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2700-PLUS SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS (I-TOPICS)
Compiled and Arranged Topically by Duane V. Maxey

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IGNORANCE -- CONCERNING CHRIST

1283 -- IF THOU HADST KNOWN

In His earthly life among men, Jesus, more than once, virtually said that if they had really known who He was their course of action would have been widely different. It was so of the whole Jewish nation. They had long waited and sighed for the coming of their Prince, but when He came they knew Him not.

A young man was taken prisoner and was to be shot at sunrise. As he lay upon the ground that night between his sleeping guards, his heart was full of bitter thoughts. Oh for a single sight of the dear ones at home! What would he not give to be free once more?

Suddenly, he saw a solitary figure steal out from behind a clump of bushes. The man saw that he was awake and began to make signs, as though trying to communicate with him. He crept nearer and nearer. The soldier thought he could see a grin of derision on the man's face. Evidently, one of his enemies had heard of his plight and had come there to taunt him. He was mad with rage. It was enough to have to die like a dog, but this cruel mocking was more than he could endure. With a shriek of anger, he sprang up. In a moment, his guards had awakened and the entire camp was in an uproar. In the midst of the excitement, the stranger had fled, and the condemned man never knew that the one he repulsed was a friend who had come to deliver him from the hands of his enemies. -- McCartney

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IGNORANCE -- CONCERNING CHRIST

1284 -- OLD RATTLE BONES

Many years ago a poor cripple was cruelly nicknamed "Old Rattle Bones" by a group of boys on the street. The ringleader named Freddie was quite worried, however, when the man headed straight toward his home one day. Because his friends were with him, the boy tried to hide his anxiety. "Go on, Old Rattle Bones," he shouted, "see who cares if you talk to my mother." The man said with sadness as he continued on his way, "You wouldn't call me names if you knew what caused my condition." Arriving at his destination, he was welcomed by the boy's mother. She told her son to come in also.

Turning to Freddie, the man said, "Years ago when you were just a baby, your nurse took you out in your carriage for a ride near the river. When she let go of the handle for a moment, it suddenly began to careen down the hill. Before she could catch up with it, the buggy had plunged into the water below. I jumped into the river and after a difficult struggle brought you safely to shore, but I left before anyone could ask my name. The water that day was frigid, and it

aggravated my rheumatic condition. Now, 10 years later, I can scarcely hobble along." Freddie hung his head and began to cry. "Thank you for saving me. And forgive me for calling you 'Old Rattle Bones.' I didn't know who you were!"

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IGNORANCE -- MAN'S

1285 -- ABNER ROBBINS AND BOSTON CURTIS WON

In 1883 in Allentown, New Jersey, a wooden Indian -- the kind that was seen in front of cigar stores -- was placed on the ballot for Justice of the Peace. The candidate was registered under the fictitious name of Abner Robbins. When the ballots were counted, Abner won over incumbent Sam Davis by 7 votes. A similar thing happened in 1938. The name Boston Curtis appeared on the ballot for Republican Committeeman from Wilton, Washington. Actually, Boston Curtis was a mule. The town's mayor sponsored the animal to demonstrate that people know very little about the candidates. He proved his point. The mule won! Such election results don't seem so far-fetched when we consider that many voters seldom take the time to investigate a candidate's moral standards, political philosophy, and position on vital issues. -- 7700 Illustrations

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IGNORANCE -- MAN'S

1286 -- SHE DIDN'T KNOW

Did you hear what happened when our Census Bureaus were comparing notes relating to their recent national nose-counting. One of them said he knocked on a door in west Texas and explained to the lady of the house what the census was all about. He said, "Madam, every ten years the federal government tries to find out how many men, women and children live in the United States." The lady said, "You came to the wrong house, mister. I sure don't know!" -- Associated Press, 3-21-91

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IGNORANCE -- SPIRITUAL

1287 -- HE CAN GET ALONG WITHOUT IGNORANCE TOO

When John A. Broadus was the president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, he went to a country church to preach one Sunday. A man approached him after the service and said, "Brother, God kin git along without all your learnin." Broadus replied, "Yes sir, God can. And he can also get along without your ignorance."

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IGNORANCE -- SPIRITUAL

1288 -- THE DANGER OF SPIRITUAL IGNORANCE

Canada and the United States have long been the best of friends, justly proud of the undefended border between them. It has not always been so. During the War of 1812, between the United States and Britain, the Americans crossed the border and destroyed York, modern day Toronto. The British retaliated by burning Washington, D. C. Finally, on December 24, 1814, representatives of the two countries, who had been meeting in Belgium signed the Treaty of Ghent, which agreed on the details of an armistice. Unfortunately, the news of the peace was delayed, and, on January 8, 1815, unaware of the armistice, the two armies met in the Battle of New Orleans. More than 2,000 men lost their lives in a totally unnecessary battle, because they were ignorant of the peace treaty.

