sharon often spoke about the Spirit–filled life, and she deeply desired to live such a life. Many of us who knew Sharon saw the fruits of the Spirit manifested in***

*abundance in her life. In her home, on her job, around the community, with her friends and family, and in her attendance and service at her Church, Sharon showed the fruits of the Spirit growing in her interpersonal relationships – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23) She possessed "that kind of deep beauty" which has been seen in saintly women of all ages. She trusted God for better or for worse, in seeming success and in seeming failure, in sickness and in health.*

*Among the many words, which could so easily be selected to describe this lady of God, I think we could choose one word that largely describes many different aspects of Sharon's life. That word is "Appreciation". "Appreciation" means "Thanksgiving", Gratitude", even during adversities and losses and seeming injustices and physical infirmities. She told me, during one of the last of many personal conversations with her, that she definitely wanted her funeral service to be a Christ-centered "Praise Service". Sharon was no stranger to pain and disappointment and sorrow and grief, but she was a woman of strong faith in God. She believed and practiced the Biblical principles for successful living: I Thessalonians 5:18: "No matter what happens always be thankful, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus". Through the ups–and-downs of life, Sharon learned the lesson of appreciation for God and life. She looked on the positive side of life. She felt joy when others could only feel sadness. She saw the "light" when others saw only the "darkness". She saw "hope" when others could only see "despair". Why? Because she strongly believed that the God she served was a "God of love" – a God who "never allows His children to shed needless tears", a God who was powerful enough to use all of life's problems to benefit her in her spiritual growth, as long as she remained surrendered to the Lordship of Christ! Even when she could not understand with her mind, she learned that it was important to trust in her heart, to offer to God the "sacrifice of praise" with her lips! She believed that somehow and at sometime God would use all of life's circumstances – even her mistakes and sins – to bring good to her and glory to Christ. She believed in what might be called the "transforming power of God" – that is, she believed that, if God could turn a "Black Friday" into a "Good Friday" because of "Bright Sunday Easter Morning", then God could take even the brokenness of her life and make something very beautiful out of her life.*

*Yes, Sharon would be the first to acknowledge that her life was far from perfect. She humbly acknowledged to me, just days before her "Homegoing" to heaven, that she had struggled greatly because of great injustices done to her in her earlier adult life – before she ever was married to Stan. She went so far as to confess to me that she allowed bitterness to dwell in her inner soul for 13 years! She said that bitterness took*

***a serious "toll" on her life! She said that even after she was married to Stan, just 19 years ago, she continued for a while to experience "fightings and struggles" within herself. Then she shared that, at a "Marriage Encounter Weekend", she and Stan together met their God and that Christ changed them both, such that they were never the same again. She liked to talk about the gracious ministry of the precious Holy Spirit who changed their hearts and their actions! She unloaded her burden of guilt and resentments, and found victory in Jesus! Oh, of course, she had recurring battles with the evil forces of temptation and sin during the last 17 years since that Marriage Encounter Weekend, but she found Jesus altogether adequate for all of life's struggles ever since that dramatic encounter with God. She testified to the very end of her earthly pilgrimage – just days before she went Home to Heaven – that knowing Jesus as her Saviour and Lord made all the difference in the world!***

***Walking and talking with Jesus, loving and praising Him as her Lord, sharing her burdens with Jesus as her best Friend – it is no wonder that she became a person who was characterized as positive, faith-filled, gracious, charming, and grateful!***

***Sharon appreciated the beauty of God's great out-of-doors. Sharon loved to hike the mountain trails, to tromp through the snow drifts in search of a deer or elk, to daringly ride the foaming rough rapids in a canoe, to prepare a delicious breakfast over a campfire, to outwit flying geese using decoys and interesting camouflages. Yes, Sharon felt so "at home" in Nature, beside her beloved husband who taught her so many skills in hunting and hiking and sightseeing and camping. She loved the flower-strewn hills, and the floating clouds, and the star–lite nights! She was a woman who was "lost in wonder, love, and praise", a woman full of gratitude for the infinite beauties of God's great out-of-doors!***

> ***"For the wonder of each hour***
> ***Of the day and of the night,***
> ***Hill and vale, and tree and flower,***
> ***Sun and moon, and stars of light!***
> ***Lord of all, to thee we raise***
> ***This our hymn of grateful praise."***

***Sharon appreciated the beauty of shapes and forms and artistic expression. I gave one of several "bouquets of flowers" to Sharon just recently. No, not a literal "bouquet of flowers", but a "bouquet" of compliments and affirmations. As she lay on her bed, so weakened by the debilitating disease which she had fought against for some 3 years, I***

***shared with her, in the presence of some of her loved ones, that I saw her as a woman of great finesse – that is, a woman of grace and charm and artistic beauty. Sharon, as many of you know, was a woman who left her artistic touch wherever she was – in her home through her interior decorating, through her attire in the fashionable way she dressed, in the flower arrangements which she so artistically placed on the communion table at her Church time and time again, in the orderly and tastefully decorated large room at the annual Reach Out In Love All-Church Dinners for her Church Family. She had an unusual sense of artistic beauty, as she saw it and as she created it in her surroundings.***

***Sharon Atwood appreciated her loved ones, as evidenced by her loving words and her affectionate actions. Many of her family members are here today. It was my privilege to observe her expressions of gratitude and her words of comfort and hope which she gave as gifts to her sorrowing loved ones during her last days on this earth. During her physical afflictions during these last years and months, God comforted and encouraged her so much. Because of God's comfort of her, she was able, in turn, to bring comfort to her family. Sharon would have closely identified with the Apostle Paul who wrote, "What a wonderful God we have – he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the source of every mercy, and the one who so wonderfully comforts and strengthens us in our hardships and trials. And why does he do this? So that when others are troubled, needing our sympathy and encouragement, we can pass on to them this same help and comfort God has given us." (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)***

***The love, which she had for her dear husband, was so deep. She knew Stan, not only as her precious lover, but as her very best friend, with whom she daily worked in business, with whom she ministered in caring for others (especially in the work of promoting Marriage Encounter Weekends for about eight years), with whom she hunted and fished and hiked and camped, and with whom she hosted delicious meals in her home for many friends and family, and with whom she prayed to her wonderful Saviour every day! Yes, she and Stan were very close and they will someday be reunited.***

***I witnessed some of the hugs and kisses and tender words exchanged between Sharon and her beloved husband and twin sister and father and stepmother and children. Even to the very end, as was so characteristic of Sharon, she was still reaching out in love and concern for her dear loved ones! Just days before she died, she called each one of her grandchildren to her bed, so she could talk to them and share her love for them.***

***Sharon Atwood deeply appreciated the Family of God – her Church Family and other believers who were close to her. A few days before her Homegoing, after I prayed with her at her bedside, I asked her if she would be willing to pray. She was very weak, but***

***she nevertheless put forth much effort to pray. Her prayer was so beautiful. She poured out her heart in thanksgiving. She told God how much she appreciated her wonderful Church family. She thanked God that she and Stan had found such a loving and caring group of believers who accepted and loved her and Stan so freely and fully.***

***Yes, Sharon loved the Free Methodist Church where she and Stan worshipped for nearly 10 years. So many times, I would look at the congregation from the platform and pulpit, and I would see Sharon and Stan near the front of the sanctuary, singing praises to God with radiant faces, listening prayerfully to the message, and then after the services I would see her and Stan hugging many friends with joyous smiles on their faces.***

***Sharon loved to organize social events in the church, and she loved to work with many women in the Church to promote fellowship through social events. She appreciated the many who participated with her in serving the congregation delicious meals, time after time through the many years she was in the Church.***

***Sharon Atwood most of all appreciated her wonderful Lord. Her gratitude for God's grace was abounding! Her praise to God was unceasing! Her adoring worship of her God was so overwhelming! It seemed that the more she suffered, the more she centered on God and praised God and trusted God. Her life emitted the sweet fragrance of a holy devotion to God, not the putrid odor of a bitter and disillusioned sufferer. Oh, it is true that she did not understand the reason for her cancer, and she was not immune to the temptations of doubt and disillusionment. But she submitted to God, resisted temptation, and she continued to praise her God regardless of the seeming injustice of the cancer and regardless of her seeming loss to the cancer after much struggling. She had a "fighting" resolute spirit, doing all she felt she could do medically and through diet and exercise and positive faith affirmations. But, even as her body was being beat down through the aggressive advance of the cancerous tumors, Sharon was growing stronger in her inner spirit.***

***Why didn't Sharon give up in her struggle against cancer? She had an eternal perspective. She was living not only for the world of time, but also for the world of eternity. Her hope was built on Jesus Christ, her Rock. She could sing with confidence, "When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay! On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand!" She believed that for her to live was Christ and to die was gain. A double winner! Victory either way!***

***Sharon believed that earth was temporary, but that heaven was permanent. She saw herself as a pilgrim, simply passing through this earth, with her true home in heaven.***

***She believed that the sufferings of this present life could not be compared to the glories that should follow hereafter in heaven. She could say with Paul, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the mind of man what God has prepared for those who love Him!"***

***She often expressed faith in a God who was going to "balance the books" at the end of time, who was going to "write the last Chapter of history", who was going to give to every man his final rewards at the final Judgment Day. As a woman of great faith in God, Sharon believed that God would have the "final word" in history. She believed that her "question marks" here on earth would someday in heaven be straightened out into "exclamation marks"! She believed that, in spite of her suffering and her seeming "premature death", a loving God had a master plan for his world in general, and also a special purpose for her individual life! When she could not understand with her mind, she still trusted in God with her heart. She could say with Paul, "We Know That All That Happens To Us Is Working For Our Good If We Love God And Are Fitting Into His Plans." (Romans 8:28)***

***Sharon's faith in God allowed her to see beyond this temporary place called earth. Because she believed that Jesus was God, that Jesus died on a cross for her sins, and that Jesus arose again from the dead, and because she had placed her total reliance and trust in Jesus as her Saviour, Sharon had absolutely no doubt that heaven would be her eternal home! She believed what Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth: "We know that the same God who brought the Lord Jesus back from death will also bring us back to life again with Jesus, and present us to him along with you. And that is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our inner strength in the Lord is growing every day. These troubles and sufferings of ours are, after all, quite small and won't last very long. Yet this short time of distress will result in God's richest blessing upon us forever and ever! So we do not look at what we can see right now, the troubles all around us, but we look forward to the joys in heaven, which we have not yet seen. The troubles will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever." (2nd Corinthians 4:14, 16-18)***

***On one occasion, I had the privilege of talking heart-to-heart with her and Stan about heaven. She shared for the first time with Stan and with me, that she had had a "vision". She told us that she had been wondering for some time just how she would be able to "find" her loved ones in heaven, amidst the large multitude who would be there. In this vision, she said she did not actually see Jesus, but that she felt His presence so powerfully. She said Jesus let her see a vision of her loved ones in heaven with their arms outstretched to her, welcoming her the very moment she passed into heaven! That vision gave her great joy. May we, like Sharon, be ready for our "Homegoing".***

# REMEMBERING
# RUSS BRANDON – 1986

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***My godly mother used to say, "The old must die, and the young may die!" But when the young (children or young adults) die, it is almost always the result of either disease or of fatal accidents. But when the young person (in his 20's) dies of suicide, it is "hard to take" – "hard to process" in our minds! Russ Brandon is such a "case". I did not know him intimately, but he did attend the Church that I pastored at the time. I remember him as a physically endowed (muscular) person, handsome, forthright and direct and unapologetic in demeanor. A young man that was full of intellectual questions that he strongly and respectfully directed to me, one after another, in the confines of my "small Church office". I liked him as a person! Excellent personality! But he seemed to be "confused", and he seemed to entertain a lot of "doubts". He probably was "skilled" at covering a lot of "hurts" in his personal life (hurts that apparently were so great, and despair that apparently was so deep that he believed - tragically – that ending his own life was the only "good option")!***

***Even with my limited knowledge of this person, and as a result of my rather "intense talks" with him, I found my love for him continuing to grow. How shocked I was to receive the terrible news of his untimely death!***

## FUNERAL SERVICE( OR) TRIBUTE

***he most important verse of the Bible is John 3:16 (For God So Loved The World That He Gave His One And Only Son, That Whoever Believes In Him Shall Not Perish But Have***

*Eternal Life.) God loves every person. He loves each one of us, as if there was only one person in the world to love. God loved us so much that He was willing to send His only Son to earth to die for us. The Bible says that God is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, that He bears our sorrows with us, that He bears our burdens for us. Jesus really cares when we suffer. He identifies with our sorrows and even shares in those sorrows.*

*"Jesus, thou art all compassion,*
*Pure, unbounded love Thou art;*
*Visit us with Thy salvation,*
*Enter every trembling heart."*

*There is never a sorrow that He doth not share, nor a woe that He does not feel. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Picture Jesus as He makes His way into the desert to contemplate, following the death of his cousin John the Baptist. Follow Jesus to the graveside of His dear friend Lazarus, and listen to His deep moans and sobbing in the midst of Lazarus' broken-hearted sisters, Mary and Martha. Then go with Jesus to the Mount that overlooks Jerusalem, and witness Jesus' tear-soaked cheeks as He cries out, "O Jerusalem, O Jerusalem!"*

*"But the greatest thing of all is this, that when you see this compassionate Christ, you are seeing God." (The Gates of New Life; Stewart; pg. 197)*

*Jesus reveals the nature of God. Jesus is the key that unlocks the heart of God. Everything Jesus was, God has always been! When Jesus was suffering on the Cross God was suffering on the Cross! God actually hurts in our hurts, He bleeds when we bleed, He shares our very guilt! "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." (Isaiah 53:4)*

*The Cross demonstrates God's love. The Cross on Calvary is the unveiling of the Cross, which has eternally been on the heart of God! The Cross is the greatest of all revelations concerning God. For the revealed Cross shows that at the heart of the universe is self-giving, sacrificial love! God is love and the Cross on Mount Calvary gives concrete expression to that truth. Because God is Suffering Love, the cross is an absolute necessity. Only as man could see Jesus on the Cross of Calvary could man see the Christ of the Ages who has always borne a cross in His heart!*

*At the very heart of Reality is God's love. The Bible says, "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him." (I John 4:16)*

***At this tragic time it is important to remember certain truths.***

***First, it is important to note that God is not the Author of suffering. However, God is the participant in human suffering. Although Jesus does not cause suffering, He does share our suffering with us. Jesus wants to comfort the sorrowing, to heal the brokenhearted, to encourage the despairing, to befriend the lonely, and to restore the downfallen. Jesus is the greatest Friend that any of us can possibly ever know!***

***Second, it is important further to know that God does not will the premature death of anyone – whether that premature death comes as a result of an accident or whether that premature death is the result of one's own willful action. God is the Author of life, and God wills that His creatures live a normal lifetime. In other words, God's heart (along with our hearts) is broken as a result of Russ Brandon's death. God allows each person to exercise personal freedom of choice, but we must never forget that some human choices are not according to God's will. It is never God's will for human life to be cut off prematurely – ahead of God's timing. God alone is the author, the sustainer, and the taker of human life, and none of us as humans should ever interfere with God's processes.***

***Third, however, I must further note that, although God never causes tragedies, God can use tragedies to accomplish some kind of ultimate good. God can salvage some good out of every loss. God can take every trouble and turn it into some kind of triumph. No, God did not cause or will the death of this fine young man, but God can salvage some good out of this tragedy if we will allow God to do so. Perhaps, through this terrible tragedy many friends and relatives will draw closer to God. Perhaps, those who sorrow most today will become the very persons whom God can use most to comfort other sorrowing people in the future. Perhaps, through this death, everyone here today will become more sensitive to hurting and depressed people around them, and that we will all "reach out in love and compassion" more effectively in the future. Perhaps family members will be drawn closer together, and perhaps those whose hearts break today will experience the miracles of God's healing power in a way that has never been known before. No, God did not will the death of this precious young man, but God is able to salvage good out of the greatest of tragedies. I would say to all friends and loved ones today: allow God to use this terrible experience to bring some kind of good into your life.***

***Fourth, I would remind all of us that God alone is Judge. God alone knows the thoughts and intentions and desires and motives of another person. God alone understands the burdens that one bears, the loneliness that one feels, the rejection that one experiences,***

*the confusion that one faces, the heartbreak that one goes through, the disappointments that one endures, the deep depression that one becomes engulfed in.*

*While suicide is never to be considered a legitimate option, we must never act as Judge of another person. God alone knows all, and therefore God alone is able justly and mercifully to judge another person. God takes everything into account. I am very sure that God intended for Russ Brandon to live longer than he lived. But I am also sure that God understands the deep depression, which brought Russ to his desperate decision to take his own life.*

*Russ, at his best, would never have done what he did. But Russ was obviously filled with despair when he made a deliberate decision to put an end to his physical life. We must now commit Russ into the hands of a loving and merciful God – a God whose saving purposes have been wonderfully revealed in Jesus Christ.*

*I wish personally to say a few words about Russ Brandon. I first met Russ in 1982 – about four years ago. I greatly enjoyed the friendship of Russ. It was on May 2, 1982, that Russ Brandon prayed to accept Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. Following his conversion, Russ began to study the Bible with special friends in our local Church. He was in various Bible classes and came to many worship services. How he enjoyed studying! He was an eager student, a very curious person. He asked scores of questions regarding the Bible and life. He read dozens of Christian books and articles, and, even though he enjoyed debating and questioning and dialoguing, Russ was basically teachable. He was a very stimulating person to talk to. He loved to debate theology. But it was to be admitted, that Russ had many unanswered questions, and some unsolved problems.*

*What is the right response to this great tragedy? We have a right to weep and to sorrow, for the loss of Russ Brandon is a great loss. A loss of a person with great talent and much unrealized potential. Russ was physically strong and athletic, socially outgoing and friendly, mentally alert and intelligent, and spiritually sensitive and inquisitive. Yes, Russ' death is a great and terrible loss.*

*As a result of Russ Brandon's death, we must each draw closer to God. We must recognize that life is precious to God. We must cherish life and we must surrender our personal lives totally to God. We must acknowledge that Jesus Christ died for us and that He arose again from the dead to be our living and loving Saviour! We must confess our personal sins to Christ, and open our heart's door to allow Christ to become the Master of our lives! Allow God to love you today. Allow God to guide you in your every decision. Seek God with your whole heart. Become a part of God's family and*

***begin to fellowship regularly in weekly worship services. Read and study your Bible daily. Allow God to heal your hurts and to comfort you in your sorrows. Fall in love with God, and begin to love and to cherish yourself. Realize that you have value and worth as a human being simply because of your unique creation and because Christ died for you. Your worth is NOT based on your achievements and your accomplishments vocationally or economically. You are valuable to God just because God made you. Surrendering to God's love totally will enable you to love yourself wholesomely, which will, in turn, enable you to love others sincerely. Love is the answer to life – love for God, love for yourself, and love for others. And God is the author of love. So, give yourself to God today.***

***Pray something like this:***

***"O God, I realize you love me personally. I thank you that Jesus died for my sins. I open my heart and my life to you today. Forgive me of all my sins, and be my Saviour just now. Enable me, O God, to love you supremely, to love myself wholesomely, and to love others genuinely. I ask all of this in Jesus' holy name. Amen."***

# REMEMBERING

# EVERITT DANIEL HUDSON – 2001

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***I was never this man's pastor, and only had limited contact with this godly man, through the friendship that I had with Rev. Hudson's grandson, who was regularly attending the Church I pastored (and who was our accomplished Church pianist). When I visited my friend (Neil, the grandson of Everett), he took me into the room of his grandfather, and I visited briefly with him. I learned about the amazing (but humble) pastoral ministry, which Rev. Hudson involved himself in – for decades! When I had contact with Rev. Hudson, he was already in his 90's. He died when he was 100 years old, and he was, until the last, still 'sharp mentally' and 'sensitive spiritually'.***

***I was asked by Neil and by Neil's mother (the daughter of Rev. Hudson) to give a 'tribute' at his funeral. There were other relatives (besides Neil and his mother) who put a careful 'time restraint' for the service, and (because the sermon itself and the other parts of the service were longer than expected), the "time allotment" for the service was "used up" – consequently, there was no time left for me to share (read) my tribute. But, even though the following 'tribute' was never given publicly, I wish to share my few thoughts regarding a man whom I considered to be very godly (even though I never knew him well or personally).***

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

***" 22 News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23 When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. 24 He was a good***

***man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. [25] Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, [26] and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." (Acts 11:22-26; NIV)***

***The description that the Bible gives of Barnabas aptly applies to Everitt Daniel Hudson. Acts 11:24 says of Barnabas that "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and faith".***

***Everitt Hudson was a 'kindly person'. Everitt Hudson was one of the most kindly persons you could ever meet. In his quiet, sweet, and tender way, he responded to people with the charity that befits a kindly man of God. Kindness in his attitude towards others, giving others the benefit of the doubt. Kindness in his tolerance of others who were far less mature than he in their actions and in their attitudes. A man with a shepherd heart who allowed the sheep in his 'flock' to grow at their own rate, under the 'watch care' of the Master Shepherd.***

***Kindness in common courtesies, kindness through a smile, kindness in a sincere compliment, kindness in a loving act or a simple prayer. He was concerned with the feelings of others, and he often reached out a helping hand to meet the practical needs of others in a most compassionate way. He was quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger. Even though he appeared to some to be a man of few words, he appeared to many also to be a man of weighty and prudent words. Full of wisdom and knowledge, he applied the salve of healing to hurting people, and he brought insight and good judgment to the difficult decision-making processes. He, indeed, like Barnabas, was a 'kindly person.'***

***Everitt Daniel Hudson was a man, like Barnabas, who was "full of the Holy Spirit". What best characterizes a man who is "full of the Holy Spirit"? I believe the fruits, which are listed in Galatians 5, are a description of a Spirit-filled person. "But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."***

***If any man ever lived a life of holiness – a life committed to deeply loving God and to sincerely loving others – I believe Everitt Hudson lived such a life! A Spirit-filled, love-saturated man of God. He was a Christ-like servant.***

***It is no wonder to me that his dedicated children and grandchildren have followed the godly example of their father and grandfather. One godly generation becomes a 'pace***

*setter' for the next generation. For several years now I have respected the lives of some of Everett's relatives (whom I consider to be godly persons), but I am sure that these godly relatives would give a lot of credit (humanly-speaking) to their loving father and grandfather who provided such a godly example for them to follow.*

*I believe Everitt Daniel Hudson sought to live what I would call a 'balanced Christian life'. I believe he was serious-minded without being somber, joyous without being frivolous, witty without being sarcastic, full of conviction without being legalistic, conservative without being radical or fanatical, affectionate without being merely sentimental, friendly without being overly-familiar with people, heavenly-minded without being impractical or unapproachable. Yes, I believe he sought to live a 'supernaturally natural life' – a life characterized by being 'earthy' on one hand and 'heavenly-minded' on the other hand. A man who lived for 'two worlds' at the same time – the world of 'matter' and the world of the 'spiritual'. He was not so 'heavenly minded' that he was of no 'earthly good'; neither was he a man who was so focused on the things of this earth that he forgot that he was essentially a 'spiritual being' with a 'heavenly destiny'.*

*The characteristic of Everitt Daniel Hudson, like as was true of Barnabas, was that he was a man who was "strong in faith". That is to say, he greatly surrendered to Christ and Christ's way of life. He believed strongly in Christ and in the values of the spiritual Kingdom. He set his affections on things above, not on things on this earth alone. As Abraham of old, Everitt Hudson too "was confidently waiting for God to bring him to that strong heavenly city whose designer and builder is God." (Hebrews 11:10, Living Bible) As a man of faith, Mr. Hudson, at times, learned obedience and faithfulness by the many things which he suffered. He was no stranger to spiritual and physical suffering, but through it all he remained true to His God.*

*William Barclay notes that fidelity "is the virtue of the man who, through all the changes and the chances of life, down even to the gates of death, is loyal to God." Mr. Hudson was that kind of man - loyal and faithful and persevering, down even to the gates of death. Said one, "There is nothing in this world which can take the place of loyalty. If all the other noble qualities of life were placed in the balance against loyalty, loyalty would outweigh them all."*

*Even though Everitt might have been too humble to declare it verbally and openly, this dear man could have confidently said (along with the apostle Paul) just weeks before his departure from this earthly realm: "I have fought long and hard for my Lord, and through it all I have kept true to him. And now the time has come to me to stop fighting*

***and rest. In heaven a crown is waiting for me which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that great day of his return." (2 Timothy 4:7-8, Living Bible)***

***Many people – both relatives and friends – will never be quite the same for having known this great man. Many of you here today will always reserve a special place in your heart for this 'saint of God' – Everitt Daniel Hudson – who, like Barnabas, was a kindly man, a man full of the Holy Spirit, and a man who was strong in faith!***

# REMEMBERING
# CEOLA BETZ - 2001

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***Ceola was a young divorcee (raising two very bright daughters) when my wife and I arrived as the new pastors of the Fort Collins Free Methodist Church, in 1967. We were so young and inexperienced at that time, and the work of the small (struggling) local Church served, at times, to be rather "overwhelming" to us. We worked very hard for many years, and slowly new persons started attending our Church. But, my wife and I did not know how to relax and to take "proper breaks" from our "taxing schedule" as leaders of the Church. It was precious Ceola (herself a hard worker as a nurse in a nursing home) who knew how to bring fun and laughter and diversion to our lives. She was like a "spiritual mom" to my wife and to me, and she was like a "substitute grandmother" to our two young daughters (since the 'real grandmothers' lived a long distance from our daughters). Ceola invited us to her home on countless occasions, for unbelievably great meals! We laughed together, picked corn together, and so much more! I probably was like a "surrogate father" to her daughters, and later I had the delight of performing the wedding ceremony for both of those daughters. Ceola was like a family member, and she helped Venita and me though many different trials (mostly problems within the local Church, but also some personal trials). We were very close to her.***

***But, after sharing all these 'warm feelings', I must say that after I retired from pastoring the local Church and when Ceola had a new (outstanding) pastor, I was not asked to conduct her funeral service. Of course, that is understandable, since her new pastor had become "close" to her, and it was appropriate for him to have that honor and privilege. It was a good sermon, worthy of Ceola! I was on the platform, and was asked to read some scripture, which I, of course, was glad to do. But, unfortunately, I***

***was not asked even to share a tribute (even though I had been Ceola's pastor for many years).***

***So, the tribute that follows was never presented publicly, to honor my close "second mom" and dear friend. Probably my wife and I were "closer" (emotionally and socially) to Ceola than we were to any other parishioners, during the 27 years we pastored the Church. But a change of circumstances (i.e., my leaving the pastorate a few years before she died) resulted in a rather "odd situation". But I felt inclined to write this tribute, nevertheless.***

## FUNERAL MESSAGE (OR) TRIBUTE

***Just one day before her 76th birthday, my wife and I lost one of our dearest friends, a friend whom we have cherished for nearly 34 years. Venita and I (in our early 20's) arrived in Fort Collins, Colorado, to become the pastors of the Free Methodist Church, the same Church where Ceola Betz had been attending for several years before we were appointed to this local Church on July 22, 1967. From the very beginning of our pastorate, Ceola became a close and dear and loyal friend – not just a parishioner, but a caring and enduring friend. From 1967-94 (nearly 27 years) it was my privilege to be her pastor, and even though I have not been her pastor for the last 7 years, she remained a cherished friend to Venita and to me.***

***Of course, time does not permit, nor are there words adequate, to describe the loving relationship which my wife and I experienced with Ceola for so many years! Truly, Ceola has been one of the very closest friends whom we have ever had!***

***What can I say about Ceola Betz? So very much, but I will share only a few highlights.***

***Those who, like us, knew Ceola well, knew that Jesus Christ was the most important person in Ceola's life. From her youth, Ceola loved her Lord, and for many decades Ceola served her Savior and Master. She talked to Jesus as if He was her best friend – for Jesus was her best friend. She overflowed with gratitude to Christ for allowing her to live, not only long enough to raise her two wonderful daughters, but long enough to see her children and their spouses and her grandchildren develop into caring and loving persons. Ceola shared both her joys and her sorrows with her dear Lord, and she found herself often talking so very intimately and naturally with her Lord, during the 'ups and downs' of her daily life.***

*Ceola was a loyal member of the Church – the Body of Christ - which she loved and to which she gladly dedicated her time and talents and finances. So many fellow Christians in her Church (and outside her Church) loved and cherished her.*

*It would be hard to find any mother who was more devoted to her children than Ceola. As a single parent, raising her children involved great sacrifice, but she counted it all joy to love and to serve her daughters (and, after her daughters were married, to love her dear sons-in-law and her grandsons). She was so proud of her children (and their spouses) and her grandchildren.*

*Ceola had a heart of compassion which was most amazing, evidenced by the fact that, as a nurse, she cared for the elderly in a community nursing home for about 25 years. When she was once asked what she did at this nursing home for so many years, she thought a moment and then she replied: "Well, I guess the best answer to that question is that I 'helped many, many people to die'". What comfort she brought to countless persons, during their last years and months and moments, before they left this earth!*

*There are so many godly traits, which I could focus on, characteristics of Christlikeness, which 'touched' so many persons whom she knew, including my wife and me and our two daughters. Characteristics like kindness, patience, gentleness, a keen sense of justice and fairness, compassion as I have already mentioned, perseverance amidst so many trials and troubles and sicknesses, fervency in prayer amidst the changes and chances of life, generosity and hospitality as shown by the scores of delicious home-cooked meals which my wife and I enjoyed around her table over a period of many years, unusual wisdom and discernment which she manifested during times when she became our personal counselor and adviser and confidant. Yes, these godly characteristics, and so many more, describe this great lady.*

*But there is one outstanding trait, which, in my mind, especially stands out when I think of Ceola Betz. I am thinking about Ceola's ability to CELEBRATE. Yes, in spite of the fact that she was forced by circumstances to live on a very limited income, Ceola knew how to 'enjoy life'. Ceola knew how to 'have fun', to 'make the most of simple events' like birthday parties and picnics and graduation parties and youth nights. When I first met her, she and her daughters (one in grade school and the other in high school) lived in a very small mobile home. But, in spite of those 'close quarters', Ceola was determined to 'have fun', to make her little dwelling a 'center of laughter and fellowship'. Several times, when a youth choir from a Christian College would come to the local Free Methodist Church, Ceola (at the bidding of her girls) would invite one of the college girls to stay overnight in her little mobile home! Even though she had so little (economically), she gave so much (in terms of hospitality). She believed that*

*'little is much when God is in it', and truly God amazingly multiplied her small gifts to bless countless persons. She was so big-hearted and so generous. When you went to her home for a meal, believe me, you were 'stuffed' at the end of the 'feast'! Everything you could imagine and more! A pure delight to be in her home, where she loved to serve big meals, where she loved to visit and to laugh and to share her deep love!*

*When our two daughters were rather young, she brought a kitten to our house and she gave it to our daughters. She believed every child should have a pet. That cat (named Muffin) became our girl's cherished pet for about 15 years.*

*On one occasion many years ago, Ceola and I together harvested sweet corn from the country corn field of one of Ceola's friends who told her to come and to take as many ears of corn as she wished (all free). And that friend meant what she said. So Ceola asked me to go with her to the country, east of Fort Collins, to help her to pick ears of sweet corn. Well, as I recall, Ceola and I (like eager beavers) picked over a 100 dozen ears of corn! We stuffed corn into her car trunk and in the back seat of her car, and in every available space we could find. It took her and my wife and me considerable time to prepare all that corn for the freezers! She and my wife and I also picked and prepared cherries for the freezer. Of course, when friends later bit into a cherry seed as they were enjoying homemade cherry pie, she would tell them that those particular pits were pits that I – her pastor – failed to get out of the cherries! After she hid Easter eggs for our young daughters, she found great delight in watching their excitement. No longer will we laugh together on earth, for now she laughs with joy unspeakable!*

# REMEMBERING

# HEATHER PARKISON –1995

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***Heather's parents both accepted Christ as Savior when they first moved from Nebraska to Fort Collins, Colorado, on the occasion of my "Salvation By Appointment" Bible study in their home. A few years later, Heather and her brother were enrolled in the new Christian Day School ("Choice City Christian School") which my wife started in 1987 (a school which my wife, as administrator, saw grow from 11 kindergarten students to 220 students and all 13 grades, within 5 years)! God mightily blessed my wife's dedicated labors (and those of several others).***

***Heather was one of those early students. But cancer took its toll on her little body. After about two years of struggle, she died. She was the youngest person for whom I was called to conduct a service. A godly young child! I am sure that our loving God is the great Compensator – that is, God allows the fulfillment of a person's life in heaven, when he/she is not able to find the fulfillment of their life on earth. I do not believe God desired or willed Heather's death (when she was so young), but in a "Fallen World" (with disease) many die prematurely! God will "compensate" for every premature death!***

## FUNERAL MESSAGE (OR) TRIBUTE

***I can see her yet, a kindergarten girl, full of excitement, running across the playground at recess time with arms open wide. Upon approaching the principal of the school, (Venita Christian), she would put her arms around her and give her a big hug. She would look up with love in her eyes and a big smile on her face. The principal would hug her in return and tell her she loved her. With that exchange of warm expression,***

***Heather would return to her playmates. This fun ritual was repeated between Heather and Venita Christian time and time again at recess time. Just recently, the day after Heather passed from this earthly existence, only to be hugged by the holy angels in heaven, the principal shared with Heather's parents what a joy precious little Heather was to her during her first year at Choice City Christian School.***

***Heather, about four years before she went to glory land, learned her phonics lessons well, and she learned a lot about Jesus' love each day. In Kindergarten, and later in her meaningful involvement with her mother in Home School, Heather began to read and read and read. Almost until the day when she went to her Heavenly Home, Heather enjoyed reading her Bible and many exciting children's stories. She was an excellent reader, spending countless hours immersed in adventure stories, including the fast-moving and colorful stories from the Bible. During the last few weeks, after Heather was told that she could no longer continue to physically live on this earth because of the disease which she had contracted, Heather's parents talked more and more to her about heaven – about her getting to walk and to talk with Jesus, and about worshipping and loving Jesus and about her getting to meet the very heroes that she had read about in the Bible – heroes like Moses, David and Elijah!***

***Who can ever estimate the amount of courage and comfort Heather received from those times when she and her parents and siblings talked about Jesus and Heaven and the Holy Angels and the great saints recorded in Scriptures! I cherish the times during the last few weeks when I was with Heather, talking heart to heart with her about her future, which she could anticipate with her wonderful Saviour. Even when she said very little, Heather would smile and respond with confidence and peace. One time recently, when she lay on her living room couch so very ill, I sat on the floor and held her hand, and expressed my love for her. I asked her when she became a Christian and she told me it was when she was 6 years old – when she was being Home Schooled as a First Grader. In the presence of her loving mother, Heather opened her heart to Jesus Christ. She was saved that day, only 3 years before her homegoing!***

***Oh, it is true that this young child did not have a lot of sins to the forgiven or a lot of bondages from which she needed to be delivered. She was a mere infant when her beloved parents, Mark and Carmma, had prayed the sinners' prayer in their apartment soon after they had moved to Colorado from Nebraska. I know this born-again experience of her parents was real, for I was there that day, and I was a witness to their prayer of repentance and faith. Heather received the positive influence of a Christian home from the time her parents became Christians, when she was less than a year old!***

***Someone may ask, "What difference did it make for Heather to accept Jesus as her Saviour?" Well, because she was saved at such an early age, there may not have been many, if any, glaring sins for which she needed to be forgiven. But, even little children need salvation. Even little children need to know firsthand of Jesus' love. Even little children need to feel Jesus' presence and experience His joyous friendship. Even little children need strength from the indwelling Holy Spirit, so that they may learn how to submit obediently to their parents. After all, the Bible says, "You children must always obey your fathers and mothers, for that pleases the Lord" (Colossians 3:20) How easy is it for a child always to obey his or her parents, without the Lord's enabling strength?***

***Yes, Heather accepted Jesus as her Saviour when she was only 6 years old, thanks most of all to the faithful Holy Spirit who moved upon her heart, and thanks also to the godly influence of several significant persons in her life – her Sunday School teachers, her Christian kindergarten teacher, Christian friends and playmates, and most of all – her loving parents who regularly instructed her in the ways of Christ in her home.***

***Little did either Heather or her beloved parents know, when Heather first accepted Jesus into her heart, that the faith of Heather and her parents would be sorely tested in only a few years from the time Heather prayed that simple child's prayer for personal salvation. But, both the faith of Heather and the faith of her parents stood the test of the hard trial – the trial which involved spending weeks in the hospital fighting the fierce disease of leukemia! The day after Heather's death, Carmma shared with us her gratitude for her many times when Heather demonstrated unusual courage during her many therapy treatments – when her little body was being poked so often with needles, and when she had to endure so much isolation from other children in her bed of affliction. A big, big hurdle for a young child to get over! But, Heather's faith in God and the deep love of her parents and brothers and sister sustained her. Through all the dark and sad valleys of these past 19 months, since the diagnosis of leukemia was first revealed in July 1993, Heather kept her little hand in the giant hand of God Almighty. Remember, the Lord Jesus said, before He returned to heaven, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. I will go with you till the end." Yes, to the very end of Heather's earthly life, Jesus was with her. The last time I saw Heather was two days before she died, on Monday afternoon, February 6th. I took her hand and told her that soon she would be with Jesus who loved her deeply. I told her that I believed soon she would be "playing with the angels" and serving Jesus and worshipping Jesus! I told Heather what a wonderful girl she was, and that we loved her so much, and that soon her whole family would be with her. I told her that she would get to see all the great Bible Heroes that she had read about in her Bible stories – heroes like Moses! I asked her if she was afraid, and she said that she was not afraid!***

***Dear friends, this little girl, age 9 who was saved at age 6, was a "little saint" – a true follower of her Master Jesus! Remember what the Bible says: "The character of even a child can be known by the way he/she acts – whether what he or she does is pure and right". (Proverbs 20:11) Heather Parkison was known by her godly character! She will be remembered for her godly character.***

***I have no doubt that the Holy Angels came and carried her into her heavenly home, the moment she breathed her last breath on earth, as she lay limp in the arms of her godly mother!***

***Even though Jesus' ministry was filled with hard tasks and with heavenly burdens, Jesus always had time for children. Even while Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, where He would be arrested and crucified, Jesus took time to recognize and to bless children and lay hands on them and pray. But the disciples scolded those who brought them. 'Don't bother Jesus', they said. But Jesus said, 'of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.' And Jesus put his hands on the heads of the children and blessed them". Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God belongs to men who have hearts as trusting as these little children's hearts. And anyone who doesn't have this kind of faith will never get within the Kingdom gates". (Luke 18:17)***

***Heather Parkison has left an example of faith for all of us, not only a faith to admire, but a faith to practice. Her faith was the faith of a child, and, it is true, not much time was given to her on this earth for her to develop her faith. But remember, time is not the only ingredient necessary in the development of a strong faith. Besides time, hardships are also necessary as an ingredient in the development of a growing faith! And, for being so young, Heather had plenty of hardships! Heather's faith in Christ and her faith in God's Word grew immensely as a result of the hardships which she experienced. We, too, like Heather, must have a childlike faith – a faith which believes that God is love, even in the midst of what seems to be senseless suffering; a faith which believes that the invisible world is more real that the visible world; a faith which believes that God forgives when we honestly confess our sins to Him; a faith which believes that Jesus and the Holy Angels will receive us lovingly into their arms at the moment of our death; a faith which believes that God will continue to allow us to grow toward maturity in heaven from the point where we left off on earth (regardless if it is at age 9 or at 90)***

***Heather Parkison was a person who exercised strong faith! "What is faith? It is the confident assurance that something we want is going to happen. It is the certainty that what we hope for is waiting for us, even though we cannot see it up ahead." (Hebrews 11:1)***

***When Heather knew she could not live very long on this earth, her parents helped her to focus her thoughts on the beauty and splendor and glory and joys of heaven. The faith and trust which Heather placed in her Heavenly Father removed her doubts and her fears and gave her confidence that heaven was for real and that heaven would be a place of unbounded joy and pleasure and fun and beauty beyond compare!***

***Faith in Jesus as her Saviour; faith in Jesus as her Friend; faith in Jesus as her Comforter; faith in Jesus as her eternal Rewarder! I can almost hear what Jesus may have said to Heather – of course in a way that only Jesus could say it and in a way that Heather would fully understand it – (but perhaps something like this) "Well done, thou good and faithful servant! You have been faithful in taking me into your heart when you were only 6. You have been faithful in obeying your beloved parents, and in being kind to your brothers and sister and grandparents and friends. You have been faithful in studying hard and in learning much through your careful observations of people and nature and through much reading. You have been faithful to continue to trust me, your Saviour, amidst your long stays in the hospital as you courageously battled a monster called leukemia! You have been faithful to read my Word, the Bible, which you loved so much! Yes, Heather, my daughter whom I created and whom I redeemed through my suffering on Mount Calvary, I love you greatly! Come now into heaven, and walk with me on the golden streets and feel free to pick all the fruit you want from the heavenly trees. You no longer will need to read books to satisfy your curiosity. You will now be a student, learning from the greatest saints in heaven, like Moses and David! Enter the glories of heaven, where you will continue to grow in every way for all eternity! Come, help me reign over my vast and beautiful kingdom!"***

***1 As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. 2 "Rabbi," his disciples asked him, "why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents' sins?" 3 "It was not because of his sins or his parents' sins", Jesus answered. "This happened so the power of God could be seen in him. 4 We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us. The night is coming, and then no one can work. 5 But while I am here in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:1-5)***

***13 And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died. 15 We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven***

***with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the Christians who have died will rise from their graves. 17 Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. (I Thessalonians 4:13-17)***

***24 We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it. 25 But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.) 26 And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. 27 And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. (Romans 8:24-27)***

***TRIBUTE FOR HEATHER PARKISON FROM CARMMA PARKISON***

***(Her***

***I love you Heather; you had a sweet gentle spirit. I so looked forward to sharing your children with you. You loved babies and wanted me to have a hundred; now you do! I know you are happy now in the love of our precious Lord Jesus. He had a plan, it wasn't mine, but I have no bitterness about it. You had to go home now. Your journey and my journey together hasn't been easy and you and I did not want to travel the road but we did it together. Many times, I had to cling to the robes of Jesus and let Him hold me for He alone knew the pain I felt, the helplessness but never the hopelessness. You accepted Jesus in your life when you were six. You grew in faith every year since then, and so did I. When you did school you read the Bible every day and you loved the Lord very much. When we laid hands on you, in my heart I carried you and placed you in Jesus arms myself. I knew you would have to leave even before then. I love you very much and I will always treasure my memories of you. How you read to your little brothers, how you thought Christ was really your baby. All the good and bad only makes me closer to our merciful God and to you in heaven now, completely whole and healed. The last 19 months have not been happy for us, but now I hear you laughing and playing and saying in your sweet voice "Hi Daddy".***