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IGNORANCE -- SPIRITUAL

1289 -- THE ORIGIN OF 360 DEGREES DISCUSSED

Have you ever wondered why our compass has 360 degrees? Or why clocks are divided into 12 hours, with 60 minutes to an hour? Actually, the "counting by sixties" system (called sexagesimal) came from ancient Mesopotamia. But, according to Wycliffe's senior statesman/scholar, Dr. Richard Pittman, the system had a very common and explainable origin. In fact, the method of counting by sixties is still in use in parts of Southeast Asia.

Dr. Pittman, one of Wycliffe's specialists in linguistics, helped to create the Alphabet Museum at the JAARS Center in Waxhaw, NC. His theory on the origin of this unique system is as follows. The ancient Mesopotamian man would, using his right thumb as a counter, touch each joint of each finger of his right hand in turn, with the tip of his thumb, counting as he did. (Try it yourself as you read this. With your right thumb touch the three joints of your index finger -- counting as you go. Then move to your middle finger, etc.

By the time he finished he had counted 12 joints on his right hand. Then, moving to his left hand he let each finger count for 12. He would fold down his fingers as he counted, making a fist. By the time he got to his thumb he had counted to 60 in multiples of 12. (Go ahead, try it. Your index finger on your left hand is 12. Your middle finger is 24. Your ringer finger is 36. Your little finger is 48. Your thumb makes 60).

Having counted up to sixty on his fingers, the Mesopotamian would then move to the joints of his arms. This time each joint would count for 60. His left wrist would be 60. His left elbow 120, his left shoulder 180, his right shoulder 240, his right elbow 300, and his right wrist 360. By being able to distinguish his right from his left, each joint of his body would have certain consistent numerical value. That is, his left shoulder would always be 180. His middle knuckle on his right hand would always be 5. The little finger on his left hand would always be 48. Fascinating!

Dr. Pittman says it was probably this counting procedure which led to the widespread current division of circles into 360 degrees, hours into 60 minutes, minutes into 60 seconds, feet into 12 inches, and in earlier times, years into 360 days.

Knowing this helps us understand what God meant when he told Jonah that he pities the city of Nineveh "in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left" (Jonah 4:11). By that we conclude they were illiterate and/or unskilled in arithmetic because they didn't know how to count.

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IMMORTALITY

1290 -- FRANKLIN'S EPITAPH

In the old cemetery of Christ Church at Fifth and Arch streets, Philadelphia, the passerby can see through the iron railing the grave of one of America's greatest men and one of the world's most versatile geniuses. If you have made a pilgrimage to that quiet acre of the dead, walled off from the city's roar and traffic as if to comment upon the vanity of it all, you will have observed that the flat stone over Franklin's grave bears no trace of the epitaph which he composed. It was as follows:

Like the cover of an old book,
Its content torn out,
And stripped of its lettering and gilding,
Lies here food for worm;
But the work shall not be lost,
For it will (as he believes) appear once more
In a new and more elegant edition,
Revised and edited by the Author.

-- McCartney

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IMMORTALITY

1291 -- MAN'S INSTINCT FOR IMMORTALITY

Danton, a leader of the French Revolution, on his way to the guillotine said to his companions on the scaffold: "Our heads will meet in yonder sack. That is the outlook on life if there is no resurrection of the dead. But because Christ is risen, and because the dead rise, the Christian believer, as he lays the body of his beloved in the grave, can say: "Our souls will meet in yonder heaven."

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IMMORTALITY

1292 -- MOODY IS NOT DEAD

One day, realizing that he was not long for this world, Moody said to a friend: "Someday you will read in the papers that D. L. Moody, of 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 sin cannot touch, that sin cannot taint, a body fashioned like unto His glorious body. I was born of the flesh in 1837; I was born of the Spirit in 1856. That which is born of the flesh may die; that which is born of the Spirit will live forever."

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IMPERFECTION -- HUMAN

1293 -- COPYING IMPERFECTIONS

A gentleman had a lovely Chinese plaque with curious raised figures upon it. One day it fell from the wall on which it was hung, and was cracked right across the middle. Soon after, the gentleman sent to China for six more of these valuable plates, and to ensure an exact match, sent his broken plate as a copy. To his intense astonishment, when six months later he received the six plates and his injured one, he found the Chinese had so faithfully followed his copy that each new one had a crack right across it.

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IMPERFECTION -- HUMAN

1294 -- FRANKLIN'S STORY OF THE SPECKLED AX

Sometimes it is best to make allowance for imperfection. Insistence upon absolute perfection from others is not a true, Christian characteristic. The following story illustrates why one man who was demanding perfection from another finally decided that it was best to accept imperfection:

Benjamin Franklin, in his autobiography, tells of the man who bought an ax from the local blacksmith. The purchaser wanted the whole of its surface as bright as its edge, and this the smith consented to do, provided the man would turn the wheel while he ground it. It was a hard, wearisome job, and often the man stopped to see how the ax was getting on. "Turn on, turn on," said the smith; "we shall have it bright by and by; as yet it is only speckled." "Yes," said the man, "but I think I like a speckled ax best."

When grinding out the imperfections will destroy an imperfect, but useful instrument, then it is time to stop grinding. -- Duane V. Maxey

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INCONSISTENCY

1295 -- DO YOU WALK THE TALK?