***You will always be my sunshine.*** ***No Regrets,***

***Mommie***

# REMEMBERING
# ERNIE ROWE – 1984

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***Ernie Rowe was one of the most godly persons in the local church where I pastored for many years. He and his wife could be considered the "love birds" of our Church. They loved each other dearly, and they were usually together. Both of them had "mail routes" and both of them cared greatly for their children and several grandchildren. Both of them were deeply committed to the Church, for decades. Both of them greatly loved to teach small (preschool) children. Both of them loved to host friends in their home. Both of them loved the "out-of-doors" (mountains). But, while Ernie had a quiet temperament, and talked much less and more softly than Bea (Ernie's wife), their great difference temperamentally actually enhanced both of them. Both loved to pray, and the one prayer that Ernie always prayed was: "Lord, keep us humble, prayerful, and obedient". I heard that prayer numerous times, so now (many years after his death), I continue to pray that simple (important) prayer as my own! Yes, I have very precious memories of Ernie Rowe.***

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

***19 Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. 20 Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. 21 The Lord's***

***hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. [22] News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. [23] When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. [24] He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. (Acts 11:19-24)***

***Ernie Rowe was a man who saw "evidence of the grace of God". "When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts." Acts 11:23. He was a man of spiritual sensitivity. He lived for two worlds – the world of time and the world of eternity. He stayed in close touch with God on a daily basis, through prayer and meditation, and the reading of the Scriptures. He was a wise man who discerned the moving of God's Spirit. He listened carefully for the voice of God and was quick to obey the Spirit's direction in his life. He was careful not to grieve the Holy Spirit and was a man of great integrity. He was a man who understood the meaning of 'grace'. 'Grace', to Ernie, meant 'God's unmerited favor'. Ernie knew that he was an object of God's special love, that he had nothing for which to boast of within himself. Ernie personally was converted when he was a young man, shortly after his marriage to Bea. Ernie lived close to Christ through the years, and he was a mighty man of prayer. He carried a heavy burden for the lost people around him. He wanted more than anything else to know that all of his family and loved ones were 'born again', truly converted, and thoroughly saved. He told me recently that he would gladly go through again what he went through during the last six months, if his suffering would help bring anyone to Christ. He lived fully for time, but his life-time goal was to make heaven his eternal home. He knew that it was not all of life to live, nor all of death to die, but that after death would come the judgment. Just the night before he died, I had a wonderful visit with him and his wife, at which time he spoke of God's peace that flooded his heart. He talked about God's peace that passes understanding and God's joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. I have never known a couple whose lives radiated more of the love and peace and joy of Christ during the last months previous to death, than the lives of Bea and Ernie. When sharing this with Bea, she replied to me, "Ron, it is not us; it is the grace of God that has made this possible. If it were not for the Lord, we could never have made it!" Bea and Ernie have always made it clear to those around them that it is the grace and power and love of Christ that have made their lives radiant and beautiful and winsome. They have given God all the glory and praise for their radiant faith.***

***Their daughter, Phyllis, said recently regarding her father, "Daddy was always rather quiet and didn't talk a lot, but the godliness of his life has spoken very loudly to me". Yes, Ernie Rowe was a man who saw and who evidenced the grace of God effectively working in his own life and in the lives of those around him.***

***Why was Ernie so conscious of the grace of God? Because Ernie's focus was on the love of God, revealed in the person of Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary. Ernie understood the significance of Christ's death for his sins and the sins of all the world. His life was based on the truth of Ephesians 2:8, 9. ("For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast"). Ernie personally experienced the truth of the words of the great invitation hymn (which he sang many times throughout his lifetime): ("Just As I Am Without One Plea").***

***"Just as I am, without one plea,***
***But that thy blood was shed for me,***
***And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,***
***O Lamb of God, I come, I come."***

***Ernie put all his faith in the 'Lord of lords' – Jesus Christ – whose blood cleansed away every sin of his life. He was a saved man who daily pled the blood of Christ for wonderful cleansing. Through the nearly 18 years I was his pastor, I often heard him pray publicly: "Lord, keep us ever humble, prayerful and obedient". The secret to the quiet strength of this godly man was his personal fellowship with Christ on a daily basis. He and his wife had morning and evening devotions together through the years of their happy married life. Seldom have I seen a couple who were so much in love with one another and who were so companionable. They loved to be together – to work and to pray and to play together. The last morning before he passed away, Bea and Ernie, as usual had their morning devotions together, at which time Ernie led in prayer. Bea said it was hard for him to pray, but that he prayed by name for each of his children and grandchildren. Ernie's life was a life of prayer.***

***Ernie was a man who encouraged others to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. (Acts 11:23)***

***Ernie was steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. He was faithful to his Lord, to his family, and to his Church throughout all the changes and chances of life. He was a good encourager. He was not a negative or critical or judgmental person. Rather, he was a positive man of faith, one who believed in others,***

***and one who freely expressed appreciation to others. His was a sweet spirit, and his words reflected kindness and thoughtfulness. His very presence was encouraging to people. He had a radiance about him that attracted people, not only to him, but to the Christ whom he served. The scores of people who knew him through the years, both on his mail route which he had for over 35 years and in his Church and among his family, knew Ernie to be a man full of kind words and loving deeds. He would go out of his way to help others. He was a favorite, not only among adults and teens, but also among children. For years, he and his wife were Sunday School teachers of children's classes. There were many small children, as young as 3, 4, 5 years old who loved to be with Ernie. He knew how to communicate God's wonderful truths to the little School class riding in their mail truck (which was especially decorated for Christmas). Yes, Ernie was a great encourager. Being his pastor for nearly 19 years was a wonderful experience. He was always a source of encouragement to me, reassuring me during the difficult times of my life and ministry that he was praying for me. There was no one who was more consistent in his Church attendance than Ernie (along with his dear wife). Seldom did they miss a Church service, Sunday morning, evening and midweek prayer meeting. His life stood the 'test of time'. He was a great encourager through the years!***

***Ernie Rowe was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith. He was a 'good man' in so many ways. He was a good husband. His wife would gladly testify to this. She looked at him as her 'rock' throughout her lifetime. He was consistently strong and wise and enduring. They were married for 45 years and experienced many joys and sorrows together during that long period of time. But their love for each other never wavered, but grew stronger and stronger through the years. They loved to be together.***

***He was a good father and grandfather. His children were deeply devoted to him and his grandchildren loved to be with him. He was a tender-hearted man, deeply respected by his family. He led his family, through his godly example. He could laugh and play and enjoy life to the fullest. He was a lover of the out-of-doors, and he loved to use his hands in skillful carpentry and mechanics. His family will long cherish some of the things which he built with his own hands.***

***He was a good Christian and Church worker. Someone recently called Ernie the "Senior Statesman" of his local Church. People in the Church respected his words of wise counsel and mature judgment. He served longer in the Fort Collins Free Methodist Church than any other man in the history of the local Church, becoming a member of the Church only a year or two after its beginning about 35 years ago. His commitment and loyalty were unquestioned, in spite of some great challenges through the years.***

*One of the greatest virtues of life is faithfulness, and Ernie was one of the most faithful persons I have ever known. "There is nothing in this world which can take the place of loyalty. If all the other noble qualities of life were placed in the balance against loyalty, loyalty would outweigh them all." (Barclay) God promised the faithful ones: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life!"*

*Ernie was a faithful, Spirit-filled man of God – full of love, kindness, gentleness, patience, and self-control. He has received his 'crown of life'. He fought the good fight, he courageously finished the race of life, and he kept the faith of Christ till the very end. Now there is in store for him the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to him. He is now enjoying the glories and beauties of heaven which are most breath-taking. Ernie, during his life as a mail carrier, beheld the beauties of the mountains, the trees, streams, wild animals and birds – but the beauty of heaven is unsurpassed! He told me the night before he passed away (as we were reminiscing on his past life) that he travelled over a million miles while he carried mail! There is a song, which says:*

*'When we've gone the last mile of the way,*
*We will rest at the close of the day,*
*And I know there are joys that await me,*
*When I've gone the last mile of the way.'*

*He now awaits reunion with his loved ones and friends. Only days before he passed away, he talked about meeting his loved ones in the Rapture.*

*Have you yet prepared to meet your Lord when you shall die? Have you confessed your sins to Christ and have you opened your heart's door to Christ? Does Christ sit on the throne of your heart today?*

*The Bible says, "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins". "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and will fellowship with him."*

*Come to Jesus today, if you have not surrendered yet to him! To know Jesus is to experience abundant life on earth and eternal life hereafter.*

*The memory of a loved one and the anticipation of a glorious and heavenly reunion with him, should provide a balm and healing for the grieving soul. As one person says,*

*"The healing of the Christian's grief should be a process of remembering rather than a process of forgetting – a returning sense of gratitude to God for the life He has made a part of ours and a joyful looking forward to the heavenly reunion He has promised us. Christian love will remain untarnished after the last tree has fallen, the last mountain worn down, the last star become a cinder. In the vast time-scale of eternity, our brief partings are but the episode of a moment.*

*"The thing that remains with us during this period of separation is the meaning of the life that was entwined with ours. Death does not sum up its meaning any more than the period on the last page sums up the meaning of a book. Our beloved dead are still alive even though we cannot see them or speak to them. What they are is what they were, maturing into the perfection of their eternal destiny." (Peter Day)*

*Joy shall replace sorrow, peace shall replace turmoil, reality shall replace dreams, and union shall replace separation.*

*The Christian has hope of seeing Jesus, face to face someday! "For the Christian, heaven is where Jesus is. We do not need to speculate on what heaven will be like. It is enough to know that we will be forever with Him. When we love anyone with our whole hearts, life begins when we are with that person; it is only in their company that we are really and truly alive. It is so with Christ. In this world our contact with Him is shadowy, for we can only see through a glass darkly. It is spasmodic, for we are poor creatures and cannot live always on the heights. But the best definition of it is to say that heaven is that state where we will always be with Jesus, and where nothing will separate us from Him anymore." (William Barclay)*

*"Jesus, these eyes have never seen*
*That radiant form of Thine;*
*The veil of sense hangs dark between*
*Thy blessed face and mine.*

*I see Thee not, I hear Thee not,*
*Yet art Thou oft with me;*
*And earth hath ne'er so dear a spot*
*As where I meet with Thee.*

*Yet though I have not seen, and still*
*Must rest in faith alone,*
*I love Thee, dearest Lord, and will,*

***Unseen but not unknown.***

***When death these mortal eyes shall seal.***
***And still this throbbing heart,***
***The rending veil shall Thee reveal***
***All glorious as Thou art.***

***Ernie Rowe has trod the road of death and has landed in that beautiful land where the sun always shines, where the flowers perpetually bloom, where the angels beautifully sing, and where the glory of Christ dwells. No longer is Ernie bowed down with the cares of life. His tears are dried and his countenance is radiant. He has the glow of eternity on his face. Because Ernie Rowe was faithful, even unto death, he now wears the crown of eternal life. He shall eternally rejoice in the presence of his blessed Saviour, Jesus Christ.***

# REMEMBERING

# GRACE BIRKINBINE – 1979

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***As I have shared in this sermon, this lady was a choice servant of God, one who loved people greatly, one who prayed fervently, one who encouraged many around her joyfully, and one who brought hope and comfort to those who were discouraged and sorrowing. She was the matriarch in our Church, the oldest lady of the Church and the one in whose home the small band of "prayer warriors" met weekly for probably ten years, of which I was a grateful participant. She was a great delight to me along with her husband, to whom she was married for 73 years! She was one of the most godly persons I ever knew – an excited member of the beautiful "band of saints" whom I cherished for many years, during my long-term pastorate!***

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

***"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised." (Hebrews 10:23)***

***Grace Birkinbine believed in God. She believed that God is faithful to His promises. First, she loved to read the Biblical Promises. She read the Bible regularly and even a short time before her death, she was reading, studying, and meditating on the Bible. At times, she used a magnifying glass in order to see to read. She honored her Bible and she believed in its great promises. Hebrews 10:23 (listed above) was her favorite verse. She had copied it on a paper, which was found in her Bible. She underlined Scriptures, which she especially enjoyed. Her old Bible was well used.***

***What she read in the Bible, she firmly believed. She took God at His Word. And that is what faith is all about. She never grew tired of reading the Bible; she spent hours weekly reading both the Old Testament and New Testament. She often shared with me that she had recently discovered a new insight or fresh inspiritation from reading various portions of Scriptures. She delighted in the laws of her God.***

***She formed her deep convictions as a result of studying the Bible. She claimed the promises and she heeded the Biblical warnings. She felt deep concern for those she knew who were not living according to Biblical precepts and who were not obeying Biblical commands. She had a profound respect for the Holy Scriptures. She lived IN the Bible and BY the Bible.***

***Grace Birkinbine believed that God is faithful in promising to answer Prayers. Grace was a solid prayer warrior. She not only talked often about prayer, but she practiced prayer every day. For 10 years, I was a member of her prayer group. Weekly, she and her close friends met together for prayer and Bible study. I have seldom heard anyone pray with greater fervency. She talked directly to her Heavenly Father. Countless times my heart was deeply moved. She prayed for her loved ones. She prayed that every member of her family would know Christ. She prayed for the Church. She deeply loved her Church. The daily prayed for the people in her Church. She loved the sinner and she loved the saint alike. She loved the younger and she loved the old. She had a special interest in the persons who were new Christians, and her love for them was expressed in earnest prayer. She believed that prayer moved the Hand of God. She often rejoiced because of answered prayers, and she persisted even in the face of unanswered prayer. She believed her prayers would eventually be answered even if she herself would not live to see all of those answered.***

***Her prayers were not passive or petty. They were fervent and the main content of her prayers consisted in the salvation of her loved ones and friends. She was indeed a Mighty Prayer Warrior! Why did she pray so much and so earnestly? Because, as her favorite verse says, she believed that "God who promised is faithful" to answer prayer!***

***Grace Birkinbine believed that God was faithful to His promise to build His Church. She believed in the Church of Jesus Christ. She was a faithful Church attender and a faithful Church member. Her loyalty to the Church was never in question. Her interest in the Church's growth was great. She was most thrilled to hear of Church growth – new people, new members, new programs, new converts, and new facilities. She was a most progressive person – positive, believing, and loving. She never had a negative word to say about the Church. There was no place she would rather be than at the Church services. She loved to come to Church. She loved to greet the people. It was easy and***

*natural for her to give a big hug of love to young and older alike. She was full of love – everyone around her was touched by her overflow of kindness and affection. She loved to talk to people in the Church. She loved to pray in the Church. She loved to sing the great hymns of the Church. She enjoyed encouraging people. She loved to hear the sermons of the Church. On many occasions, she would overwhelm me with her enthusiastic comments regarding my sermons. She always was teachable. Even in her late 80's, after hearing my sermons, she would often comment to me that she had learned something new. She expressed deep appreciation for my sermons.*

*Grace Birkinbine believed in the Church. For years and years, she attended Church and served in the Church, and gave to the Church.*

*She gave everything she could to her church. She gave her prayers. She gave her faithful attendance. She gave her positive testimony, (she loved to share her love for God with everyone in the Church). On one occasion, just a few years ago, she sang "Life Is Like A Mountain Railroad' in front of the congregation on a Sunday morning. She gave her talents to the Church. She taught Sunday school classes for years. She worked in the Salvation Army many years ago, caring for the sorrowing and the suffering. She gave her tithes and offerings to the Church! Oh, how careful she was to pay her tithes regularly to her Church. She gave her influence to the Church. So many people – young and old – deeply loved 'Grandma Birkinbine' as she was affectingly known. Upon hearing of her death, my children wept. To them, Mrs. Birkinbine was like their grandmother. They loved to visit her and her husband. They loved to climb up on their laps. They loved to receive her kisses, and her candy, and her love in a thousand ways. We still cherish the beautiful quilts, which she made for our girls. Mrs. Birkinbine's love for children can be seen in the scores of quilts which she made for those she loved. Our Church nursery received some of those fine quilts, which she made with her most skillful hands. It's hard to believe, but it is true that Grandma Birkinbine was cutting and sewing quilt blocks only a few days before she died! She also gave her time and her gifts and talents to the Church. Her greatest gift was the gift of love. She constantly reached out in love to people. For years, she loved to go with me to the nursing homes to sing, to share, to pray, to exhort. She delighted to minister to the old people (as she put it) - many of whom were younger than herself.*

*Grace Birkinbine believed in the Church. She believed that Christ established the Church. She believed that the Church is important for spiritual growth and encouragement. She believed in Hebrews 10:25: "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching."*

***She believed that the Day of Christ's Second Coming was soon approaching. She believed it is important regularly to meet together for prayer, worship, study, and mutual encouragement. She believed it was important to keep her prayer group meeting regularly. For years, she weekly called the members in her prayer group to encourage them to be faithful in attendance at the cottage prayer meeting.***

***Why did Grace Birkinbine believe so strongly in the Church? Because she believed that the Church was established by Jesus Christ, and she believed that the "gates of hell cannot prevail against the Church of Christ." She believed that God is faithful to His promise to build His Church. She gave her long life for the Church because she believed in the God-ordained purpose of the Church. She believed that the cause of the Church would outlast time! She invested in eternal values. She set her affections on things above. The Church was the center of her activity, and the stimulus of her creativity.***

***Grace Birkinbine believed that God is faithful to fulfill His promise of Eternal Life. Let us again repeat her favorite verse: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised". (Hebrews 10:23) She held steady to her hope of eternal life. She experienced the buffetings of life's sorrows. She was sensitive to life's hurts. It was hard for her not to worry about her husband's health and welfare. She was no stranger to life's multiplied grief. She was acquainted with life's changes and chances. During her long life, she attended many funerals. Late in life, she still occasionally talked about the death of her small baby, who died many, many years ago. Occasionally she spent sleepless nights worrying and fretting. Other people's troubles were her troubles. She carried the burdens of others often. If any fault could be noticed in her, perhaps it would be her tendency to worry, born out of her very sensitive nature.***

***Grace Birkinbine lived fully for time, but the interests of time were always subordinated to the interests of eternity. She lived for God and she lived for heaven. She often talked about heaven, and she greatly anticipated meeting her blessed Saviour in heaven. She talked of the glories that would follow this life, and she was filled at times with such ecstasy that she said she felt like shouting. Eternal values were all important to her, and yet she was very earthy, and practical, and personable, and believable. She lived so much for heaven that she lived fully for earth. She was a woman of two worlds – the world of time and the world of eternity. She liked to think of what heaven would be like, and yet she never gave up her practical concerns to minister to human needs and hurts in this world. On one occasion, she and her husband and I held hands and we sang, "When we all get to heaven, what a glorious day that will be."***

***Grace Birkinbine was not selfish. She wanted to see all of her family and friends go to heaven also. She often prayed that not one of her relatives would perish but that all of them would come to repentance and be saved. She wanted to see all of her family turn to God, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. She wanted to meet all her family in heaven some day. She loved her family so very much. She often spoke warmly and lovingly about them. She was deeply devoted to her husband, and she was the source of joy to her many children and grandchildren, and even great grandchildren. She was always proud of her wonderful husband and her precious family. The greatest desire of her heart was that her entire family would turn to Christ and to the Church.***

***Why did Grace Birkinbine hold so unswervingly to the hope of eternal life? Because, as her favorite verse says (Hebrews 10:23), she believed that "God is faithful that promised." She believed that if she repented of her sins and turned with all her heart to God that she would be forgiven and that she would receive eternal life. Her hope of living in heaven was based upon the fact that God is faithful to His promises.***

***She lived by God's promises and she died with God's promises in her heart!***

***What God promised Grace Birkinbine, He has now given to her – eternal joy in the presence of her heavenly Father. To be absent from this earthly body is to be present with the Lord. Grace Birkinbine is absent from her old body today, but she is present with her Lord. As she entered heaven's gates, I am sure she heard those wonderful words from her wonderful Lord: "Well done thou good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful in little. Now I will make you ruler over much!"***

***Her earthly sorrows are over. Her heavenly joys are beginning. She has an eternity to enjoy her Lord and to fulfill her Heavenly tasks.***

***Revelation 21:1-4***

***1 Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth",[a] for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death'[b] or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."***

***Revelation 22:1-6; 17***

***1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever. 6 The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place."***

***17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.***

***Jesus asks you today to come to Him for forgiveness, for salvation, for eternal life. Come to Jesus today – right now!***

***Today is the day of salvation. Now is the accepted time. Tomorrow may be too late. Come to Jesus, just as you are. Allow Jesus to forgive you, to cleanse your heart, to give you peace and hope and joy. Allow Jesus to write your name in heaven's Book of Life.***

***If you are not a true Christian today, may I urge you to confess your sins to Christ! The Bible says, "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (I John 1:9)***

***If you are not a true Christian today, may I urge you to believe on the Lord Jesus, with all your heart? The Bible says, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Romans 10:9)***

***If you are not a true Christian today, may I urge you to accept Jesus into your heart as your Saviour and Lord. Says Jesus, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me". (Revelations 3:20)***

***Confess your sins, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and accept Him into your total life. That is what Grace Birkinbine did, and that is why she is now rejoicing in her heavenly home!***