A missionary in India was once teaching the Bible to a group of Hindu ladies. Halfway through the lesson, one of the women got up and walked out. A short time later, she came back and listened more intently than ever. At the close of the hour the leader inquired, "Why did you leave the meeting? Weren't you interested?" "O yes," the Hindu lady replied. "I was so impressed with what you had to say about Christ that I went out to ask your driver whether you really lived the way you talked. When he said you did, I hurried back so I wouldn't miss out on anything."

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INDECISION

1296 -- RONALD REAGAN'S MISMATCHED SHOES

President Ronald Reagan learned the need for decision making early in his life. A kindly aunt had taken him to a cobbler to have a pair of shoes custom-made for him. The shoemaker asked, "Do you want a round toe or a square toe?" Young Ronald hemmed and hawed, so the cobbler said, "Come back in a day or two and tell me what you want." A few days later the cobbler saw young Reagan on the street and asked what he had decided about the shoes. "I haven't made up my mind," Reagan answered. "Very well," said the cobbler. "Your shoes will be ready tomorrow." When Reagan got the shoes, one had a round toe and the other a square toe. Says Reagan, "Looking at those shoes every day taught me a lesson. If you don't make your own decisions, somebody else makes them for you." -- A. P. Standerman

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INDECISION

1297 -- THE KEY DESCRIPTIVE WORD FOR PILATE

When it comes to names which live in infamy, that of Pontius Pilate is certainly near the top of the list. The weak will of the Roman governor of Judea is recounted wherever the gospel is preached. But what happened to the man who gave Jesus up to His accusers? Pilate ruled until A. D. 36, when he was removed for his role in a massacre of Samaritans. Some nonbiblical writings say Pilate committed suicide in Rome that year -- but another work called the Acts of Pilate exonerates Pilate and portrays him and his wife as Christians. Amazingly, Pilate is even revered as a saint in the Coptic Church!

The key descriptive word for him seems to be: indecisive. The challenge for each of us is: where do we need to make an important decision?

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INDIFFERENCE

1298 -- PRAYER OF A HALF-HEARTED CHRISTIAN

I love thy church, O God;
Her walls before me stand;
But please excuse my absence, Lord;
This bed is simply grand!

A charge to keep I have;
A God to glorify;
But Lord, don't ask for cash from me;
The glory comes to high.

Am I a soldier of the cross,
A follower of the Lamb?
Yes! Though I seldom pray or pay,
I still insist I am.

Must Jesus bear the cross alone,
And all the world go free?
No! Others, Lord, should do their part,
But please don't count on me.

Praise God from who all blessings flow;
Praise him, all creatures here below!
Oh, loud my hymns of praise I bring,
Because It doesn't cost to sing!

* * *

INDIFFERENCE

1299 -- WHY THE CUSTOMERS QUIT

A few years ago I was traveling and stopped at a service station for some fuel. It was a rainy day, yet the station workers were diligently trying to take care of the customers. I was impressed by the first-class treatment and fully understood the reason when I read this sign on the front door of the station:

Why Customers Quit

1% die

3% move away

5% other friendships

9% competitive reasons (price)

14% product dissatisfaction

But...

68% quit because of an attitude of indifference toward

them by some employee!

Let's take just a moment to evaluate our church and the way we respond to the people God sends through our doors.

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INDIFFERENCE -- IN SERVICE

1300 -- YOU'LL GET USED TO IT

Finding his newly-appointed pastor standing at his study window in the church weeping as he looked over the inner city's tragic conditions, a layman sought to console him: "Don't worry. After you've been here a while, you'll get used to it." Responded the minister, "Yes, I know. That's why I am crying."

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INFLUENCE -- EVIL

1301 -- A GREATER INFLUENCE THAN IMAGINED

A little clock, in a jeweler's window in a certain western town, stopped one day for half an hour -- at fifteen minutes of nine. School children, noticing the time stopped to play; people hurrying to the train, looking at the clock began to walk leisurely; professional men, after a look at the clock, stopped to chat a minute with one another; working men and women, noted the time and lingered a little longer in the sunshine, and all were half an hour late because one small clock stopped. Never had these people known how much they had depended upon that clock till it had led them astray.

Many are thus unconsciously depending upon the influence of Christians. You may think you have no influence, but you cannot go wrong in one little act without leading others astray. --
The Seattle Churchman

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INFLUENCE -- EVIL

1302 -- A SHOCK AFTER WICKED BEHAVIOR

In the seminary, there was a man in the class above me who was converted and brought into the ministry by an unusual experience. After leaving college he became the secretary to a United States senator from a nearby state. A party had gone with this senator on a campaign through his state. There was plenty of whiskey and champagne and all that goes with it. In all this the young secretary was a willing participant. One night they were in their room in the hotel, and their life that evening had been in keeping with what had been going on before.

Preparing for bed, this young man was surprised to see one of his fellow secretaries kneeling in the attitude of prayer at the side of the bed. The group had heard him mock and had seen him drunk, but never before had they seen him pray. They thought he was just mocking, putting up a joke on them. One of them gave the kneeling man a push with his foot, whereupon the unresisting body fell limply to the floor, with wide open eyes staring up at the ceiling. The man was dead.