***CLOSING PRAYER***

***FATHER,***

***We thank you for sending Jesus Christ, your Son, to earth to live a sacrificial life, to die a substitutionary death, and to demonstrate His power over death through His glorious Resurrection. We thank you that the same power that raised Christ from the dead is the power which has been released into your world. That resurrection power is available to each one of us – to forgive us, to cleanse us, to change us, and to save us from the power of sin and death.***

***We thank you that because Christ died, we may live. Christ, the sinless one, died for Man the guilty one. We thank you, Father, that when we transfer our trust from ourselves to you, we find new life. When we confess our sins, we find forgiveness. When we call upon you in simple faith, we are saved.***

***We thank you that Jesus Christ hath abolished death. Christ's victory over death becomes our victory over death also – when we place our full trust in Jesus Christ as our Saviour. Thank you that "Death has been swallowed up in victory". You give us "victory through our Lord Jesus Christ".***

***We know that "Heaven" is "the continuation and expansion of a quality of life which Grace Birkinbine began when her central trust was transferred from herself to Jesus Christ." (Phillips' Reading 211) Death hath no power over your servant, for Jesus said, "If a man keep my saying he shall never see death". (John 8:51) "Whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die." (John 11:26) We know that the great adventure of living with God which Mrs. Birkinbine embarked upon during her earthly pilgrimage, is now being enjoyed in the heavenly presence of her wonderful Saviour. A life without sorrow, heartache, disappointment, or death!***

***Thank you for the blessed memory of your godly servant, Grace Birkinbine. Comfort those who remain to grieve her loss. May her loved ones and friends experience the same hope, which she enjoyed – a hope born out of personal faith in Jesus Christ. May Christ, who was so real to Mrs. Birkinbine, be equally real to those who remain. May the God of all comfort, comfort their hearts today. May the circle not be broken in heaven, but may each one who loved her on earth, someday greet her in heaven. Through faith in Jesus Christ.***

***Amen.***

# REMEMBERING SHARLA CHRISTIAN – 1981

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***This is the message I gave, just a few days following her unexpected and tragic death (as a 15 year old) on August 14, 1981, one of the darkest days in the life of her father (my brother) and in the lives of several others. She died as a result of having one of her very rare seizures while she was riding on a roller coaster at an amusement park in Denver, Colorado. Her close friend, sitting beside her, frightenly observed the accident. How honored I was to be asked by my brother to preach her funeral sermon, and to offer some words of tribute in Sharla's honor. As the message points out, she was a very dedicated Christian, even though she was quite young. (The vision-visitation – which my brother experienced and wrote about, days after Sharla's death, is shared in the Introduction to this book).***

## FUNERAL MESSAGE (OR) TRIBUTE

***Before Norman Vincent Peale preached his first sermon, many years ago, he came to his minister father and asked, "Dad, what in the world am I going to say to the people?" Replied the wise father, "Just tell them that God loves them".***

***What else is there to tell, and what better news is there than this? And that is the heart of the Bible; God loves you and will see you through and will take care of you all the way!***

*A great theologian who had written many volumes was one time asked what was the greatest and most profound truth in the theology that he had discovered. Replied this brilliant theologian "The greatest fact in all theology is this: "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.""*

*One little frightened girl in a dark room, cried out to her mother to come to her. The mother reassured the daughter that God would take care of her. The little girl replied: 'But God has no face.'*

*I am glad to tell you that, although you can't visibly see the face of God today, God does have a face. It is the beautiful face of Jesus Christ!*

*A small boy was gazing at a picture of his father who was away for several months. Exclaimed the boy: "I wish daddy would step out of that picture and be really with me in person just now."*

*That is what God did. He stepped out of the Universe and became a real man with a real face. Jesus gave God a face. Jesus is the God with a Beautiful Face! "Jesus is God Approachable, God Available, God Loveable, God Simplified." (E.S. Jones) "Transfer every characteristic of character from Jesus to God, and you do not lower your estimate of God – you heighten it." (Ibid; Word Became Flesh; 37)*

*One woman who was struggling to make a surrender to God was making little progress. The very thought of God terrified her. Finally a friend said, "If you were asked to make a surrender to Jesus, would that be difficult". "Oh, no." "Jesus is so beautiful. I could easily surrender to Him." The beautiful face of Jesus is the very face of God. What Jesus was, God has always been!*

*Jesus really cares when we suffer. He identifies with our sorrows and even shares in those sorrows.*

*"Jesus, thou art all compassion,*
*Pure, unbounded love Thou art;*
*Visit us with Thy salvation,*
*Enter every trembling heart."*

*There is never a sorrow that He doth not share, nor a woe that He does not feel. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Picture Jesus as He makes His way into the desert to contemplate, following the death of his cousin John the Baptist. Follow*

*Jesus to the graveside of His dear friend Lazarus, and listen to His deep moans and sobbing in the midst of Lazarus' broken-hearted sisters, Mary and Martha. Then go with Jesus to the Mount that overlooks Jerusalem, and witness Jesus' tear-soaked cheeks as He cries out. "O Jerusalem, O Jerusalem!"*

*"But the greatest thing of all is this, that when you see this compassionate Christ, you are seeing God." (The Gates of New Life; Stewart; pg. 197)*

*Jesus reveals the nature of God. Jesus is the key that unlocks the heart of God. Everything Jesus was, God has always been! When Jesus was suffering on the Cross, God was suffering on the Cross! God actually hurts in our hurts, He bleeds when we bleed, He shares our very guilt! "Surely he hath borne our grief's, and carried our sorrows." (Isaiah 53:4)*

*The Cross demonstrates God's love. The Cross on Calvary is the unveiling of the Cross, which has eternally been on the heart of God! The Cross is the greatest of all revelations concerning God. For the revealed Cross shows that at the heart of the Universe is self-giving, sacrificial love! God is love and the Cross on Mount Calvary gives concrete expression to that truth. Because God is Suffering Love, the Cross is an absolute necessity. Only as man could see Jesus on the Cross of Calvary could man see the Christ of the Ages who has always borne a cross in His Heart!*

*At the very heart of Reality is God's Love. The Bible says, "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him." (I John 4:16)*

*The amazing and wonderful thing about this young 15 year-old girl, Sharla Christian, is that she had discovered the key to life and to living, namely, God's love. Only as one is mature in love is one mature at all.*

*The key to Life is love. Paul, the apostle wrote, "If I…have not love. I gain nothing…These three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love." (I Corinthians 13)*

*Sharla Christian was mature for her age, for she had discovered God's love. Sharla was in love with life. I personally saw her love manifested in many ways.*

*I would like, in a general way, to describe four big loves, which I observed in Sharla's life.*

***Sharla was in love with God's beautiful world. Just yesterday, my brother was sharing with me some of Sharla's writings for her 'Creative Writing' class. Her writings showed such a love of nature. Here is a small sample:***

> ***"The leaf crumbled as I began to pick it up, it fell to the ground in tiny little bits. I stood there looking at it, wanting to put it back together."***
>
> ***"As I walked through the forest I could smell the beautiful pine trees. I walked on - snap, crackle, pop went a twig as I stepped on it. The snapping sound reminded me of how a fire smelled as it burned. I walked on quietly. All of a sudden a baby rabbit jumped out. I picked it up, feeling it's soft fur. I smelled her fur, it had a soft, dewy smell to it. When I put the rabbit down I saw a little group of flowers. I picked one and put it in my hair. As I stood up and started to walk on, I felt as if I was in heaven.***

***Sharla loved the out-of-doors. She loved to run, to jump, and to play. As a fine athlete, she loved to tumble, to dance, to hike, to jog. Sharla loved to travel. As a young teen, she was looking forward to getting her driver's license. She was talking to my daughters, a little younger than herself, about future trips into the mountains together. She spent many hours with her father in Rocky Mountain National Park, hiking the trails, climbing the mountains, and breathing in the fresh air. Sharla loved the thrill of new discoveries in the world of nature and in the world of travel. Her joy, however, was not a frivolous or shallow joy, for Sharla was a deep and contemplative girl. Without being somber or morbid, she was serious-minded about life. She was a girl who had learned profound respect for life, for nature, and for people. Sharla respected God and, in respecting God, she respected others. She laughed with people but not at people. She was most sensitive to the feelings of others. She had a tender heart of love, and easily showed affection for others.***

***Sharla was not only in love with God's beautiful world, but Sharla was in love with her beautiful family. It was customary for Sharla to write love notes to her parents and loved ones. Her father told me that on several occasions he would find little love notes from Sharla, 'hidden' here and there for her father to discover. Even as a teenager, Sharla was open and free with her expressions of love. Sharla's father showed me one of the many notes that she had written to her parents – a love note of appreciation***

*.Dear Mon and Dad:*

> *I'm writing this letter to say thank you for everything you've done for me. I'm really glad that you love me enough to provide food and clothing for me and to just be able to love and care for me. You've done so much for me and have taken so much time and money just to make me happy. Love, Sharla.*

*For Father's Day, Sharla gave her dad a hand drawn Rainbow and expressed her love to him with these words:*

> *"Dad, this rainbow is always bright, cheerful, and happy – like you are."*

*Sharla loved her father and mother and brother and sister. She loved her grandparents, her aunts and uncles, and her many cousins. Talking about cousins, my two daughters who were two of her cousins, had a very close relationship to Sharla. Upon hearing of the death of Sharla, my daughters were utterly struck with shock. I think the last of many letters, which Sharla wrote, was written to my daughters. She wrote that letter four days before she was called home to heaven. That letter was sprinkled with expressions of love, and delight, and anticipation. Before Sharla would leave our home, after visiting her cousins, she always wanted to give them a hug and kiss. As a teenager she was not afraid to express her affections and love. What a beautiful Christian girl, what a precious niece she was to me! The last words she said to her father were, "Daddy, I love you."*

*Sharla had a love for God's Truth also. She had a quest for knowledge, as demonstrated by her outstanding academic record. She worked hard to achieve, and it was not uncommon for her to bring home school papers, tests, and reports with marks of excellence on them. Her father showed me a file of Sharla's special school papers. She took legitimate pride in her many academic achievements as a young student.*

*Most of all, Sharla possessed a great love for God. God, to Sharla, was not a mere name to respect, but rather a person to love. Sharla really loved Jesus! She loved to read her Bible, and to underline special passages of Scripture. She loved to attend her Sunday School and Church services. She loved her church youth group. Sharla was particular in the friends she chose. It was important to Sharla that her close friends be truly Christian. Sharla had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. As a very young child,*

*she had accepted Christ as her Saviour. She was disciplined in her schedule of daily Bible devotions.*

*Sharla Christian – so young and yet so mature for her age! A choice girl, a girl who was in love with life in its many dimensions. She loved nature. She loved knowledge. She loved her family. She loved her God.*

*I asked for permission to go into Sharla's bedroom, the day after her death. To view Sharla's room was to be reminded of the kind of girl Sharla was – a girl full of love!*

*Her love of nature was evident as I looked at the seashells on her dresser. Her love of knowledge and her desire to achieve was evident as I looked at the 'National Junior Honor Society' certificate on her desk, and as I observed the 'Excellence in Language Arts' award with Sharla's name signed in large letters at the bottom of that certificate. Her love for human relationships was so obvious from the kind of colorful posters, which Sharla had so neatly placed on her bedroom walls. You know, those kind of posters where little animals are hugging each other. On one of these posters, the two bunny rabbits are hugging, and on the poster appear these words:*

*"Love makes the world a little softer,*
*A little kinder,*
*A little warmer!"*

*On another poster two cute monkeys are hugging one another. She had a series of Raggedy Ann and Andy posters, all of which show a delightful enjoyment of life! On still another poster are found these tender words, "A hug would make my day!" In looking at that poster, I could not help but think that Sharla's hugs brightened the day of many people in her short lifetime.*

*Sharla believed in singing her way through life. On one small wooden plaque appear these words:*

*"The Lord respects me*
*when I work,*
*But he loves me*
*when I sing."*

*This is not to say that Sharla did not have times of struggle, or that she never had her darker moods. But it is to say that for such a young girl, she was learning well to face all of life with a positive attitude. Talking about positive attitude, I was particularly*

*impressed with her large rainbow poster, which has these words printed on it: "I am the sunshine of my life." What a statement! Sharla's identification with this positive poster was saying to me that she believed that she created her own world by the words she spoke and by the attitudes she reflected. Learning to love and to accept herself was the key to accepting her world around her, with its joys and its sorrows alike.*

*The greatest of all loves in Sharla's life, namely, love for God, and was also manifest in Sharla's room. In sight for all to see was Sharla's well-read Bible, from which she faithfully read each day. On the wall, close to the door appeared a small cardboard bookmark with these words: "My Bedtime Prayer Reminder". A wooden plaque was neatly displayed which said, "The Lord is my Shepherd." Perhaps what most impressed me, not because of its size for it was very small, and was a tiny framed picture on her desk. It was the same picture that appeared in larger form on my own bedroom wall during the many years of my own childhood. It is that famous picture of the teenage boy in the ship, which is being tossed by the wind, and waves of the ocean. In the background appears the calm Son of God with His hand on the boy's shoulder and with a finger pointing ahead to give guidance to the young boy whose ship is being tossed by the waves.*

*That picture must have influenced Sharla as it did me when I was a child. In the storms of life, Christ was with her at the helm of the ship of her life, safely guiding the ship to harbor!*

*There is a song that has for many years been a comfort to me during times of sorrow. The name of the song is, "DOES JESUS CARE?" All the verses are helpful but listen to the last stanza:*

*"Does Jesus care when I've said 'good-by'*
*To the dearest on earth to me,*
*And my sad heart aches till it nearly breaks –*
*Is it ought to Him? Does He see?*

*O yes, He cares! I know He cares,*
*His heart is touched with my grief;*
*When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,*
*I know my Savior cares.*

*Let us who sorrow today remember first that God is all wise and all knowing. He sees every sparrow that falls to the ground. God knows what is best for each person.*

***Second, remember that God is all loving. God not only knows what is best for all persons; God wants to give what is best for all persons. "There are times when a Christian has to learn the hardest lesson of all, the very lesson which Jesus Himself had to learn in Gethsemane; He has to learn how to accept what He cannot understand. There are times when things happen that He cannot understand, but He can still say, 'God, Thou art love; I build my faith on that.'" (Barclay)***

***Thirdly, remember that God not only knows what is best and not only wants to give what is best, but God is all-powerful and is thus able to give what is best. God can see the beginning from the end. God wants to give only what is best for every person. God never allows his children to shed a needless tear. "All things work together for good to those who love God."***

***Confidence in a God who is all-knowing, all-loving, and all-powerful will sustain us in the darkest hour!***

***Says E. Stanley Jones, "I once saw some rug weavers of North India. They patiently sat week after week and month after month making one rug. As I stood and gazed at the rug I felt the futility of sitting there so long, for the rug seemed to be full of blotches and blurs and knots. But I was looking at the wrong side of the rug. When I came around to the weaver's side, I saw the pattern that was unfolding – and how beautiful it was! It was worth the patience. We now see the wrong side of God's purposes, and they seem without pattern as he weaves through the ages. But one day we shall stand and see things as he sees them, and then we will gasp at the wonder of the plan that unfolds. Now we see the blotches and the blurs and the knots, but we also see the cross. That holds us steady. God means well and he means to make us well." (Christ and Human Suffering; pgs. 197-198)***

***"Be still, my soul; the Lord is on thy side;***
***Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;***
***Leave to thy God to order and provide;***
***In every change He faithful will remain.***
***Be still, my soul; thy best, thy heavenly Friend***
***Thro thorny ways leads to a joyful end."***

# REMEMBERING

# MRS. LEE – 1998

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***I have known many older people, during my lifetime, and I am a "debtor" to so many of them – to scores of them! Why? Because these many "saints" (both men and women) have shown me how to live, by the example of their own godly lives. How to act and how to react to life's challenges! How to relate to other people, both likeable people and not so likeable persons! What to truly value in life, cherishing the eternal things without despising the earthly things! How to grow old without becoming self-pitying and self-centered and sour and difficult and inflexible in viewpoints, to become "sweeter as the years go by," to stay "young at heart" and "open to new and legitimate ideas," to be others-oriented and project-oriented and missions-minded and good-humored and clear-headed and creative and likeable and in love with God's Word. Being supportive of new (inexperienced) pastors and empathetic during their struggles to become mature in ministry work! Not critical, but affirming! Not narrow-minded and legalistic, but broad-minded and grace-filled! Not stubborn, but amiable and flexible, and "open to reason"! Not introverted and self-conscious, but extroverted and outgoing and Christ-conscious! Not indolent and lazy, but energetic and zealous and enthusiastic! A possibility thinker! A visionary! A prayer warrior! A Bible reader and a reader of countless, thought-provoking devotional and theological books! Keeping in contact with long–time friends (by letter and by phone calls and in person), but always excited to cultivate the relationships with new friends! "Old friends are like gold; new friends are like silver"! Both are precious! The ability to give a 'listening ear' and a 'shoulder to cry on' – availability to hurting friends! Praying for sinners, and seeking to witness lovingly to them! Being patient and understanding with the new struggling Christians and seeking to be a friend to these "little lambs" in Christ's fold! Seeking to daily cultivate a closer relationship with the Savior, like the older "mentors" I admire, so that I will have no fear when it is my time to die. Claiming the***

***promises of the Word, especially Psalms 23! "Ready to go, ready to stay, ready to do thy will!" A willing heart to follow the Loving Master!***

***Yes, there are qualities (descriptions) of many of the older persons whom I have personally "known" or observed throughout my life (since I became a Christian as an 11 year old child). I have long admired (and imitated) so many of these mature believers. Many of the older ones (those who have "gone through the fires" of afflictions and adversities and trials), I have looked up to as my "Mentors". I have long loved and adored them!***

***As I think of Mrs. Lee (whose tribute is rather specific and detailed in this Book of Remembrance), I think of a "woman of God" who experienced many trials during her 103 years on this earth! She was "tried in the fire" of adversity, and, time after time, she came forth as "gold tried in fire"! She was "steadfast, unmovable, and always abounding in the work of God". She was very faithful to the work God gave her to do! She used her "gift of healing" to bring restoration to many, in her beloved South Korea (one of the most Christian nations on earth!).***

***I found her to be so supportive of me, and of the small Church where she attended, and where I pastored. She had a respect for pastors, which was incredible! Even though I could not understand any Korean, when she prayed for me (and they were long prayers, before I left her house), I felt that she was truly "touching heaven" ("bringing heaven down"). She was always so very interested in me and in our Church. When her daughter and son-in-law (Richard and Martha Sloan) invited me and my wife to go out to "Country Buffet" (lots of food available), she would sit silently at the table and allow her talkative daughter (Korean pastor) to talk to Venita and me. But, occasionally, she would show her concern (speaking to us in her Korean language) that we needed more food! Ha! So respectful and so loving and so caring! One of the greatest saints I ever knew! She was active not long before she died at 103!***

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

***"The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day , and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing." (II Timothy 4:6b-8)***

***Mrs. Lee consistently and enthusiastically ran the spiritual race of life. She was not a 'quitter' in the race of life, but she persevered until the very end of her human life. The spiritual race for her was not a short 'hundred yard race', but instead it was a lifetime 'marathon'. Her race in life was very long, and sometimes very difficult, wrought with many trials, tests, and temptations to despair. But she never gave up. She kept her faith in Christ, and she crossed the 'finish line' of her long arduous race with great triumph and victory! She was a true convert to Christ and to the Christian way when she was about 24 years of age. That means that she travelled the Christian 'course of life' for nearly 80 years! Through all the 'ups and downs', the 'changes and chances of life' for nearly 80 years! Through all the 'ups and downs', the 'changes and the chances' of life, amidst the successes and the failures and the losses and the gains of life, Mrs. Lee maintained a steadfast purpose and a deep commitment of her whole soul to Christ her Lord! She was faithful "in season and out of season", when it was easy and when it was difficult to live the Christian life, in sorrow and in joy, in the company of many fellow believers and when she had to 'stand alone' for Christ, during times of peace and during times of great conflicts and spiritual persecutions! Her life and her faith in Christ stood the 'test of time'; she was 'faithful to the very end' of her very long life! The Lord said, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."***

***'Perseverance' – that is a word which greatly characterizes the great life of Mrs. Lee! Think with me of several ways in which Mrs. Lee demonstrated her tenacious faith and her persevering life.***

***Her perseverance in Faith, in following Christ's Person (She had a very deep love for Christ and for Christ's people and Christ's Word) The following Scriptures describe her life:***

> ***"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (I Corinthians 15:58)***

> ***"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." (Galatians 6:9)***

***In seeking Christ's Purposes (Helping to fulfill the Great Commission – 'to make disciples of all nations' – focusing on her own nation of South Korea for many years)***

***With only seven other people, Mrs. Lee started a Methodist Church in her own home which gradually grew and grew until the Church became rather large – numbering well over a thousand persons in the Church today – sometimes having an attendance of***

*2 thousand persons! It is my understanding that when many persons were healed - as a result of Mrs. Lee's prayers and anointing, they decided to attend the Church she began. (She had hardly any formal education, but she was educated by God and a woman full of godly wisdom and spiritual discernment; she was thankful that her daughter – Martha Sloan – could receive a fine education, including a seminary education, and that her daughter eventually became a pastor in America of a Korean Church (here in Fort Collins) for the last 10 years. Mrs. Lee did not have the opportunity to receive a formal education, but she had much practical insight and sound judgment. She passed her 'good genes' on to her daughter, Martha, who (as a humble servant of God) pursued higher education. A part of Martha's broad education, includes her ability to understand several languages – Japanese, Chinese, Hebrew, Greek, English, and of course her native language of Korean).*

*When Mrs. Lee came in 1983 to the Fort Collins Free Methodist Church (where I served as her pastor for more than 10 years), she believed that it would be God's will for our small congregation to expand to the extent that it would be necessary, in our very modest sanctuary, to offer three worship services on Sunday Mornings. She prayed earnestly about this vision, and (sure enough) before long, our congregation grew large enough that it was necessary to add a second and finally a third worship service (our Church grew from about 30 persons to about 350 persons in attendance – from one service to three services and two Sunday School Hours) .*

*Perseverance in Prayer throughout her long life as a believer, Mrs. Lee was a fervent prayer-warrior who prayed for hundreds of people – mostly in Korea for many decades, but also during the last 15 years that she lived in Fort Collins. She often went to hospitals and to 'shut-ins' to pray for the ill and downtrodden, and, as a farmer's wife, she would respond to requests of farmers to come and to pray even for the recovery of sick animals! She had a special gift of 'spiritual exorcism' – i.e., casting out evil spirits from demon-possessed persons.*

*When Mrs. Lee would pray on many occasions for me, I could sense, as she prayed fervently and at length, and, of course, in the Korean language, that she was 'bringing heaven down to earth'. I would go from her presence, always encouraged.*

*A few years ago, when my crippled and elderly mother was visiting in the Fort Collins Free Methodist Church (where, at the time, I was pastoring), Mrs. Lee (who was in her very late 90's at the time) came over to my mother (in the foyer of the Church) and Mrs. Lee prayed over my mother's arthritic knees. On another occasion, I was with her and her daughter (Martha) and her son-in–law (Richard) when Mrs. Lee prayed over and anointed the body of a young lady who was suffering from a blockage caused by kidney*

*stones. Before praying, Mrs. Lee, Martha, and Richard spent time in the home of the young lady, singing hymns, praising the Lord, and building their faith. Then, after an hour of 'spiritual preparation' in the lady's home, Mrs. Lee, with her daughter and son-in-law, prayed earnestly for Janene (Stallings). A short time after the evening of prayer, Janene's body ridded itself of this serious problem. I am convinced it was largely due to Mrs. Lee's prayers.*

*Mrs. Lee was faithful in praying, in the general sense of the term, and, specifically, Mrs. Lee was faithful and persevering in the use of her God-given spiritual gift of healing. She prayed earnestly for the healing of many persons throughout her life.*

*Perseverance in Cultivating the Fruits of the Spirit during Her Long Life. Mrs. Lee was a woman who was very sensitive to the person and the work of the Mighty Holy Spirit. She indeed was a truly Spirit-filled and Spirit–anointed lady of God. Throughout her long life, she remained humble, prayerful, and obedient, and she continued to the end of her earthly life to cultivate the fruits of the Holy Spirit in her character. "When the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self–control…Those who belong to Christ have nailed their natural evil desires to his cross and crucified them there. If we are living now by the Holy Spirit's power, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives." (Galatians 5:22-25; Living Bible)*

*This was the supreme desire of Mrs. Lee – to follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of her life. Her life was overflowing with love for everyone around her! Why? Because she was deeply in love with her God, whom she worshipped wholeheartedly, as a result of her faith in Jesus as her Lord and Master! She manifested a beautiful smile on her radiant face, and her positive, joyous outlook on life was so contagious. She was magnetic in personality, drawing so many around her to her Savior whom she worshipped so naturally and spontaneously! She, indeed, had a glow with the countenance of holy love, and every wrinkle on her aging face was a mark of holy wisdom and beauty! Her face was the face of kindness and compassion, and her face reminded me of the kind face of her Master whose likeness she mirrored! She walked and talked with her Lord for so long, that she began to look like her divine Master! What a holy representative for Christ on earth was Mrs. Lee.*

*She wanted everyone to become acquainted with the Lord of Heaven, and she was willing to fit into God's 'master plan for world evangelization'. For years, she stamped the name and address for the Fort Collins Free Methodist Church on the back cover of nearly 3,000 small devotional booklets (called "Our Daily Bread"), in preparation for her son-in-law (and about 20 other persons in the local Free Methodist Church) to pass*

***out 'door-to-door' in the community! Because she knew no English, she was carefully instructed how to use the stamp to place the address on the booklets – and she took this volunteer job so seriously as she 'squatted down on her floor' every 3 months to help stamp and to sack these thousands of devotional booklets. She enjoyed amazing physical health and mental alertness and spiritual vitality and enthusiasm. For years in Korea, she worked hard as a farmer's wife. After her husband's death, 51 years ago, she invested her time in much house–to-house and hospital visitation and other volunteer work in her fast-growing local Church, which she began when she was in her middle-life.***

***As a love-filled and Spirit-controlled servant of God, she was one of the most hospitable and warm-hearted persons whom I have ever known. When I occasionally visited in the home of her daughter and son-in-law where she lived during the last 15 years, Mrs. Lee was so concerned that I was getting enough hot tea and cookies and that I was comfortably seated and enjoying myself in her home. Even though I could not communicate verbally with her (because of our language barrier), at times I talked with her, and then her daughter Martha would translate my English into her native Korean language. Then, before leaving her home, I would ask her to pray for me and the local church I was pastoring. Her prayers were fervent and very spirited. Giving her a good-bye hug, I would then go to my car. But where was Mrs. Lee? As her native Korean custom dictated (and as an expression of her warm Christian hospitality), Mrs. Lee would follow me to my car, and then she would stand on the curb and would continue waving to me until I rounded the corner where I could no longer see her waving, from my rear-view car mirror. What a dignified, beautiful, and loving servant of the Lord! She manifested great respect for those whom she considered spiritual leaders, like pastors.***

***Yes, Mrs. Lee was a faithful servant of her Master, an obedient child of her Heavenly Father, an authentic 'lover of the souls of lost persons'.***

***Now and Forever, She Experiences the Fulfillment of God's Promises to Her (the Crown of Righteousness).***

***As Martha Sloan shared with me, today is a time to celebrate her life of faithfulness, and a time to celebrate her glorious "homegoing" to Heaven where she will reign forever with her Lord!***

***(Note briefly my experience with Mrs. Lee, a week before she died, when I served the 'Lord's Supper' to her and read the Scripture II Corinthians 4:14-5:10 – and shared my love and appreciation for her – and gave her ten 'holy kisses of love' on her forehead***

***before I left her presence for the last time. I told her I hoped God would grant me the great privilege, through His grace, of living near her in heaven)!***

***Because she endured to the end of life as a faithful servant, full of God's love, now she has been 'crowned with the crown of eternal life' in heaven, where she will forever rejoice in the presence of her Lord and in the presence of all the saints of the ages and of the myriads of holy angels! It is no wonder that, shortly following her death, Martha and Richard Sloan sang hymns and prayed and praised their Lord, in thanksgiving for their mother and in gratitude to their Lord for taking their mother to her 'home sweet home'! No longer a pilgrim on earth, but now a first-rate citizen of heaven itself! For the Bible says, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord". The last breath she breathed on this earth introduced her to the first breath of 'celestial air' in heaven. On early Sunday morning – the first day of the week in which weekly we Christians celebrate the resurrection of Christ, which vanquished death forever – Mrs. Lee entered the 'pearly gates' of heaven.***

***Heaven – described as a glorious city, and likened to pure gold and clear glass. Heaven – God's dwelling place prepared for those earthlings who love and who serve Christ, a place of holiness, beauty, unity, perfection, and joy. Heaven – a place where there are no tears of sorrow and grief, and no sickness or pain or death. A place where there is no sin, temptation, trials, or hard tests. Heaven – a place where there is no need for the sun or the moon, for Christ Himself is the source of all light. In heaven, there is no night. There is no aging. No separation from those we love. Heaven – a place where the focus of all is on Christ alone. A place where there is no competition or comparison among jealous-ridden persons, all of whom are seeking selfish glory and praise and applause. A place where all serve each other with holy love and gladness. A place of perfect harmony and unity where 'all is for each, and each is for all'. Serving each other without the physical limitations of a human body. Heaven - a place of joyful singing and happy serving and constant learning. A place where all the saints will learn from one another and all will learn forever from the 'Master Teacher' Himself – the Lord Jesus Christ. Heaven – a place where each will become more like God forever – without, of course, ever actually becoming gods. The excitement of eternal growth in knowledge and in holy wisdom and understanding! No longer seeing reality as if peering through a hazy glass, but instead seeing reality with our spiritual eyes as a result of being given a 'spiritual body'. Heaven – a place where we will no longer walk by faith, but a place where we shall behold Christ, face to face in all His glory!***

*Death for the believer is like going from the basement of the house to the top story of the house. Death allows the Christian to reach his destination. Death for the Christian is like crossing the 'finish line' after a long marathon run.*

*Death is not a loss for the believer; death is the doorway into eternal life in heaven. Paul wrote, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain!" Christians are only pilgrims on this planet. Dying allows the believer to "go home"! Perhaps Mrs. Lee's favorite Scripture was John 14:1-3 which reads "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."*

*Placing your faith in the Deathless One – Jesus Christ – you shall never die! Of course, your body will die and return to dust, but you as a believer will never die! Said Jesus, "If a man keeps my saying he shall never see death." (John 8:5) "Whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die." (John 11:16) Notes J.B. Phillips, "It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the meaning that Christ intended to convey was that death was a completely negligible experience to the man who had already begun to live life of the eternal quality". (The Newborn Christian; pg. 212)*

*Said the great 19th century evangelist D.L. Moody, "Someday you will read in the papers that D.L. Moody of East Northfield is dead. Don't you believe a word of it? At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now. I shall have gone up higher, that is all – out of this old clay tenement into a house that is immortal; a body that death cannot touch, that sin cannot taint, a body fashioned like unto His glorious body…That which is born of flesh may die. That which is born of the Spirit will live forever." (Quoted in Angels by Billy Graham; pgs. 162, 163)*

*Because Mrs. Lee, for so very long, gladly followed her Lord amidst many times of suffering and loss and deprivation and persecution and sorrow, now she has been graduated into the class of the eternally redeemed where she will share the 'glory of her Lord' forever!*

*As it was in the case of Mrs. Lee, so it is with all of us believers who still remain on earth. As she longed for many years, so we who remain on earth continue to long to experience the 'glory' of the Lord in heaven.*

*Concerning the 'glory' of heaven for which all true Christians 'hunger and thirst', the famous author C.S. Lewis writes: "The promise of glory is the promise, almost*

***incredible and only possible by the work of Christ, that some of us, that any of us who really chooses, shall actually survive that examination, shall find approval, shall please God. To please God…to be a real ingredient in the divine happiness. To be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son – it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is.***

***"For glory means good report with God, acceptance by God, response, acknowledgement, and welcome into the heart of things. The door on which we have been knocking all our lives will open at last.***

***"Apparently, then, our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited, with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside, is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation. And to be at last summoned inside would be both glory and honour beyond all our merits, and also the healing of that old ache.***

***"We are to shine as the sun; we are to be given the morning star.***

***"We want something else which can hardly be put it into words – to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it.***

***'At present we are on the outside of the world, the wrong side of the door. We discern the freshness and purity of morning, but they do not make us fresh and pure. We cannot mingle with the splendors we see. But all the leaves of the New Testament are rustling with the rumor that it will not always be so. Someday, God willing, we shall get in.***

***"The whole man is to drink joy from the fountain of joy. As St. Augustine said, the rapture of the saved soul will 'flow over' into the glorified body." (Portions from C. S. Lewis's sermon entitled "The Weight of Glory")***

***Because Mrs. Lee was faithful until the very end of her earthly life, now she has been ushered into her eternal home. By God's grace – i.e., God's enabling power – Mrs. Lee has 'gotten in' – no longer a travelling pilgrim on earth but now a permanent citizen of that heavenly city! Wrote Paul, "For we know that when this tent we live in now is taken down – when we die and leave these bodies – we will have wonderful new bodies in heaven, homes that will be ours forevermore, made for us by God himself, and not by human hands. How weary we grow of our present bodies. That is why we look forward***

***eagerly to the day when we shall have heavenly bodies which we shall put on like eagerly to the day when we shall have heavenly bodies which we shall put on like new clothes. For we shall not be merely spirits without bodies. These earthly bodies make us groan and sigh, but we wouldn't like to think of dying and having no bodies at all. We want to slip into our new bodies so tht these dying bodies will, as a guarantee, he has given us his Holy Spirit." (2 Corinthians 5:1-5; Living Bible)***

***Yes, think of it, Mrs. Lee now in eternity 'shines as the noonday sun'! She has been given 'the morning star'! On earth, she ran a good race, and she finished the 'course' of faith in great triumph and victory! Henceforth, there is laid up for her the 'crown of life', which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will surely award to her in her heavenly home! Let us follow her noble example and run well our own spiritual race of life! And then we too will someday share with Mrs. Lee the 'glory of heaven' with our Lord and Master!***

# REMEMBERING

# ROBERT KERBY – 1992

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***From the time I was a young teen, while I was at the 10-day-long Summer Camp Meeting, held annually on the Camp Grounds at Canon City, Colorado, I was rather awe-struck by the brilliant mind, the articulate messages, the fervent prayers, the wise exhortations, the sane decorum, the holy mannerisms, the quick wit and humor, and the compassionate heart of a most unusual man and servant of the most High God! I was one of the few teenagers who chose to attend the early morning (hour-long) prayer meetings (6:00 am – 7:00 am), and (even though there was only a 'handful' of persons present in the large tabernacle) I was overwhelmed by the powerful prayers and the insightful expositions of Scriptures given by Robert Kerby.***

***The main leader of that prayer meeting was Robert Kerby. He was a fearless man of God, one who hated sin in all of its manifestations, but he also had a deep love for sinners! His mind was most keen, and scores of his theologically – oriented articles appeared (for many years) in the Free Methodist Denominational magazine. He was respected as a godly man, as an astute writer, as a fearless preacher, as a kind friend – throughout the entire denomination that he loved.***

***The Denominational Leaders – Bishops and Conference Superintendents – greatly respected him! Probably no one was considered a more respected man of God in the conference (where he served for decades) than was Robert Kerby! He served with honor in several Free Methodist Churches in the Rocky Mountain (Colorado) Conference. But, even though he was well liked as a pastor, and was greatly acknowledged by many as a mature and insightful preacher, none of the churches where he served grew numerically (as far as I can remember). He served a few years as the Fort Collins Free Methodist pastor, probably five years before I became pastor***

***there, but the local Church remained rather small numerically during his term. But, the size of the congregation is not all-important. Robert Kerby loved his people, wherever he pastored, and his sermons were among the best that anyone could hear.***

***He suffered greatly (for several years) from Parkinson's disease. As a bedfast person (in later years), unable to eat except through a "feeding tube", he was a "pathetic sight". But, he remained loyal to his Lord, and loving towards everyone who visited him, in his humble abode (mobile home). His wife was most faithful and loving in her care of him, to the very end of his life.***

***The sweetness of the Spirit of Christ within him was particularly evident, as he suffered physically to a great degree, during the last few years of his life. This man, whose mind was so brilliant, and whose heart was so tender, and whose fervency in prayer was so great, remained in "essence" (as just noted) the same man during his advanced physical deterioration. Though his body was tragically growing old and dying, his spirit was very much alive! During his vibrant ministry (pastoring and preaching), I think Robert Kerby knew (by memory) more hymns (and more stanzas of the hymns) than anyone anywhere!***

***He could, while he shared devotional thoughts at Camp Meeting, quote stanza after stanza of hymn after hymn! I stood back with utter amazement! When he would get "real happy in the Lord" (sharing a promise from God's Word), sometimes he could not "contain" himself emotionally. In a "state of ecstasy", all of a sudden, he would let out a "loud shout" of praise and joy!***

***Every believer probably has deep disappointments (or hurts) that he/she seldom verbalizes to others. Although he never personally shared any of his personal hurts with me (for I was never a "real close friend" to him, even though he respected me when I was a young pastor, in the same Conference with him), I am quite sure the greatest 'hurt' of his life was the fact that all but one of his five children (3 sons, 2 daughters) apparently "rebelled" against the Church (Denomination) that he loved so dearly, and that he had served all of his life!***

***This constitutes perhaps the greatest grief that any Christian father (and minister) could have, (I do not know what is the "present spiritual condition" of his children; perhaps they have found a personal relationship with God).***

***Robert Kerby is, in my mind, a man who will long be remembered as a God-fearing, holy preacher, one who possessed a "tough mind" and a "tender heart" and a "decisive pen" – a communicator of God's Truth by word and by pen! From the time of my youth***

*and throughout my adulthood, Robert Kerby has left an "indelible mark" on my life – for good and for God!*

*There is a phrase in a song that says, "Holiness unto the Lord is our watchword and song." It is true that two of the 'key themes' of Robert Kerby's life were "Holiness unto the Lord", and "Separation From This Evil World".*

*What Robert Kerby taught, he certainly lived! His 'word' and his 'walk' were the same! He sought earnestly to please his God in all that he said and in all that he did! He, to me, was one of the most holy (godly) persons I ever knew! "Come out from among them, and be ye seperate, saith the Lord, and I will receive you and ye shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty." "Touch not the unclean thing!" "Be ye holy, for I the Lord thy God am holy." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." These are but a few Scriptures that describe God's call to a holy life, and Robert Kerby not only taught holiness, he lived a holy life.*

*He was holy "in all manner of conversation" – in his speech, in his attitudes, in his behavior, in his priorities, in his relationships. And, consequently, this faithful man died as a holy man! He who often sang about heaven (and he had a great voice for singing) found heaven's doors opened to him when he died!*

*(I was both surprised and honored when Robert's wife asked me to preach his funeral message)!*

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

*Robert Kerby loved the Lord supremely, and therefore he was able to love all other persons sincerely and subordinately. He deeply loved his wife. Seldom have I seen such a close relationship between a husband and a wife, as I observed between. Their communication between each other surpassed the mere verbal communication. They knew each other so well and were so deeply devoted to each other, that they could almost read each other's mind without ever saying a word. Mrs. Kerby's devotion to her bedfast husband was both beautiful and unsurpassed. Her loving and understanding words, backed by her tender and unselfish care for her husband made Robert Kerby's life endurable and even pleasant. Words are not sufficient to describe the praise and honor that Mrs. Kerby deserves for the undivided care, which she gladly gave to her very ill husband during his many years of declining health. The day will come when Mrs. Kerby, as well as Robert, will receive her eternal 'crown of life', as a*

*reward for faithfulness to her Heavenly Lord and devotion to her earthly 'lord'. It is no wonder that her children find it easy to "rise up and call their mother 'Blessed'".*

*Robert Kerby was a man who was deeply in love with life. Robert Kerby was a man deeply in love with his God. Soundly converted many years ago, he spent a lifetime glorifying Christ in his decisions, in his relationships, and in his daily work. He loved his wife and children deeply, and he had a tender heart of compassion. He wept with those who wept, and he rejoiced with those who rejoiced. He loved the Free Methodist Church, to which he was deeply loyal all of his life. He served the Church faithfully as pastor, and as writer, and as a practical Christian counselor. He admired the leadership of the bishops of the denomination. He joyfully reached out to the lost and the dying around him. He had an unusual burden for sinners. He preached the message of holiness and heart purity with great zeal.*

*As a writer, he was highly respected for his depth of theological insight and for his analysis of a variety of ethical issues. He was uncompromising in his moral standards, and deeply sensitive to the movements of the mighty Holy Spirit. He was a "pulpit giant", with the rare gift of thought-provoking Biblical exposition and relevant contemporary application. The goal of his life was to glorify Christ by loving people truly and by obeying God's commands explicitly. His holy walk with God and his love for people were both consistently seen throughout his long lifetime. A brilliant mind, a tender heart, a simple lifestyle, a reverent spirit, an eloquent tongue - these describe Robert Kerby.*

*I first met Robert when I was a mere youth. He has long been one of my heroes, a man whom I have highly esteemed and deeply respected, and a man whose godly example has profoundly impacted my own life. I have viewed him as a man of beautiful contrasts – on one hand, a man whose strong prophetic message from the pulpit could overwhelm you with conviction; and, on the other hand, a man whose tender pastoral counsel in private could melt your heart with compassion and tenderness.*

*He was a man who not only preached a strong holiness message, but he was a man who consistently lived a life of practical holiness. He had a terrible hatred for sin in its many manifestations, but he also had an understanding love for sinners. There was nothing that delighted his soul more than the salvation of sinners and the sanctification of believers.*

*The morning after her husband died, Mrs. Kerby told me that she had never known a more patient man than Robert Kerby. His life was lived to the full in God's presence. He was a Spirit-filled man, and he manifested the fruit of the Spirit in his life. Galatians*

*5:22 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control".*

*Take just one of those nine descriptions of the Spirit–filled life – the quality of faithfulness.*

*Is there any greater virtue than faithfulness? Robert Kerby was faithful to his Lord, faithful to his family, loyal and true to his convictions to the end of his long life.*