The incident shocked this other young man into sobriety, and turned his steps toward the Church. If you got down to pray, are there those who would conclude at first that you were mocking?

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INFLUENCE -- EVIL

1303 -- HELL'S SOREST PAIN

A man once dreamed that he was in hell. When asked to give an account of what he had seen, if there were flames there and suffering there and wrecked and malign creatures with whom he had to associate, and if the place resounded with oaths of blasphemy, he said, "Yes, but there was something far worse than that: I was compelled to face my influence. I knew that I deserved

punishment, for I had scorned and rejected Jesus Christ; but my sorest pain was to see what the effect of my life had been upon others." -- McCartney

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INFLUENCE -- EVIL

1304 -- INFLUENCE CAN'T BE BURIED

He was a young man who undoubtedly belonged to Christ. But only in the last part of his life had he given himself to Christ. When he came to die, he was filled with regret that he had done so little for Christ, and with remorse that he had done so much against him. His dying request was this: "Bury my influence with me." -- McCartney

No matter how noble the reason for such an request, one's influence, good or bad, lives after he has passed on. -- D. V. M.

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INFLUENCE -- EVIL

1305 -- RESISTING EVIL INFLUENCE

One of the most successful preachers of Scotland, Ambrose Shepherd, writes thus of his youth:

"I have already alluded to my experience in a hard school. Indulge me if I return to it for a moment. My earlier years were spent in a Lancashire cloth mill. In it I wrought from morning to night side by side with youths of my own age and men who were older. For the most part, young and old, they were practiced in almost every conceivable coarse and brutal way of casting their existence as rubbish to the void. But I think I can truthfully say that, while I tried to be loyal to the conditions of contract, and as a comrade in the ranks was not unpopular, yet they knew that neither within those grim walls nor without them was I of their world."

Have your own world! Have the courage to stay in that world and breathe its pure air.

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INFLUENCE -- EVIL

1306 -- SATAN'S OFFSPRING

In 1740, according to records, a woman was born name Ada Take. True to her name, she took everything there was to be had in the way of liberties and licenses. She died a confirmed drunkard, and altogether she had 700 descendants. Among them, were 100 children born out of

wedlock, 181 prostitutes, 142 beggars, 46 jailed inmates, and 76 other criminals. It has been estimated that this woman cost the country. \$1,200,000. -- Presbyterian Record

Add that up according to the comparable figures of 1993, and I would imagine that she and her offspring would cost the taxpayers more like \$120,000,000. Furthermore, there are today probably countless more in this country just like Ada Take. -- Duane V. Maxey

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INFLUENCE -- GOOD

1307 -- ALTERED BY WHAT WE DO

When a man has mastered his profession, it has altered him and left its indelible marks upon him. We read that Eleazar "arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword..." 2 Sam. 23:10 -- Topical Illustrations

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INFLUENCE -- GOOD

1308 -- INFLUENCE APPEARS ONCE IN THE BIBLE

The word "influence" occurs only once in the whole Bible, and that is in a sublime passage from the book of Job in which the Almighty asks Job unanswerable questions. Among the questions is this one (Job 38:31): "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?" The Pleiades are a cluster of stars in taurus, one of the constellations of the heavens.

Today, we know a good deal about refrigerators, and radios, and automobiles, but the ancients knew more about the stars; and I am not sure that their knowledge is not to be preferred. Little is known about the Pleiades; but the intimation here is that they exert an influence, perhaps on other celestial bodies, perhaps upon our world, its life, and its climate. Whatever that influence is, it was thought of by this inspired author as benign, powerful, silent, irresistible: "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?"

A beautiful idea that for the influence, not only of the heavenly bodies, but of the lives of men one upon another. There is an influence and a power which goes forth from one life to another. -- McCartney

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INFLUENCE -- GOOD

1309 -- LIVINGSTONE'S INFLUENCE UPON STANLEY

The world knows how British journalist Henry Stanley went to Africa to find the famed missionary, Dr. David Livingstone. Stanley's greeting, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" is world famous, but few know the rest of the story. After the two had been together for some time, Stanley saw what Livingstone endured and wrote, "I went to Africa as prejudiced as the biggest atheist in London. But there came for me a long time for reflection. I saw this solitary old man there and asked myself, 'How on earth does he stop here -- is he cracked, or what? What is it that inspires him so?' For months after we met I found myself wondering at the old man carrying out all that was said in the Bible -- 'Leave all things and follow Me.' But little by little his sympathy for others became contagious; my sympathy was aroused; seeing his piety, his gentleness, his zeal, his earnestness, and how he went about his business, I was converted by him."

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INFLUENCE -- GOOD

1310 -- MISTER, ARE YOU THERE?

A New York Sunday School superintendent urged his teachers to bring new scholars with them the next Sunday, and as he walked down Sixth Avenue attempted himself to win a street boy. "Will you go to Sunday School?" he said, and in the vernacular of the street, the boy said, "Nope." The superintendent said: "We have picture papers for every boy," and he would not come? "We have music; we have everything to make you have a good time." The boy steadily refused.

Disappointed, the superintendent turned away and, when he had gone a short distance, he heard the patter of little feet behind him and, turning back, he saw the boy. He said with an earnest, eager look: "Mister, are you there?" The superintendent said, "Yes, I am there." "Well," he said, "next Sunday I'll be there." And, he was. Sunday School papers, music, and other attractions of Sunday School were simply the first mile. The spirit of the superintendent was the second mile, and was an influence the boy could not shake off. -- J. Wilbur Chapman

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INFLUENCE -- GOOD

1311 -- MOODY'S INFLUENCE FELT

President Woodrow Wilson told this story. He said: "I was in a very common place, I was sitting in a barber chair, when I became aware that a personality had entered the room. A man had come quietly in upon the same errand as myself -- to have his hair cut and sat in the chair next to me. Every word the man uttered showed a personal interest in the man who was serving him. And before I got through with what was being done for me, I was aware that I had attended an evangelistic service. Because Mr. D. L. Moody was in that chair. I purposely lingered in the room after he had left and noted the singular effect that his visit had brought upon the barbershop. They didn't know his name but they knew that something had elevated their thoughts and I felt that I left that place as I should have left the place of worship. My admiration and esteem for Mr. Moody became very deep indeed."

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INFLUENCE -- GOOD

1312 -- OUR BROTHER'S KEEPER

When travelers climb dangerous precipices in Switzerland, they frequently go tied together and all fastened to the guide, who steps carefully and climbs most cautiously up and down the dangerous part of the mountain. A company of tourists climbing one day made rapid progress until suddenly one of them slipped. He pulled down the second and the third and so on, until it seemed as if all would be dashed to death over the precipice. But the guide knew exactly what to do. With gigantic strength, he wielded the peculiar ice pick that he carried and struck it deep into the ice; and when the strain came upon him the rope tightened and all were saved.

We are thus bound together by the cord of influence. One slipping is likely to pull down another, but it is a possible thing for the awful power of the downward tendency to be averted if just one man in a company or one member in a household is planted firmly on the Rock of Ages. Whether we choose to be, or not, we are our brother's keepers. -- J Wilbur Chapman

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INFLUENCE -- GOOD

1313 -- PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENT

Major General O. O. Howard was once stationed on the Pacific Coast, and some friends of his wanted to honor him by having a reception. They decided to have it on Wednesday night. It was to be a great affair and the President had given it his sanction. Then some one said "We had better let him know so that he will be ready on Wednesday evening," and so they went and told him: "General, Wednesday night we want to see you on a matter of business." "Well, gentlemen you cannot see me on that night; I have a previous engagement." Finally they said "It is a reception, and the president of the United States has given it his sanction."

Then, the old veteran, his eyes flashing, stood up and said: "You know I am a church member and I promised the Lord when I united with His church that every Wednesday night I would meet Him in the prayer meeting, and there is nothing in the world that could make me break my engagement." They had the reception, but they had it on a Thursday evening. When I was out there, I asked, "Where is the man who has the greatest influence?" and they said: "It is not a minister of the gospel; it is Major General Howard." -- J. Wilbur Chapman

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INFLUENCE -- GOOD

1314 -- PROOF OF PUDDING

Gustav Dore, the famous artist, lost his passport while traveling in Europe. He was at a certain boundary post between two countries and the officer in charge asked him for his passport. Dore fumbled about and finally announced, "I have lost my passport, but it is all right. I'm Dore, the artist. Please let me go in." The officer replied, "Oh, no. We have plenty of people representing themselves as this or that great person! Here is a pencil and paper. Now, if you are Dore, the artist, prove it by drawing me a picture! " Dore took the pencil and drew some pictures of scenes in the immediate area.

"Now, I am perfectly sure that you are Dore. No one else could draw like that! " said the officer as he allowed the great artist to enter the country. So it is with professing followers of Christ. You say you are a Christian. But can you really produce evidence? -- Power

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INFLUENCE -- GOOD

1315 -- SAMUEL MORRIS

Speaking once at the commencement ceremonies of an Indiana university, I heard frequent reference to a man spoken of as Samuel Morris, "the angel in ebony." I asked the students to tell me who this Samuel Morris was. This was his story:

Samuel Morris was a black boy, son of an African king. He escaped from the neighboring tribe which had captured him, and making his way to the coast, came to a Christian mission where he heard the gospel and gave his heart to Christ. He stowed away on a sailing vessel bound for America, and after great hardships and cruelties reached New York. There, a man, whose name had been given him, sent him across the country to this Indiana college.

Soon after he arrived, and under his influence, the college was swept by a revival. The boy planned to go back to his African country and tell his people the story of the gospel. He would describe to his fellow students how he planned to gather his people about him on the sand and tell them of the way of salvation. But God had another plan for him. The severe American winter was too much for this black boy, and he was stricken with consumption. After a brief illness, Samuel Morris died.