*"In the last analysis Christianity is not a philosophy which we accept, not a theory to which we give allegiance. It is a personal response to Jesus Christ. It is the allegiance and the love which a man gives because his heart will not allow him to do anything else." (Barclay) Whether it means popularity or persecution, prosperity or poverty, health or illness, our loyalty and faithfulness to Christ must never waver. Changing circumstances must never change our loyalty to Jesus Christ! Robert Kerby did not allow himself to grow bitter when bitter circumstances descended upon him, but instead he became sweeter in his spirit. When the storms of life assailed, Rev. Kerby simply tightened his grip on God's strong hand. He guarded against bitterness in his life.*

*The Bible tells us that it is he who endures unto the end that shall be saved. "Loyalty…means that fidelity which will never waver in its utter devotion to its Master and its Lord…The Christian must win his battle with the world by presenting to all men the steadfastness and the loyalty which will not be moved by the fear or the valor of men." (Daily Study Bible Series; Revelations, vol.2; pg. 127; Barclay) Amidst change, remain changeless in your devotion, loyalty, and faithfulness. Said one, "There is nothing in this world which can take the place of loyalty. If all the other noble qualities of life were placed in the balance against loyalty, loyalty would outweigh them all." (Barclay)*

*Birth, Childhood, Adolescence, Adulthood, and Old Age – these are the passing stages of life. One may be abruptly introduced to the next stage, but more often, one enters the next stage gradually and slowly. The tenderness of spring gradually changes into the fragrance of summer, followed by the ruggedness of fall and the aging of winter. So each of life's stages is followed by a more mature and experienced stage. Death signals finality for this earthly realm of existence, but out of the darkness of death comes the dawn of eternity. Death seals the end for one realm of existence, only to introduce an infinitely more glorious realm of existence.*

*The last stage of Robert Kerby's life – what we have called the 'aging of winter' – was a long and difficult stage. He suffered long before he got out of this life.*

*How was Robert Kerby able to endure so long without falling into the abyss of despair? I believe the reason for his unusual perseverance, and patience and even optimism amidst his suffering, lies in the fact that he had a firm grip on the promises of God as revealed in the Bible. The verse which he held tightly onto, during his suffering, was Romans 8:28: And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

*In other words, he believed that God is all-wise (God knows what is best for all human beings). He also believed that God is all–loving (God wants to give what is best for all human beings). God will not allow his children 'to shed any needless tears'. He also believed that God is all-powerful (God is able to control all circumstances, such that nothing will happen but what will ultimately benefit His children). When a man, like Robert Kerby believes that God is all-wise, all-loving, and all-powerful, it is no wonder that joy can be experienced amidst sorrow, that peace can be experienced amidst turmoil, that hope can be maintained amidst heartbreak.*

*Those who don't know God and who don't understand God's ways, might think that when a person is bedfast for many years, that life is meaningless, and wasted. But for the believer who is surrendered fully to Christ, none of life's experiences are meaningless or wasted. God works in mysterious ways, His saints to prepare for heaven. Even though we humans cannot always understand God's ways, if we are believers, we can rest assured that all things (even seemingly 'bad' experiences) are working into a pattern for our ultimate good and for God's total glory. God is not the author of pain or suffering or death, but the almighty and loving God can use all suffering for ultimate good.*

*George Matheson (the blind hymn writer) reminds us that there is 'joy that seeketh us through pain'. With our finite minds we are not wise enough to understand all that is best for us; but our Lord does, seeing He is Alpha and Omega and all in between, and we are gathered up in His loving arms.*

*John Ruskin wrote a meaningful short essay he called 'The Music of a Rest".*

*"There is no music in a rest, but there is the making of music in it. In our whole life-melody the music is broken off here and there by rests and we foolishly think we have come to the end of the theme. God sends a time of forced leisure, sickness, disappointed plans, frustrated efforts, and makes a sudden pause in the choral hymn of our lives;*

***and we lament that our voices must be silent, and our part missing in the music which ever goes up to the ear of the Creator. How does the musician read the rest? See him beat the time with unvarying count, and catch up the next note true and steady, as if no breaking place had come between.***

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

***Robert Kerby's life produced beautiful music. This quiet and contemplative person – a deep thinker and a sensitive feeler – made music out of what seemed to be the remainders of life – his illness and suffering. The 'rests' and 'stops' in his life were all part of the over–all musical theme of his life. Robert Kerby has trod the road of death and has landed in that beautiful land where the sun always shines, where the flowers perpetually bloom, where the angels beautifully sing, and where the glory of Christ dwells. No longer is Robert bowed down with the cares of life. His tears are dried and his countenance is radiant. He has the glow of eternity on his face. He shall eternally rejoice in the presence of his dear Saviour.***

# REMERBERING

# AL PARKER - 2000

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***Al Parker was a person who, as a young man, was dramatically converted! He told me during the enjoyable time I knew him (after he had retired from his full-time service with the Salvation Army), that the woman who finally became his wife was the one God used as His instrument to bring him to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ!***

***Al deeply loved that woman who spent many years with him in ministry, in several different locations (Mississippi, Alabama, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Arkansas, Texas, and Colorado). As Al worked very hard and faithfully in the work of the Salvation Army, he finally reached the rank of "Brigadier' (a very honored position within this well-known and compassion - oriented movement).***

***Al was a man of unusual abilities – a keen mind, an articulate speech, a decisive action, and a compassionate heart. When he told me many stories of God's miracles among lowly people who were transformed and who were healed, he would become "chocked up" with visible tears! Al was a "restless person", always wanting to become involved in another "love project" in his community! Feeding the poor, providing housing for the homeless, giving the Gospel message to the down-and-out, and so much more! "Ready to go, ready to stay, ready to do thy will, O God!" Many times he came to my Church office, simply to visit with me (to tell more stories) to encourage me, to pray with me! I mostly listened, for I wanted to learn from this "veteran soldier of the Cross"! My congregation occasionally heard him preach from my pulpit, and they loved his message – filled with words of encouragement and accented with most interesting stories of God's miraculous power, experienced in the lives of persons that he had worked with. Truly I considered him a "giant" in the Kingdom of God!***

***Based on the fact that he had walked with God for many decades, this man was "full of wisdom and understanding and sound judgment". Perhaps he had a "gift of discernment" for (without harshly judging others), Al Parker could quickly discern if someone or some happening around him was "true blue" or "genuine" or "honest" or "authentic" or whether it was "false" and "heretical" and "hurtful". He hated sin in all of its manifestations, but he dearly loved sinners who needed to be miraculously delivered from their bondages to sin! He defied the former, and he worked for the latter!***

***Al Parker was a tireless "solider of the cross".***

***During the few years I associated with him (during his semi–retirement), he was not a young man, but he, nevertheless, was very active and vivacious in the Church he loved so much.***

***By temperament, AL was 'high-strung', 'restless'', a 'man of action', 'driven by his high-minded and worthy goals'. He was a person who 'made things happen'. He seemed to know how to 'pull the right ropes' to accomplish 'great things for God.' All kinds of things, most of which I would not know. But I do remember one of his simple 'projects'. Al was liked in the community, and he had rapore with many businessmen who learned to share with Al certain compassion concerns in the community. Some of those businessmen were 'notable famers', and Al regularly contacted them with a request that they would donate one calf each year (or more calves possibly) to provide needed meat for the needy (poor). Al had a great concern for the poor, and the needy, and the overlooked people in society.***

***Both as a lifetime hobby and as a part of his serious ministry, Al Parker greatly enjoyed music. Even though none would consider him a "professional musician" (by which he would make money), probably everyone would consider him a person who was rather knowledgeable in music.***

***In the funeral bulletin appears these words regarding Al's involvement with music, "Brigadier Parker adapted his musical abilities to the Army's music program. He left in each appointment the harmonies of his ability and spirit. Brigadier loved music, composing many of the songs he would play."***

***"The Old Rugged Cross", one of the most popular and most frequently sung hymns throughout the Christian world, was composed and written by George Bennard. George Bennard was a Salvation Army Officer, and a friend to Al Parker! Al talked to***

*me about George Bennard, and he talked to me about his friendly conversations with him. The last stanza of that familiar hymn is as follows:*

*"To the old rugged cross I will ever be true,*

*It's shame and reproach gladly bear;*

*Then He'll call me someday to my home far away,*

*Where His glory forever I'll share"!*

*Says the Lord, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life".*

*Al Parker was a most faithful servant of His Lord – and he was faithful for an entire lifetime! He was called to his home far away, where Christ's glory he is forever sharing! What a friend he was to me! What a good husband, a good father, a good grandfather, a good officer, and now a good citizen of Heaven.*

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

*It was my privilege, as pastor of the Fort Collins Free Methodist Church for over 25 years, to enjoy the friendship of Al Parker during much of this time. I did not know him during his so-called active ministry in the Salvation Army, but even though I first met Al during his retirement years, I knew him to be a most active worker and a most engaging personality, giving of his time and talents and influence to the work of the Kingdom of God.*

*What made AL Parker such an attractive and winsome person, not only to me but to hundreds of others during his long and active life and ministry? Of course, different persons would answer this question in different ways, but I believe that what made Al Parker such a great person was the fact that he diligently and perseveringly and enthusiastically served His Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Al Parker was a mastered man – mastered by Jesus the Lord! What was the 'driving force' of his life – the force that kept him forward - moving during all the ups and downs and the changes and chances of his life? It was the love of God, shed abroad in his heart by the blessed Holy Spirit! Al Parker was a Spirit-filled man of God, and thus he was a love-driven man – a man who loved God supremely and who loved his neighbors wholeheartedly and sincerely! Love was the driving force of his long life!*

***Al Parker was lost in wonder, love, and praise as he contemplated the grace of God which found him and which transformed him when he was a young man! Al Parker was deeply touched when he would share how God used the lady, who was to be his wife for many years, to lead him to a saving relationship with Christ! Al Parker was a man of grace because he was rescued from the pits of sin by the God of grace! It was easy for him to sing:***

***Amazing grace! How sweet the sound,***

***That saved a wretch like me!***

***I once was lost, but now am found,***

***Was blind, but now I see.***

***Al Parker humbly and gratefully acknowledged that without Christ he was lost in sin, on the road that leads to destruction in time and eternity. He testified to being dramatically transformed by the power of God, as a result of his deep repentance and his faith and his wholehearted surrender to the claims of Jesus Christ. As a result of his wonderful conversion and his deep sanctification, Al Parker spent all of his adult life, from his early 20's until his death, serving Christ and touching the lives of thousands of folks through his loving words and his compassionate deeds.***

***E. Stanley Jones, the great missionary of the last century, used to say that without Christ his life was a MESS, but with Christ his life had become a glorious MESSAGE! The same could be said of Al Parker. Before he met Christ, his life was a mess, but after he was thoroughly converted, his life became a glorious MESSAGE. A message of cheer for the discouraged, a message of joy for the sad, a message of hope for the despairing, a message of forgiveness for the guilt-ridden, a message of reconciliation for the alienated, a message of comfort for the bereaved, a message of transformation for the sin–bound persons to whom he often ministered.***

***Because he became a changed man as a result of his encounter with Christ, Al Parker was constrained by the love of Christ to declare the Good News – the Good News that Christ receiveth sinful men! To evangelize the lost ones and to disciple the found ones – this was the two-pronged focus of Al Parker's entire life! Why? Because Al took the Great Commission of Christ seriously: "Go into all the world and make disciples". (Matthew 28:19, 20)***

***Al knew that a sinner cannot become a disciple of Christ until he first repents of his sins, and in faith surrenders his life to Christ. So, Al Parker spent his time, for decades as a Salvation Army officer and leader, seeking the lost ones for Christ. It was his strong conviction that Christ can transform the life of the chiefest of sinners. Al believed (along with William Booth) what the song 'Christ Receiveth Sinful Men' says:***

***Sinners Jesus will receive;***
***Sound this word of grace to all***
***Who the heavenly pathway leave,***
***All who linger, all who fall.***

***Come, and he will give you rest;***
***Trust Him, for His word is plain;***
***He will take the sinfulest;***
***Christ receiveth sinful men.***

***Sing it over and over again;***
***Christ receiveth sinful men;***
***Make the message clear and plain;***
***Christ receiveth sinful men.***

***Al Parker declared the simple and clear message of salvation to hundreds of sinners – both high and low, rich and poor, young and old. He witnessed the amazing transformation of so many persons during his long ministry. The Christ who died on an old rugged cross, and who was gloriously resurrected on the third day, was the central message in thousands of sermons, which Al preached to the lost and dying persons around him. Al told me that he was privileged personally to know a fellow Salvation Army officer by the name of George Bennard who wrote and composed the very popular song 'The Old Rugged Cross'.***

***On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross***
***The emblem of suffering and shame***
***And I love that old cross***
***Where the dearest and best***
***For a world of lost sinners was slain***

*So I'll cherish the old rugged cross*
*Till my trophies at last I lay down*
*I will cling to the old rugged cross*
*And exchange it someday for a crown*

*To the old rugged cross I will ever be true*
*It's shame and reproach gladly bear*
*Then He'll call me someday*
*To my home far away*
*Where His glory forever I'll share*

*So I'll cherish the old rugged cross*
*Till my trophies at last I lay down*
*I will cling to the old rugged cross*
*And exchange it someday for a crown*

***Yes, the driving force of AL Parker's long life was the love of God, which possessed him. Because of God's love, which was shed abroad in Al's heart as a result of his dramatic conversation and his deep sanctification, Al spent his life sharing the Good News of God's saving and transforming grace. Many were the persons whom Al led to Christ, through his personal witnessing and through his clear preaching about the Cross and Resurrection of Christ.***

***But, as important and indispensible as the conversion of the human soul is, Al Parker knew that Jesus clearly taught His followers that they were to minister to the human body (with it multiple needs) as well as to the human soul (with its desperate need for forgiveness and transformation). While the needs of the soul must always be considered primary in the focus of one's ministry, Al knew that the needs of the body must never be ignored or neglected. Al Parker understood well the teachings of James (Jesus' brother) who wrote: "Faith without works is dead!" Why was Al's life full of good works? Because good works were the natural overflow of God's love, which possessed the heart of Al Parker! Al believed that it might be possible to give without loving, but that is was always impossible to love without giving. Love must always be manifested by outward and practical works of compassion. Wrote John (one of Jesus' disciples): "But if someone who is supposed to be a Christian has money enough to live well and sees a brother in need, and won't help him – how can God's love be within him? Little children, let us stop just saying we love people; let us really love them, and show it by our actions. Then we will know for sure, by our actions, that we are on God's***

***side and our consciences will be clear, even when we stand before the Lord". (I John 3:17-19, Living Bible)***

***One well-known minister (Jerry Cook) once said: "Christianity that doesn't walk around in shoes isn't worth much. It has to walk in shoes, all kinds of shoes – sandals, boots, high heels, and suedes. It has to walk. If we only teach Christians how to THINK Christianity and how to FEEL it, but not how to WALK it, we are failing." Al Parker was one of the most biblical and balanced Christians whom I have ever known. He knew how to THINK Christian thoughts (in his preaching and counseling). He knew how to FEEL Christian feelings (in his affection and sympathy and tenderness). He also knew (as too many professing Christians fail to know) how to WALK as a Christian - i.e., he knew how to fill his life with Christ-honoring and God–pleasing actions – feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the lonely, counseling the troubled, guiding the confused, imparting hope to the prisoner. Al spent his entire life doing good works!***

***Al Parker followed in the footsteps of his Master – the Lord Jesus Christ. His HEAD (i.e., his thoughts), his HEART (i.e., his affections), his HANDS (i.e., his compassionate deeds) were totally surrendered to Christ. No wonder he was an amazing man of God!***

# REMEMBERING

# LYNN KEYS – 1987

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***Of course, none of my tributes that I have written in this Book of Remembrances does 'full justice' to the person whose life I am briefly reflecting on. But I find it exhilarating to remember and to focus on a few noteworthy characteristics and accomplishments of persons who, in my past, meant a great deal to me. Each of these persons, honored in this 'unique book', has left his/her 'Mark' on my own life. Some persons I knew quite well, and some persons I knew more casually, but each person was a significant part of my personal life. And Lynn Keys was one of those "significant others" in my life – a fellow believer whom I greatly respected!***

***I have, in considerable detail, described Lynn Keys (her personhood and her accomplishments) in the tribute which I shared at her funeral (and recorded in this book). But, perhaps a few additional comments are worthy of being stated.***

***Among the many characteristics (virtues) that I believe accurately describe Lynn Keys are the following two virtues. (1) Adaptability, (2) Availability.***

***Let me illustrate how these two virtues were "fleshed out" in her life (and also in the life of her beloved husband, Gene).***

***Through most of the 27 years of my pastoral ministry, I regularly conducted what I called "Salvation By Appointment" Home Bible Studies. Almost without exception, adults (mostly couples, sometimes singles) who allowed me to come to their home for these salvation-oriented (detailed) studies, at the end of the presentation, would pray to accept Christ as Savior. At the conclusion of the Study, I asked the newly-born***

*Christians to make a commitment to allow a "Timothy Couple" from our Church to come to their home once a week, for 12 consecutive weeks (according to their workable schedule). The vast majority of these new Christians (who were very eager to 'grow spiritually') readily accepted my offer.*

*These 'Timothy Couples' were mature-type Christian couples who had a 'real heart' for new believers, couples who believed in the importance of "follow–up" of young believers, couples who were friendly and positive, sensitive, outgoing, faithful, and who believed in the power of prayer as the greatest "aid" for spiritual growth of new believers.*

*Of course, these new Christians were provided a packet of 12 simple "How To" lessons, covering a variety of relevant subjects having to do with "successful Christian living". The 'Timothy Couple', of course, would prepare the same material that the new Christians prepared. The new Christian couple and the 'Timothy Couple' spent an hour together in the home of the new Christian couple, discussing the lesson content, and also discussing any other 'real needs' which the new Christians were experiencing. This follow-up program brought immense blessings to both the new Christian couple and the 'Timothy Couple'.*

*Lynn Keys (and her beloved husband who worked closely with Lynn) was involved in various programs in our local Church – especially programs having to do with music and programs having to do with children. But, in addition to these worthy involvements, Gene and Lynn (as a close couple) chose to accept my invitation to be a 'Timothy Couple', not once or twice, but over and over and over again. We had several committed 'Timothy Couples' in our Church who did a fine job, but there was no couple who was as involved in caring for new believers (the 'Timothy Program') as this couple!*

*Just a short time before she died (when she was middle-aged), Lynn Keys (with her beloved husband) was still tirelessly reaching out to new believers. Gene and Lynn literally 'loved' this 'Timothy' ministry. This ministry not only blessed many new Christian couples, but one result of this ministry was readily seen by the fact that Gene and Lynn multiplied the friends they had.*

*Those two virtues standout in Lynn (and in her husband also): (1) Adaptability, (2) Availability.*

*Lynn (with Gene) was able remarkably to 'adapt' to so many different kinds of people (including those couples who lived "on the wrong side of the tracks"). Lynn accepted all*

*kinds of couples (especially into 'Timothy Program') and she was 'thrilled' to be their new friend! An amazing quality!*

*Also, she and Gene never turned me down when I asked them to be a 'Timothy' for another newly saved couple! At times, Gene and Lynn were acting as 'Timothy' to two different couples, at two different homes, the same week! And they spent lots of time with new Christians! I sometimes think of the time in heaven, when all those new Christians, whom Lynn discipled on earth, will gather around her in heaven, and they will say 'Thanks'!*

*Lynn Keys was a great woman – a loving wife, a devoted mother, a loyal friend, a mature Christian, a talented worker, a compassionate servant, a brave sufferer, and now a rewarded saint.*

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

*Allow me the honor to share a personal tribute to Lynn Keys.*

*Lynn was first a loving wife. She loved her husband dearly. She was faithful and committed, understanding and caring. Marital fidelity and unconditional love in her marriage through the 'ups and downs', the trials and tests, the successes and failures characterized Lynn Keys. She took her marriage vows most seriously and she remained faithful through good times and through hard times. I want to say at this point that my respect and my admiration for Gene Keys has always been great since I first met him, but my observation of Gene's loving commitment to Lynn during the severe trial of these last six months has simply deepened my appreciation for Gene. Gene loved and tenderly cared for his wife, especially during the times of great hardships during Lynn's hard bout with cancer. On several occasions Lynn expressed her deep gratitude to Gene during these trying days.*

*The second thing I would like to say about Lynn Keys is that she was a devoted mother. Lynn had so many of the motherly qualities that one finds in a great woman – a listening ear to hurts her children experienced, provision of good meals, daily prayer for her family, loving discipline and instruction, providing of educational materials and books and Bible readings, and a loving atmosphere for Christian nurture. Her youngest child told me yesterday how his mother played football with him out in their yard, only a few weeks before she passed away. This was at a time when she was very sick with cancer. Lynn loved to play games and to fellowship with her family. She*

***maintained high moral standards for her children and she encouraged her children's development – spiritually by keeping them faithfully involved in Sunday School and church activities, socially by encouraging them to invite good friends to their home, and intellectually by challenging her children to do well in school. Her commitment to sound education was reflected in the fact that she did 'Home Schooling' of her youngest child for one year. She chose not to work outside of the home, in order that she might be with her children more frequently when they needed her. Her children were her priority in life, second only to her God and to her husband. She was progressive, intelligent, and up-to-date, but one might say (in the best sense of the term) that Lynn Keys was 'an old-fashioned mom' practicing the best motherly traits that phrase brings to one's mind.***