It was a strange providence to those who had followed his marvelous career, but a providence which was soon vindicated. Three young men who stood at his grave gave themselves, then and there, to the work of Christ in foreign lands to do what this boy had planned to do. Thus, the power of his spirit-filled life was carried in every direction. His influence, and his death, became the chief endowment of that university. Students came from all parts of the world, drawn by his story; and out of the large class which I addressed on that commencement day, three-fourths of them were going into the service of Christ in foreign lands.

The grave of that black boy, in the cemetery at Fort Wayne, Indiana, is the most visited grave in all that city. When a monument was recently erected there, almost forty years after the

boy's death, hundreds of citizens came from far and near to wonder at his grave, and to give thanks to God. -- McCartney

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INFLUENCE -- GOOD

1316 -- SILENT, BUT POWERFUL INFLUENCE!

Perhaps some of you may have heard of that old man, who was a deacon of the church. It is said an infidel miller came to tell his experience to the church, and some one said to him, "How can this be?" He was a man who had denied his God' denied the Gospel, and denied every thing that was good. But said he; "When I used to run my mill on Sunday, the deacon used to go down regularly to church every Sunday, passing by at a certain hour, and I saw him go. He never said a word to me, but some how his influence seemed to take hold of me, so that I said, ' I am not going to trample on that man's good sense and Christianity any more by running this mill when he goes by; and so, when I thought it was about time for the deacon to go by, I would shut the mill down, and wait till he got past, half an hour or so, and then start it up again. By and by that process of action let me to think there was something in religion, some power in it, and I gave myself up to Christ, just under that influence; and here I am today with my heart right before God." -- Albert P. Graves

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INFLUENCE -- GOOD

1317 -- SILVER DOLLAR INFLUENCE

An industrial concern in a small city desired certain concessions in order to put into effect a program and expansion. There was the customary element of opposition, which advanced the theory that the company was of no special importance, and the city would fare as well without its presence. Thereupon the company commenced to make payment to its employees in silver dollars instead of the usual paper currency. Silver dollars began to flow over the counters in stores, into filling stations and theaters and refreshment stands. Where silver dollars had been all but forgotten legal tender, they flowed in every kind of transaction. The influence of the company was better understood, and the opposition to the expansion was withdrawn. In a day in which the church is classified as irrelevant, let us be diligent to use our influence, our "salt" and "light", to make a difference in our world.

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INFLUENCE -- GOOD

1318 -- SOMEONE ELSE IS WATCHING

A friend of mine, who had been a holdup man and a kidnaper for twelve years, met Jesus Christ in prison. Christ said, "I will come and live in you and we will serve this sentence together," and they did. Several years later he was discharged, and just before he went out he was handed a two-page letter written by another prisoner. After the salutation, it said in effect, "You know perfectly well that when I came into this jail I despised preachers, the Bible, and everything. I went to the Bible class and the preaching service because there wasn't anything else interesting to do. Then they told me you were saved, and I said, 'There's another fellow taking the Gospel road to get a parole'; but, Roy, I've been watching you for two and a half years. You did not know it, but I watched you when you were in the yard exercising, when you were working in the shop, when you played, while we were all together at meals, on the way to our cells, and all over, and now I'm a Christian, too, because I watched you. The Saviour who saved you has saved me. You never made a slip." Roy said to me, "When I got that letter and read it through I came out in a cold sweat. Think of what it would have meant if I had slipped, even once." -- Sunday School Times

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INFLUENCE -- GOOD

1319 -- TELL ALBERT TO MEET ME IN HEAVEN

Happy a man as can probably be in this place; and one great source of my happiness is, the remembrance that God gave me a praying father. When I was young, he passed away to the better land, and left upon my memory impressions that were hallowed by prayer and hope. And this very night it seems as if I can lean upon a father's prayers. But those influences have no such power over me now as they had when I was a young man. I was six miles away from home when my father died. I stepped into the house about sundown, and the lady of the house said, "Albert, I have some sad news for thee." "What is it?" "The messenger has just been here -- thy dear father is dead; he died very suddenly."

Oh, how I felt it! I dropped my head quickly, turned around, went through a little hall into the adjoining room, sat down, and put my elbows on my knees, folded my face in my hands, and wept as only a fatherless boy of nine years can weep. By and by I went up to my bed, and wept myself to sleep. In the morning I prepared myself, and went home. Little did I dream of the rich legacy that my father had left me. Would that I had never abused it! I entered the house. My dear mother sat on the opposite side of the room with her children and a few friends around her. She arose and came to me, put her arms around my neck, and kissed me as only a loving mother can kiss an orphan boy. The first words she breathed into my ears were these, "Your dear father's last words were, 'Tell Albert to prepare to meet me in Heaven.'"

I wish that I had never abused those golden words, or trampled upon the love of that dear mother! She lived to be nearly eighty. Two years ago, when I was away down in New Orleans, just going into the pulpit one night, a message was put into my hands -- "Mother died last night at eleven o'clock." I sent back word as soon as I could: "Put my dear mother in the vault until I can come and see her face once more." I laid her in the grave; but positively, young man, the saddest impression of my heart with my dear father and mother's memory is that I abused their love. -- Albert P. Graves

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INFLUENCE -- GOOD

1320 -- THE BOY WHO HELD THE LANTERN

On one occasion when Whitefield, the great preacher, went to America he stood on the steps of the courthouse in Philadelphia, and preached to the people. There was, amongst the crowd, a little boy. The little boy saw that Mr. George Whitefield could not see to read his Bible very well, so he got his lantern, and lit it, and held the lantern for Mr. Whitefield to see to read by. Mr. Whitefield was very much obliged to him. The little boy listened with all his might and main to Mr. Whitefield's preaching. He listened so much that he let the lantern tumble down, and it was broken all to pieces.

Many years afterwards, Mr. Whitefield came back to America, on his fifth journey, he stopped at the house of a minister, who said: to him one day: "Do you remember, sir, preaching once in Philadelphia, and a little boy, who was holding the lantern, dropped it and broke it?" "That I do," said Mr. Whitefield, "and I would give anything in the world to know what has become of that little boy." The minister said, "I was the little boy, sir. I held the lantern. I listened to you. I let it drop. Your preaching made me what I am, a Christian minister." -- J. Vaughan

He had better said: "Christ, by the influence of His Spirit through your preaching made me what I am today, both a Christian and a minister." The statement as it is, I fear, leans too much toward the adoration of Christ's minister instead of toward the adoration Christ, Who alone, as our God and Savior, is worthy to be the object of our worship. -- Duane V. Maxey

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INFLUENCE -- GOOD

1321 -- THE GODLY INFLUENCE OF A CHILD

A number of years ago a young man was coming from California to visit the East. In the Pullman car with him were three or four racetrack gamblers. They were rough, hardened, godless, but somewhat interesting men, and this young man, who himself had been wandering from the training of his youth, became familiar with them. At a town on the way east a little boy was put on the car and given into the custody of the Pullman conductor. When night came the porter made up the berth for the boy. The gamblers and the young man were sitting across the aisle from the boy's berth. Presently the boy came out in his nightdress and, first looking timidly up and down the aisle, knelt to say his prayers. At once the gamblers ceased from their loud conversation and removed their hats in reverential pose. The young man felt a lump in his throat as he looked at the praying child. What had happened? The prayer of a child had carried them all back to their Bethel. The young man afterward entered the ministry and became a well-known preacher of the gospel. Thus was fulfilled the saying of the Bible, "And a little child shall lead them." Isa. 11:6

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INFLUENCE -- GOOD

1322 -- THE INFLUENCE OF A CHRISTIAN TEACHER

In 1930 in South Dakota a Christian school teacher went into a small town to teach in a consolidated school. There was a church in the village, but they were struggling for an existence. They had no pastor. She felt led to throw her influence into the work of helping the church and Sunday School to reach the boys and girls and parents of the community. Soon the burden for the souls of these people began to weigh heavily upon her. God seemed to be calling her to conduct church services and to tell them the Gospel story. She yielded to His will and began announcing the preaching services.

A small group greeted her each Sunday, but not enough to suit her. This was the only church for many miles and she knew that these people were getting very little, if any, spiritual food. In her sleep she could see these precious boys and girls, fathers and mothers tramping steadily on to the Judgment. And how they stood in the eyes of God, she could not be sure. Yet she could see their lives were not measuring up to the standards of the Bible. She said, "I will not be here long. My stay in this community may be short. I am going to meet everyone of these souls at the Judgment. What I do for them I must do quickly...I will cast an uplifting influence over them. Maybe I can rescue some of them from the clutches of sin and Satan."

She went to work. She began to spend her school days with reading of a portion of God's Word. She went about on Saturdays, and during the evenings inviting the people out to church. She sent invitations home with the children to the parents. She prayed, cried and held on to God in prayer. Her travail of soul for the lost could be heard in the night hours. She took walks up the road and over the hills that she might be alone. In the main the people remained unconcerned, indifferent and distant. She could have grown discouraged and given up or could have said, "After all they have hired me to teach arithmetic, reading spelling, writing and geography. Here I am a self-appointed spiritual worker. Why spend my leisure hours in the evenings and on Saturdays praying and inviting the folks and preparing talks for the children? I may as well take life a bit easier."

But no, she reasoned again, "I am a steward of my life and my influence. I cannot face these boys and girls and parents at the Judgment unless I have done my best for their spiritual welfare. I will continue on, trusting the God who called me to bring the harvest and the increase." She worked on, writing cards, smiling, praying, preaching, persuading and entreating men to seek the Lord.

She grew especially concerned for a family who lived nine miles in the country: a father, mother, three boys and two girls. The depression was on making money scarce and hard to get. She wanted to see them in the services so that she might win them to God. That was her sole purpose. But nine miles seemed a long way over a country dirt road for an unsaved man to bring his family to church. She said to herself, "I will try. I will do my best for them. Maybe by working together

with God, I can influence them to come. I will do my little part, backed up by prayer, and leave the results with God."