***The third thing I would like to say is that Lynn Keys was a loyal friend. My wife and I commented just recently about the number of couples in our own Church, which Gene and Lynn ministered to in one way or another. Gene and Lynn loved people, and people found it easy to love Lynn and Gene. Said my wife about Lynn, "If Lynn was your friend, you really had a friend who was loyal and faithful!" Lynn was companionable, sociable, good–humored, approachable, understanding, non-judgmental, sensitive to people's hurts, and always available to listen and to lovingly offer counsel. She carefully guarded 'confidences' and was a person with whom many shared their hurts and sorrows. She was so patient with people, and so accepting of others, regardless of their weaknesses and failures. Lynn was always a person who sympathetically would give you a 'listening ear', and one who would also see the 'funny side of life'. Her wholesome sense of humor made her, at times, the 'life of the party'. This is not to say that she did not have her special sensitivities. All of us do have sensitivities, and Lynn was no exception, but while she, as most of us, was not always free of particular biases, Lynn sought to be fair with all people and just in all her human relationships. Her warm heart and loving approach attracted many friends to her.***

***The fourth thing I would like to say about Lynn Keys is that she was a mature Christian.***

***YOUR OWN VERSION***
***You are writing a gospel,***
***A Chapter each day,***
***By deeds that you do,***
***By words that you say.***
***Men read what you write,***
***Whether faithless or true;***
***Say, what is the gospel***
***According to you?***

*Paul Gilbert –*

***She became a born-again Christian during childhood, having been raised by a godly father and mother. Even though Lynn was rather young when she lost both of her parents, Lynn had a lasting and deep affection for her godly parents. She often spoke of her deceased parents with greatest of respect and love. She was deep in her faith. She fellowshipped with God intimately. God, to her, was a personal friend. One whom she loved and worshiped daily. She testified often to the goodness of God, even during her very trying times. It was not uncommon for Lynn to share her faith in God with others. She faithfully maintained a personal devotional life, praying daily for many, studying her Bible regularly, reading a large number of outstanding Christian books, attending Church and Sunday School faithfully, learning patience and perseverance during many trials and troubles. She was no stranger to pain, having gone through many physical challenges during her childhood and adulthood. Her medical history was most unusual, but the active life she lived, in spite of her many physical problems, was most amazing. She walked with God through the years. Her experience stood the test of time and trials.***

***The fifth thing that can be said about Lynn Keys is that she was a very talented worker. She loved music and for several years she was our Church pianist for both morning worship services. She often sang solos and loved to sing hand-clapping choruses. Music with a fast tempo and an upbeat message were her favorites. She was an excellent record keeper, and for several years taught many Sunday School classes. Trained in college as a children's worker, she taught scores and scores of little boys and girls – many of whom had a special affection for and attraction to Lynn. She was most affective in her ministry to children.***

***Jesus said, "I must be about my Father's business", and so was Lynn – active in the Lord's Business. Only what's done for Christ will last.***

***TO THEE, LORD***

***Dear Lord, you've done so much for me.***
***You saved my soul and set me free,***
***And gave me joy and liberty,***
***What can I do, dear Lord, for thee?***

***A thousand things along life's way---***
***You do for me, each blessed day.***
***I'm grateful, Lord, I want to show***

*How much I think to thee I owe.*
*Oh, help me, Lord, as days go by*
*The golden hours, Lord, help me buy,*
*That when on Jordan's shining sand,*
*I may not come with empty hands.*

***Another thing that can be said about Lynn is that she was a compassionate servant. 'Compassionate' because she had the 'gift of mercy' and because she was love-filled. 'Servant' because she loved to care for others. So selfless! She and her husband personally spent hundreds of hours in the homes of young Christians – studying the Scriptures, answering their questions, counseling them in their hurts, nurturing them in their faith. She could weep with those who wept, and she could rejoice with those who rejoiced. She was a deep feeling person, a humble self-giving servant of others, uncalculating and generous in her gifts of time and money and food and clothing and even shelter. As a very hospitable person, she had an 'open-door policy' in her home, and people felt so welcome in her home as guests. Her love was so practical and 'earthy'. She spent hours counseling people. She was most concerned that all of her friends and loved ones would accept Christ as their Saviour and be born again. If Lynn could come back from eternity just now, she would strongly urge all her unsaved friends and relatives to repent and to surrender their lives to Christ!***

***Another thing that can be said about Lynn Keys is that she was a most courageous sufferer. She was no stranger to pain. Throughout her entire lifetime, she experienced recurring physical struggles of one sort or another. The last six months, during her bout with cancer, she experienced unusual physical challenges. One time a person said to another who was suffering: "Suffering fairly colors life, doesn't it?" Came back the reply from the one who was suffering: "Yes, and I propose to choose the colour!" Of course, Lynn did not like to suffer. Because she cherished life, she would have loved to have continued in life, but nevertheless, in spite of suffering, Lynn chose to live victoriously. The following poem, which was found in Lynn's address book, after she passed away, expresses Lynn's attitude toward suffering and other obstacles in life.***

*FRIENDLY OBSTACLES*

*For every hill I've had to climb,*
*For every stone that bruised my feet,*
*For all the blood and sweat and grime,*

*For blinding storms and burning heat,*
*My heart sings but a grateful song –*
*These were the things that made me strong!*

*For all the heartaches and the tears,*
*For all the anguish and the pain*
*For gloomy days and fruitless years,*
*And for the hopes that lived in vain,*
*I do give thanks, for now I know*
*These were the things that helped me grow!*

*"T'is not the softer things of life*
*Which stimulate man's will to strive;*
*But bleak adversity and strife*
*Do most to keep man's will alive.*
*O'er rose-strewn paths the weaklings creep,*
*But brave hearts dare to climb the steep.*
*Author Unknown*

***The most wonderful thing that we can say about Lynn Keys is that she is now a rewarded saint. Heaven is now her eternal home. She will be with the Lord forever, safe from all harm and free from all trials and tribulations and temptations. Paul said, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Lynn's passing away is a great loss to her friends and to her loved ones, and the real sorrow and grief that we feel today is understandable and legitimate, but for Lynn this is a day of rejoicing and rewards. She is being crowned with the crown of life.***

***Paul said: "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." As soon as her spirit left her body on Saturday morning, she was gently ushered into heaven where she shall forever worship and adore her Lord, and where she shall love and enjoy the innumerable company of God's saints. She shall never know pain again. All tears are wiped away from her eyes. She will receive a new resurrection body – totally healthy and wonderfully real. Not a 'flesh-and-blood' physical body of course, but a spiritual body – one that is altogether beautiful, identifiable, and patterned after Christ's resurrection body. Wrote Paul to the Corinthian Church:***

***"Our earthly bodies which die and decay are different from the bodies we shall have when we come back to life again, for they will never die. The bodies we have now embarrass us for they become sick and die; but they will be full of glory when we come back to life again. Yes, they are weak, dying bodies now, but when we live again, they will be full of strength. They are just human bodies at death, but when they come back to life they will be superhuman bodies. For just as there are natural, human bodies, there are also supernatural, spiritual bodies." (I Corinthians 15:42-44; Living Bible)***

***The true Lynn Keys is with her Lord, in heaven today. Her body was only her temporary abode.***

***Jesus' disciple John, saw a vision of heaven, as recorded in the Book of Revelation:***

> ***"And I, John, saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. It was a glorious sight, beautiful as a bride at her wedding. I heard a loud shout from the throne saying, 'Lord, the home of God is now among men, and he will live with them and they will be His people; yes, God Himself will be among them. He will wipe away all tears form their eyes, and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain. All of that has gone forever…There shall be nothing in the city which is evil' for the throne of God and of the Lamb, will be there, and His servants will worship Him. And they shall see His face and His name shall be written on their foreheads. And there will be no night there – no need for lamps or sun – for the Lord God will be their light; and they shall reign forever and ever." (Revelations 21:2-4; 22; 3-5; Living Bible)***

***Think of it – Lynn shall reign with Christ forever and forever!***

***Are you ready to meet God if you should die today? Are your sins washed away by the blood of Christ? Have you made peace with God? Have you repented of your sins and surrendered yourself to Christ? Is your name written in the Book of Life? The Bible says that it is appointed unto man once to die, but after death comes the judgment. God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. Will you turn you life and turn your face toward Christ just now?***

***What must you do to prepare to meet your God in peace?***

***First, confess all your sins to God. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (I John 1:9***

***Second, Believe…. Acts 16:31 says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved". (Romans 10:9b says, "if you…believe in your own heart that God has raised Jesus from the dead, you will be saved."***

***Third, accept Jesus into your heart. "To all who received Him (Jesus), He (God) gave the right to become children of God. All they needed to do was to trust Him to save them." (John 1:12) Says Jesus to every person, "Look! I have been standing at the door and I am constantly knocking. If anyone hears me calling him and opens the door, I will come in and fellowship with him and he with me." (Revelations 3:20)***

***These Biblical truths, which I have just shared with you are the truths which Lynn Keys built her very life upon. These are foundational truths – truths that if you deny them, you will lose your eternal soul! Jesus said, "With all the earnestness I possess I tell you this: Unless you are born again, you can never get into the Kingdom of God." (John 3:3; Living Bible)***

***Have you been born again? If not, you can be born again this very day! One of the last and most intense desires of Lynn Keys was that all her loved ones and friends be saved. If you are not sure that you are ready to meet God in peace, then please pray this prayer with me right now:***

> ***"I now acknowledge you, Jesus Christ, as my risen Lord…I confess all of my sins to you…Thank you for forgiving me as you promised. I now receive you Lord Jesus into my life…I need Christ more than anyone, or anything else in all the world. Thank you, Jesus, for coming into my life as you promised…thank you for making me God's child. Thank you for keeping Your Word…All of this, God, I have sincerely prayed in Jesus' name. Amen."***
>
> ***(Prayer written by George Delamarter)***

# REMEMBERING

# OLLIE VONDY – 1991

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***The "Cottage Prayer Meeting" that I described in some detail at the beginning of this book, (i.e., in the Introduction) was, as I emphasized, a wonderful group, composed of about 10 older ladies – all of whom loved the Lord supremely and who loved one another dearly. Even though this group met regularly (weekly), this group had no formal or written code or organization. But, even though it was an informal group (based on a common primary desire to enjoy 'group praying'), nevertheless, this informal group needed a "leader". And that "leader" was Ollie Vondy. She, by nature, was a leader – even in her marriage. She was a "preacher's kid", and her father was probably the strongest, most outspoken, extrovert that I ever knew. (I was his pastor when he was very old, and I participated in his funeral service, when I was still a young pastor). Ollie's father was a very kind and loving man, but he was never "timid" or "withdrawn", and, as a man who loved to converse, he was quick to "share" his opinions about life in general and about "Church policy" in specific. He was well liked by many.***

***As pastor of both Rev. Messer (Ollie's father) for awhile, and as the pastor of Ollie Vondy for over 24 years, I could not help but see the similarities in mannerisms and in speech and in attitudes and in convictions between beloved father and beloved daughter! Ollie Vondy, though she, like her father, was very extroverted and usually quite outspoken on all kinds of subjects (especially on subjects having to do with her Church which she greatly loved), was greatly liked (and loved) by almost everyone!***

***Ollie Vondy lived to be an old lady, but when the "Cottage Prayer Meeting" started, I recall that Ollie Vondy was the "youngest" in the group of ladies. She "reached out" with great interest to all the other ladies in the group, and she took care of any***

*"logistics", necessary for a "smooth running" group. She could (apparently) see and hear better than the others, and she was an excellent reader (of Scriptures or devotional readings from Norman Vincent Peale – which everyone enjoyed). She was a woman, full of love, and she easily and naturally and joyously expressed her love to every other lady in the group. She not only talked fluently (and wisely), but she had a sympathetic ear to listen to the "hurts" of others in the group. All the ladies in the group were (as far as I could discern) great "prayer warriors", but there was something about Ollie Vondy's prayers that struck a "note" deep within my heart! In a special way, she seemed to bring "heaven down to earth". She was no stranger to "suffering" herself (such as the "suffering" she experienced as a result of members of her family who were staying away from God), and, therefore, it was common for me to behold tears flowing from her eyes as she was praying for other "hurting" persons.*

*Ollie Vondy was highly-opinionated and strong-willed, and somewhat (in my opinion) "domineering" in her marriage! She loved her husband dearly, and they remained married for many decades, but she (an only child, married to a husband who was the 9th child among 17 children in his family), tended to be "a little bossy"! But, someway, she and Lawrence (whose tribute appears in this book) got along well, and they seemed to be compatible and well-adjusted. Lawrence had a "strong will" also, and I think they occasionally had their conflicts! It is said that "opposites attract" in terms of selection of marriage partners, and it was very obvious to any observer that Ollie and Lawrence (while they loved each other deeply) were very "opposite" in many ways!*

*One was an extrovert; the other was an introvert. One loved to talk, the other was rather quiet and slow of speech. One was an only child, the other was one of 17 children. One was not adept mechanically; the other was rather adept with the hands. One was very open and transparent regarding 'faith in Christ'; the other was rather 'secretive' and 'closed' regarding 'faith in Christ'. But "opposites attract", and these two were greatly attracted to each other when they were young, and they spent a lifetime together. Ollie Vondy cared greatly for her husband, at all times, but especially as he grew older, and when he was suffering so much (having a hard time breathing, caused by his years of smoking). Of course, they not only had several "differences" in terms of their personality and interests and outlook, but Lawrence and Ollie certainly had "things in common" which made their lives as lifetime spouses enjoyable.*

*Without being "stingy" (for they both were generous in so many ways), they both were known to be "frugal". They did not believe in being "wasteful" in the use of material things or self-indulgent in the use of material things. Even though Ollie was far more*

*"extroverted" in her personality, Lawrence nevertheless was also friendly and gracious in his relationships with others.*

*Both of them greatly enjoyed their many friends. Both of them greatly enjoyed their yard, especially their gigantic apple tree (an apple tree that bore several different kinds of apples). When I was a young pastor, I was invited by them each Fall to come to their back yard, to receive a large container of various kinds of apples from that "unique, old apple tree".*

*In terms of similarities, more importantly, Lawrence and Ollie both dearly loved their three children (one son and two daughters). Till the day of their respective deaths, their children (and grandchildren) were their "pride and joy"! When I often visited in their home, the subject of their children was parmomont. Through all the "ups and downs" of their children's lives, Lawrence and Ollie were always available – for encouragement and for understanding (not to intrude or to intervene).*

*I personally liked Lawrence very much, and I often enjoyed our conversations together. Because he never attended Church services, Ollie prayed much for him through the many years they spent time as husband and wife. Ollie told me that, shortly before Lawrence died (while he was suffering so much), he asked his wife to forgive him for any and all things he had ever wrongly done to her, to please forgive him for times he had hurt her! Ollie, of course, quickly and totally forgave him! Ollie believed that her beloved husband (this man who, with his 16 siblings was raised by godly parents, but a man who, although he was "good" in many ways, did not apparently visibly serve the Lord during his lifetime). I say, Ollie believed that her husband (late in his life) made "peace with God"! The greatest desire of Ollie's heart was finally fulfilled!*

*Each person, of course, is unique, and that uniqueness is sometimes seen even in the way a 'saint' of God expresses herself/himself in the giving of a "public testimony". As pastor, I often allowed lots of time for believes to share their personal testimony (often during Sunday Evening Services). Almost without exception, during an extended half-hour 'Testimony Service', Ollie Vondy would rise to her feet (and when she did, there was a spirit of respect and awe throughout the congregation – everyone considered her almost "a mouthpiece for God"). Her testimonies were so fervent, so 'dear', and so 'direct', filled with "sweetness" and with "blessing towards others", and with "glorification of her blessed Saviour"! She overflowed with gratitude for what God had done for her – saving her and keeping her and giving her (a humble servant) so very much! Then she would tell everyone present how very much she loved them, how very precious each one was to her and that they all were like her spiritual children! I can see her yet (even though many years separate me from those "Testimony Services").*

*I say, I can see her yet raise her little arm, as she testified. Then, I can see the tears trickle down her soft and aging cheeks! And, (here is the "unique feature"), I can see "her lips quiver and quiver and quiver" as she testified! This woman, wrapped in God's love! "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another." A love-filled, Spirit-anointed 'Saint' of God!*

*It is no wonder that she was one of the most loved persons in our Church! Ollie Vondy loved her God, and she loved God's people! Faithfulness to her God and to her church was her "way of life". You could always depend on Ollie Vondy! She was a "woman of her word". Most reliable and consistent! She was one of the few persons who composed the group who started the Free Methodist Church in Fort Collins, Colorado, in 1947. She was a member of her Church until her death in October 1991, a period of 44 years (a member longer than any other person)! Faithfulness!*

*This is not to say that she had no "faults"! Yes, like all of us, she was not perfect in some ways! As a regular member of the Church Board, she was gracious, and she did not intentionally "offend" fellow Board members, but there were times during the Monthly Board Meetings when she straightforwardly (and sometimes rather bluntly) gave her opinions regarding "controversial issues". As a pastor who "chaired" the monthly business meetings, for over 25 years, I did not find that these (sometimes controversial) meetings were my most favorite involvement! But, when Ollie Vondy "spoke her mind", everyone respectfully listened! Not always did her "ideas" win the "heated debate", but she never sulked or belittled others or criticized others. She had a charitable and 'sweet' spirit at all times, even when she thought another viewpoint (that won the vote) was mistaken.*

*Yes, even though she had a very "tender heart", she also had a "strong will" (highly opinionated). Very spiritual, but also very earthy! Perhaps that is one reason why she was so well liked, by so many people! She was 'real', 'authentic', 'approachable', and 'genuine'! No hypocracy at all!*

*The Bible notes that Jesus had many disciples. The 70 who were sent out by Jesus, the 12 disciples whom Jesus specifically chose "to be with him", and also (most interesting) the "most inner circle" of disciples that Jesus chose to be with Him at special times (namely, Peter, James, and John). Jesus loved all the disciples (including the large number of 70 that He sent on a special mission), but dare we criticize Jesus for selecting only three (3) men to be closest to Him? I think not!*

*As a pastor, I felt a love for the entire congregation (like the 70 disciples that Jesus chose for a special mission). Also, I felt a "close love" for the small group (Prayer Group*

*of about a dozen 'prayer warriors'). But, to be honest, like Jesus, I had a "small inner group" (possibly 3) that I found it quite "easy" to bare my heart and my soul to! Ollie Vondy was definitely one of those "very dear" persons with whom I spent many special times – talking openly about needs and desires, praying earnestly about the needs of various persons in the Church, discussing financial challenges the church was facing (for Ollie – even though she was not very young – was our Church treasurer for many years), sharing her own "heavy burdens" regarding her "hurting family members", etc., etc..*

*Ollie Vondy was my special "prayer partner". I loved to go to her home (especially during the years when she was a widow, and she herself was growing quite old). When I went to her home, she always expected me to pray and perhaps to read some Scriptures, and to share an "update" on the progress of our Church, and she would serve me a "desert" (she was a great cook!), and then she would expect me to give her a big hug before I left her home. She expressed love and appreciation to me as her pastor. So expressionable! She was like a "second mother" to me!*

*She made many requests of her Lord, and when she prayed, she talked so naturally and so humbly and so gratefully to her "dear Heavenly Father". Such a sweet child of God! I loved her so much, and after all these many years (since her death) I still miss her so much! In spite of great difference in our ages, I felt we were "so close", in spirit and in our mutual desires for god! I hope that (by God's grace) she will be one of the first ones in heaven whom I will see! When I see her, I want to bow at her feet (not in worship) to kiss her feet and then to thank her for being one of my closest, kindest, and most helpful friends on earth! I was her pastor for many years, but she was my "spiritual mother" in the "inner circle" of my closest friends!*

*With all the "accolades" (praises and affirmations) I have given in respect for this dear lady, it must not be supposed that somewhere along life's pathway, Ollie was "saved" from all her human (faulty) ways! No, indeed! This is one reason why I identified so closely with her even though we were, in large measure, very different type persons. She remained very "human" not carnal, but human to the end of her earthly pilgrimage! That is, she was not "super pious", but she instead was approachable, down-to-earth, believable, transparent, humble, honest, open, good-humored, communicable, and flexible (even though she maintained strong convictions). I liked the fact that I could visit with her, and that she would "put the best construction upon everything I said." She believed in me as a person, and she cherished me as her pastor. She was a steadfast friend for so many years! No judgementalism! No criticism! She was a faith-filled, optimistic, forward-moving, vision–oriented, God-trusting person.*

***She was like "a breath of fresh air" to me! One of the most progressive persons I knew (even when she got old)! She believed in "trying new ideas". Conservative in doctrinal beliefs, but not conservative in methodology! Instead of getting sinners saved at my church altar, I decided (as a very young pastor in my 20's) to go to the home of sinners and to present the "Plan of Salvation" to them around their own table! What did Ollie Vondy (one of the strong church leaders, at the time I came to pastor that tiny church) think of such a "radical idea"? Isn't the Church altar the "proper place" for sinners to be converted? Ollie Vondy, so open to God's (new) ways of doing things in the Church, was most supportive of the new method! (Of course, occasionally, there were sinners and believers who came forward at my "altar call" on Sunday mornings, but the vast majority of sinners – well over 300 adults and children – were "saved" in their homes, through what I called a "Salvation By Appointment" Bible Study).***

***I previously mentioned that Ollie Vondy, while she was deeply practical (and certainly, heavenly-minded), she was also (as a woman who "lived for two worlds"), very 'human', very 'earthly', very 'practical', very 'honest', very 'pragmatic'!***

***She was honest about her feeling in many things, but one thing she confided in me was her "worry" that, before she died, she might "end up like her beloved father ended up before he died." Her wonderful father (a minister, a caring 'pastor type' man) ended up spending several years in a nursing home, mentally deteriorated. He was able to talk, but he was very "mixed up" mentally; he was not his mentally-alert self that he was for many years of ministry.***

***Ollie Vondy (spiritually-minded as she was ) had this terrible dread that she someday would "end up just like my dear dad". In fact, this was such an "undercurrent of concern" to her, that she prayed and prayed that God would have "mercy" on her, and would spare her of such an "end"! (I never heard anyone resort more to God's "mercy" as Ollie Vondy did, in the hundreds of her prayers that I heard her pray through the near quarter century that I knew her!).***

***Well, no one knows the "mystery of God's ways", for "His ways are higher than our ways, as high as the heavens are above the earth." (Why does God answer some prayers in the affirmative, and answer some other equally sincere prayers in the negative?) (Why do some Christians die a rather 'easy' death, and some other Christians die a very 'difficult' death)?***

***When the time came for Ollie Vondy to die (October 1991), she (as far as I know) died an 'easy' death! As I recall the past, Ollie Vondy had just come home from a trip to California (where she visited a daughter), and when she got to her home, she noticed a***

*"Growth" in her upper body. The doctor confirmed that she had cancer. She went to a nursing home (for one month before she died). When I visited her in the nursing home, she carried on a "normal conversation", and she did not appear to be in pain. Friends and family enjoyed her conversations, until the very "end". She died in peace and full of joy and gratitude! Just before her death, she could hardly wait to "go to her heavenly home", to see her Savior, and the heavenly saints! A victorious woman – in life and in death!*

*A parishioner (and one of my "inner circle friends" - and my "spiritual mother") gone! Gone from earth, but very much present with the One who caused her lips to "quiver" and "quiver", when she testified before her "spiritual children" on earth! Yes, I loved her deeply, but God's love for her is infinitely greater!*

*She was an "earthy" woman but she never was a "crude" or a "careless" or an "undignified" woman! She was a woman of "dignity", "propriety", "courteous", and "respect". Talking about "respect", she showed respect in many ways, but one way she showed it was in the use of what she considered was the right term in addressing me – her pastor. When I became her pastor, I was only 22 years of age. When Ollie Vondy died, I was still her pastor (over 24 years later), and I was nearly 47 years old. From the beginning to the end, she addressed me as 'Brother Christian" (not Ron; not Rev. Christian). That was her term, a term which expressed at one and the same time, to me, her 'affection' for me as her 'brother in Christ' in the family of God, and also her 'respect' for me as her pastor and as 'a man of God'! Of course, showing my respect for her, I always addressed her as "Sister Vondy" (and, of course, I addressed all the older ladies and older men as 'Sister' or 'Brother'). Sister Vondy loved her "spiritual family" (Church on earth). Now, she is a member of the "heavenly family" – and maybe her lips still "quiver" and "quiver" in eternal praise and gratitude!*

*When talking about 'Heaven', Sister Vondy (as I affectionally called her) spoke often about Heaven (in a strange way, different from anyone else that I had ever heard speak about heaven). I heard her often say, "Heaven will be cheap at any cost!" What did she mean by this unusual statement? I think she meant that the rewards of heaven would be so great that the sufferings and sacrifices a Christian makes while on earth would, from eternity's perspective, be small and trivial. Perhaps she was thinking of many scriptural promises that spoke of the glories of heaven that far supersede the sacrifices that believers must make on earth, in order to please God. One such Scripture comes to mind: "The sufferings of this present earth do not compare with the glories (of heaven) that are coming (i.e., that are laid up for believers in God's heavenly home)"! Ollie Vondy "lived for two worlds" – the world of time and the world of eternity. As a very*

*"practical person", she greatly enjoyed the world of time (i.e., she greatly loved many people), but she also had a great expectation that (in spite of her earthly sufferings) she would eventually meet her Savior "face to face" and all the blessed inhabitants of heaven!*

## FUNERAL SERVICE (OR) TRIBUTE

*Ollie Vondy was positive in attitudes. She believed the best about others, not the worse about others. She was quick to accept others, slow to judge others. She looked on the bright side of life, not the dark side of life. She was a most grateful person. She saw the funny side of things, not always the sad and doleful side of life. She believed that all things are possible with God (always believed that others could change, and she didn't give up on people). (As long as there is breath, there is hope). She brought peace where there is discord, and understanding where there was confusion, (A peacemaker).*

*Ollie Vondy was prayerful in worship. Worship was a way of life to her. Prayer to her Heavenly Father was most natural and simple. She was earnest and faithful and specific in praying. (My personal times of prayer with her – tears flowed often)*

*Mrs. Vondy was purposeful in goals. She was a woman who lived for eternity, without avoiding the responsibilities of earth. Heavenly–minded, but very practical and sensible. A woman of great wisdom and understanding and common sense. She was a woman who was always learning and always growing. She loved to read her Bible, good books, and she was so interested in discovering new truth in Sunday School Classes and during preaching services. (So affirming of me as her pastor and preacher – a great appreciator).*

*Mrs. Vondy was a woman who wanted so much to please God, as she constantly sought the will of God. A woman who had a great love for world-wide missions. (She was the Mission Director for many years in our Church). She was a woman who had a great love for the unsaved (she desired the salvation of the lost ones). She was a woman who was generous in giving, willing even to sacrifice in order to meet needs of others, and needs of the local Church and missions.*

*Sister Vondy was personable in relationships. She was interested in people in general and loyal to her friends in specific. She wrote 100's of heart-warming letters in her lifetime, and prepared thousands of delicious meals (very hospitable, opening her*

***home to evangelists, missionaries, pastors and hosts of friends to eat around her table and to sleep in her guest bedroom).***

***She was an excellent conversationalist and a sympathetic listener to burdened people. She was extroverted in temperament, unafraid to meet and to welcome guests and strangers (like her beloved father Rev. Messer who was once the friendliest person I ever knew!).***

***She was deeply in love with her family (her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren; very proud of all of them!) She was a deeply devoted wife, married to her dear husband for many decades, before Lawrence passed away.***

***Ollie Vondy was persevering in service. She was faithful in service to her Lord and to her Church for many decades (including about 45 years in her present local Church). She served in many capacities in her Church and community, using her gifts unselfishly and tirelessly, year after year. She seldom missed a public service, regardless of weather, (a faithful steward, whom everyone could trust!)***

***Mrs. Vondy was pure in motives. She was humble in spirit (not boastful), but confident in work for God. She had positive self-esteem, sensitive but not overly-sensitive in nature, she did not easily take offensive. She gave people the "benefit of the doubt" and she was trusting of people without being gullible or naïve.***

***Her gift of "discernment of spirits" to quickly distinguish between the genuine and the hypocritical, without becoming harsh or judgmental!***

***She loved God supremely and she sought to love her neighbors as herself. She was unselfish and others–oriented. She could be frank without being harsh; truthful without being cruel; without guile and no ulterior motives; a Spirit-filled and gentle person!***

***Ollie Vondy could be peaceful amidst problems. She learned (sometimes with difficulty) to "cast her cares on the Lord", to turn her "worry energy" into "prayer energy". She accepted challenges and difficulties as opportunities for great growth. She believed in a miracle-performing God. She learned to enjoy the "simple lifestyle" materially-speaking. She endured hardships and losses as a "good soldier of the Cross"; she helped keep her hard–working husband encouraged during times of great loss, while he was farming during the "depression years". She always believed "the best is yet to be". (Looked back with gratitude).***

***Her practice in lifestyle was simple, with enjoyment of God's material blessings. (She did not despise the nice things of this world, but she had her affection set on heavenly things – not things on the earth). She was always courteous and polite in manners, without being sophisticated and unapproachable. Her housekeeping habits were orderly, without being tedious and overly–particular (people felt so "at home" in her well-kept house).***

***She was always dignified and modern in her dress and her hairstyle. She was not extravagant or in bondage to fads and fashions. She was persistent in work and exercise. When she worked, she worked hard, but she took time for sufficient rest and sleep. She was health conscious, without taking away enjoyment in eating. She exercised regularly as she lived on the 3rd floor of an apartment building, and she enjoyed walking and she was glad to climb the steps.***

***In spite of multiple surgeries earlier in her life, she had "bounced back" to health, time after time. She always enjoyed working but always took time to "smell the roses" along life's way. She was an appreciator of the beauties of nature and she loved her beloved state of Colorado.***

***Ollie Vondy was progressive in her thought and actions. She was future-oriented rather than always living in the past. She was willing to try new activities, rather than holding tightly and conservatively to the past. Her "youthful approach" to life was without compromise of the basic principles of age and experience. She was usually the oldest person at the annual Ladies' Retreat in the mountains at Horn Creek – 9,000 ft. She enjoyed having fun and laughter with all the younger women. All the younger ladies loved her youthfulness and good-humor and great affection for them! She brought the "Sunshine of God's Love", wherever she was! She was a "Down-To-Earth Saint"!***

# REMEMBERING
# ELBURN GREGORY - 1988

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

***After my personal conversion, at the age of 11, (towards the end of my sixth grade in school), I started attending the 10 day-long (old-fashioned) Summer Camp Meeting at Canon City, Colorado (about one hours-drive from my hometown in Fountain, Colorado). During those summer camps (where all age groups were represented), during my Junior High and Senior High years, I came in contact with very unusual persons – both lay persons and ministers from several churches in our "Rocky Mountain Free Methodist Conference". I could not have been among a greater group of godly persons (very authentic and very loving and very personable and very mature Christians). The stories of God's grace in their individual lives were most interesting to me and the lives of the persons were most powerful and most impactful in my young life!***

***These lovely persons (many of them very experienced believers who had weathered the "storms of life") were truly caring and loving and faith-filled, and full of wisdom regarding the "skills of daily living" amidst all the "changes and chances" of life, the common "trials and tests of life".***

***During my teenage years, while I was struggling to understand the "ways of godly living", many of these mature (older) lay persons and ministers listened to my troublesome questions and my heart concerns. They were all so compassionate and understanding, as they counseled me during my "soul agonies". They loved me and they prayed with me, and they fully accepted me, in spite of my rather immature actions and attitudes. Even though I was with these "saints of God" for only a short 10 days (during Camp Meeting), for six different summers (7th thru 12th grades), I came to***

***love them deeply, and to admire them highly! I rightly concluded that these persons (both laity and clergymen) were among the greatest Christians in the world!***

***As a teenager, I found myself starting to "imitate" them, in my mannerisms and in my speech, and most of all, in my attitudes. They have had a continuing impact on my life for many years.***

***Almost all of these "select persons" are now dead. I know that they are now rejoicing with their Beloved Savior and Lord, in that heavenly mansion! Those joy-filled persons who found it easy to "shout the praises of God", during the services in that old Camp Tabernacle, are now doubtless shouting and singing praises to the Lord whom they dearly loved – in that heavenly mansion! I will not be worthy, but I am requesting that God shall allow me (an adult who grew up to serve the Lord, after those long-ago troublesome teenage years) to "live on the same blocks" in heaven someday, near to those whom I loved dearly during the old-fashioned Camp Meeting Days!***

***Why this brief account of my days, as a teenager, on the Camp Grounds at Canon City, Colorado? Because, for one reason, it was during these years that I first met Elburn Gregory (whom I am presently honoring in this tribute) among persons whom I cherished during my teen years during the days of Family Camp. Mr. Gregory was a gentleman whom I quickly recognized as a man of distinction and dignity and quiet respectful reservation - a man of few words but a man of radiant countenance and godly actions.***

***For about the next 30 years (following my teen years), Mr. Gregory remained as a steadfast follower of Christ. A man who never sought the "limelight", but a man who, nevertheless, was called by God to be (for several decades) a public school principal in a small northern Colorado community (Ault, Colorado). Even though the small Greeley, Colorado Free Methodist Church never grew numerically, he was never ashamed to remain as a loyal member and lay leader in that small, but beloved, local Church. He was a confident man, a very intelligent man, a highly respected man! Also, he was a devoted husband whose intelligent and sweet wife was created by God with a very different temperament and a very different personality than the way God created Mr. Gregory! Mrs. Gregory was a woman, in great contrast to her husband, who enjoyed talking a lot, a woman whose visible servant-spirit was most noteworthy and admired by those around her. I think Mr. and Mrs. Gregory were as "close" as any couple could be! Both were very intelligent mentally, and both were very godly spiritually!***

*I never served as their pastor, but they were very supportive of my ministry, through several years. When their son (Dwight Gregory) asked me to deliver Mr. Gregory's funeral message, I was most honored!*

*Elburn Gregory, of all persons whom I have known personally, was one of the most guileless (honest and sincere) persons I have ever known! I would gladly entrust my life to him! He was totally reliable and dependable in human relationships! He would never, in any circumstances, lie to another person! He was, indeed, a "man of his word"! His character was truly Christlike! One of the greatest "saints" of God whom I have ever known! A Spirit-filled man who clearly manifested the several "fruits of the spirit" (Love, joy, peace, patience, etc. – Galatians 5). A man "above reproach"! He was known as a man "who said what he meant, and who meant what he said." No deception, but (like Nathaniel in the New Testament) a man "without guile"! Everyone could trust him and, even though he was quiet by temperament, a man of few words, his carefully selected words (spoken rather slowly and meditatively and charitably) during school and church committee meetings, were listened to and were often heeded by fellow committee members.*

*As I earlier mentioned briefly, he and his wife were "opposites" in many ways, but they, nevertheless, appeared to me to be compatible and very happily married. Mr. Gregory was slow-speaking, quiet, contemplative, meditative, and careful in making decisions, reflective, an introvert, not articulate.*

*Mrs. Gregory, on the other hand, was quick speaking, opinionated, impulsive, excitable, action-oriented, articulate in speech, emotional, friendly, and outgoing and informative, extroverted.*

*Yes, very different in so many ways – in speech, in actions and reactions within their relationships, and in personal interests. But, when I occasionally observed them as my friends (not as parishers in my local Church where I pastored for many years), I always noticed that (even though he was slow moving and inarticulate in speech, and she was the opposite of these characteristics), Mrs. Gregory was always submissive to her husband. She admired and loved him dearly! She felt so secure in his presence, he indeed was her "hero". They get along together so peaceably!*

*Their daughter (whom I verily "knew") was an intelligent and talented lady. She spent many years with a Methodist minister husband. She and her minister husband had a fruitful ministry, as far as I knew!*

***Their son (Dwight), whom I knew since his youth (we attended Summer Camp Meeting together), was, like his parents, very smart. Even when he was a teenager, he had a rather special (some would say "odd") hobby! He loved to study the statistics of hundreds of local Free Methodist Churches throughout our Free Methodist Denomination! From his diligent examination (study) of the large Denominational "Yearbook", Dwight observed and compared statistics (like the average attendance of many churches, and the monetary data)! As he continued to pursue this "hobby" into adulthood, as an eventual loyal Free Methodist pastor, Dwight became one of the most knowledgeable persons in the denomination, in terms of the location of churches throughout the entire country, and the "vital statistics" of these hundreds of Free Methodist churches!***

***For many years, Dwight served his denomination in a variety of important capacities – as pastor of several churches, as conference superintendent, and as a "Church planter" of several churches in new locations. This smart, extroverted, multi-talented man manifested, along with his parents, deep spirituality, and unwavering loyalty. He was (and is) one of the most respected Church leaders in the entire Free Methodist Denomination! By God's grace, godly parents "produced" godly children! Legacy!***

***Mr. Gregory was known to be a perfect gentleman, a man who sought to be a peace-maker in all situations. A man with a mild temperament, he was never volatile or quick-tempered. He sought to glorify his Lord at all times, and he was charitable in his attitude towards others. Not judgmental, he was ready to give everyone around him the "benefit of the doubt". He wanted to think well of his fellowmen, but, on the other hand, he was not 'soft' on discernable evil in persons and circumstances. He was a man of firm and Biblically-based convictions, and he was committed at all times to just and moral and righteous actions and decisions. He was not argumentative, but conciliatory. He was never divisive in his spirit, but he was committed, as much as possible, to be "at peace with all men". He did not relish controversy, either in school board meetings or in Church committee meetings, and he sought to contribute to consensus and to unity and to understanding among dissenting members. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" .***

***Mr. Gregory surely was a child of God! He was one of the most 'holy men of God' that I ever knew! My life has been forever influenced by this godly, lovely life! He is one saint, among several saints whom I have known, to whom I am eternally indebted!***

# FUNERAL MESSAGE (OR) TRIBUTE

*It is interesting that the Bible gives the title of 'saint' to every believer – even to brand new believers. What God calls the new believer, He in reality makes the believer – 'saintly'. It takes much time with God for a person to become in reality 'saintly'.*

*I have been highly privileged to know several real 'saints' throughout my lifetime, and one of those great saints whom I have long admired and appreciated was Mr. Gregory.*

*The description that the Bible gives of Barnabas aptly applies to Brother Gregory: "Barnabas was a kindly person, full of the Holy Spirit and strong in faith".*

*First, Mr. Gregory was one of the most kindly persons I have ever known. During the some 30 years that I knew this precious person, I never once heard him say a harsh or hurtful or judgmental word. I am sure that he, like all of us, was not without his faults, but judgmentalism certainly was not one of them. In his quiet, sweet, and tender way, he responded to people with the charity that befits a kindly man of God. Kindness in his attitude towards others, giving others the benefit of the doubt. Kindness in his tolerance of others who were far less mature than he in their actions and in their attitudes. His consistent and patient attitude left its deep impact on hundreds of students through the years, during the countless times, as a public school administrator, that he counseled and guided and corrected young people. He was highly esteemed and respected, not only in his school, but in his community, in his Church, in the Rocky Mountain Conference, and certainly among his family and his personal friends.*

*Kindness in common courtesies, kindness through a smile, kindness in a sincere compliment, kindness in a loving act or a simple prayer. He was concerned with the feelings of others, and he often reached out a helping hand to meet the practical needs of others. He was quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. Even though he appeared to me to be a man of few words, he always appeared to me to be a man of weighty words. Full of wisdom and knowledge, he applied the salve of healing to hurting people, and brought insight and good judgment to the difficult decision–making processes. As I recall, Mr. Gregory served well as Church delegate to the Colorado Conference on several occasions, and he served on several important local Church and conference committees, like the Conference 'Stationing Committee'. A man of brilliance and great knowledge, he humbly surrendered his gifts to the Master for use in the Kingdom! As a kindly man, his love was most greatly expressed to his noble wife and outstanding children. A close-knit family who deeply loved each other and*

***who worked hard in the local Church for many years. As a long-time friend and admirer of Brother Gregory, I personally have been deeply enriched by his godly example of kindness.***

***Secondly, Mr. Gregory was a man "full of the Holy Spirit". What best characterizes a man who is "full of the Holy Spirit"? I believe the fruits which are described in Galatians 5 are a description of a Spirit-filled person. "But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."***

***If any man lived a life of holiness, I believe Mr. Gregory did. A Spirit-filled, love-saturated man. He was a Christ-like servant.***

***It is no wonder to me that his dedicated children have followed the godly example of their great father. One godly generation becomes a 'pace setter' for the next generation. I have long respected the lives and the ministries of Mr. Gregory's children, but I am sure that his children would give a lot of credit (humanly-speaking) to their loving father who provided such a godly example for them to follow. He was serious–minded without being somber, joyous without being frivolous, witty without being sarcastic, full of conviction without being legalistic, conservative without being radical, affectionate without being merely sentimental, friendly without being familiar, heavenly-minded without being impractical. In short, I believe Mr. Gregory was one of the most 'balanced' men of God that I have known.***

***Many of the great qualities I observed in Mr. Gregory for many years, I have also noticed being exemplified in his son who also has become a great spiritual leader in our denomination.***

***The third and last thing I would like to say about Mr. Gregory is this: Like Barnabas, Mr. Gregory too was "strong in faith".***

***He greatly surrendered to Christ. He believed strongly in Christ and in the values of the Spiritual Kingdom. He lived for two worlds, the world of time, and the world of eternity. He set his affections on things above, not on things on this earth alone. As Abraham of old, Mr. Gregory too*** "was confidently waiting for God to bring him to that strong heavenly city whose designer and builder is God." ***(Hebrews 11:10, Living Bible) He, at times, learned obedience and faithfulness by the things which he suffered. He was no stranger to spiritual and physical suffering, but through it all he remained true to His God.***

***William Barclay notes that fidelity "is the virtue of the man who, through all the changes and chances of life, down even to the gates of death, is loyal to God." Mr. Gregory was that kind of man – loyal and faithful, down even to the gates of death. Said one, "There is nothing in this world which can take the place of loyalty. If all the other noble qualities of life were placed in the balance against loyalty, loyalty would outweigh them all."***

***Even though he might have been too humble to declare it verbally and openly, Mr. Gregory could have said (along with the apostle Paul) just weeks before his departure: "I have fought long and hard for my Lord, and through it all I have kept true to him. And now the time has come for me to stop fighting and rest. In heaven a crown is waiting for me which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that great day of his return." (II Timothy 4:7-8; Living Bible)***

***I will personally never be the same for having known him. I will always have a special place in my heart and in my affections for Mr. Gregory – a man who was a "kindly person, full of the Holy Spirit and strong in faith".***

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