Every Monday morning she wrote that family a card, just a one cent government card, telling them that she had not seen them at church the day before. Then she would urge them to come the next Sunday. She kept that up for months, but the result was the same. They were absent. She knew God was working because He continued to burden her heart for them. Finally, one day as the father read one of those cards, he said, "It looks like we'll have to go to church or that school teacher will spend all of her money and time sending us cards."

The next Sunday morning found them in Sunday School. They stayed for church. The sermon impressed them. At the close of the service the father walked to the front and said to this teacher, "Thank you for being so persistent in sending those cards. We will come again." From every angle those cards were a gilt-edged investment for that school teacher. They cost her a very few cents and a little time during the year, but oh, the eternal results! But the account could not stop there. They continued to come. One by one the family wended his way to that altar of prayer and was gloriously saved. About this time another baby girl came to bless the family circle, who at this writing is in the grades and serving the Lord. In the course of time they joined the church. God called the eldest son into his ministry.

One night about midnight amidst tears and prayers I bade him good-bye. He was on his way to Northwest Nazarene College to study and prepare for his life's work. During his years at college a brown-eyed, brunette girl, a fine Christian, entered his life in a special way. They were drawn to each other. After graduation they were married and took a church on the west coast. But that is only the beginning. God laid His hands upon them for the Mission field. At this writing have learned the language and been on the field (the Cape Verde Islands) several months. You be the judge. Did it pay for that school teacher to send Earl Mosteller Jr.'s father those post cards inviting him to church? Yes, a hundred fold in this life and far more in the life to come.

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INFLUENCE -- GOOD

1323 -- THE INFLUENCE OF ONE FAMILY

This illustration is taken from "That Endless Influence," by Rev. Harry F. Taplin:

One man has said that our influence is one of those things that never dies. Long after we have been carried to the silent city of the dead our influence will be living. And the serious thing about our influence is that whether good or bad it lives on. If it has been corrupt it goes on and on widening and deepening until the end of time. If it has been good it will continue to bless the world as long as time shall last. It works many times in silence, but for good or evil it works. Influence is somewhat like our shadow. It is with us all the time. We cannot get away from it.

I was pastoring a church in the Middle West country. One morning as I came to the church for the morning service I noticed a different car from our own group parked by the church. I

approached the car and introduced myself as the pastor, inviting them to come in. There was the father and mother and four small children. At the close of the service I invited them to come back. That night the father and mother returned, leaving the four small children home, but bringing four older young people. I again invited them back. The next Sunday the entire family came to Sunday School -- mother, father and ten children. I found that they lived ten miles in the country. They became steady attendants at our services, both morning and evening. In a few weeks the children began coming to the altar.

A few months later I took the father, and mother and five of the children into the church. Today finds one of these young men a graduate of Northwest Nazarene College and a pastor in one of our churches. Here is the part that influence played in this account.

While driving ten miles in to Sunday School every Sunday morning and ten miles home, ten miles in to Young People's Meeting every Sunday night and ten miles home they naturally had to drive past other farm homes. Their influence was silently working. True they did not realize to what extent. As a father he was only doing what he felt to be the right and Christian thing to do -- taking his family to Sunday School and Church and again to the evening services.

But his neighbors were watching him. One day one of his neighbors asked him how he could afford to drive forty miles every Sunday just to go to church. I have never forgotten the answer this Christian father gave to his unsaved neighbor. Here it is, "I am not sure that I can afford to go, but with ten children growing up, I know that I cannot afford to stay home. These boys and girls as well as my wife and I need the influence of the church services."

This answer must have struck deep into this unsaved father's heart as he had three boys and two girls of his own. Soon they separated, each going to his work. But Sunday after Sunday this unsaved man watched the Christian man with his family drive by, going to church. (See part two for the conclusion)

One Sunday, as he watched them go by, he said to his wife, "There must be something interesting about that Nazarene Church to pull that family in twice every Sunday. We ought to drive in some Sunday and see what they do. Of course we won't go steady, but now and then will not do us any harm." About that time the church of which I speak conducted a Sunday School contest. One of the members invited the unsaved man and his family to come and help their side to win. They came, were favorably impressed, and were there again the following Sunday. At this writing seven years have passed. Though they had to drive seven miles each way as a family they have not missed more than a dozen times.

Soon they began to attend at night, giving God a better chance to deal with them. It was not long before their hands were raised for prayer. In a few weeks they made their way to the altar. I had the privilege of taking them into the church and today they are filling places of responsibility in that church. Did it pay for this Christian man to cast a church-going influence upon his neighbor? Eternity alone will reveal the result of this one incident.

But the account does not end here. Across the weeks as these two faithful families drove to church twice each Sunday other neighbors took notice. One Sunday another neighbor brought his

family in to see what the attraction was. In a few weeks his entire family was at the altar. They were converted to Jesus Christ and soon joined the church.

As these three faithful families drove to church twice each Sunday other neighbors became interested and started coming. At this writing three more families in this community have started attending church and everyone of them has found his way down to the altar and been saved by the blood of Jesus and gloriously sanctified by His Spirit. One by one these families joined the church and are filling positions as stewards, trustees, ushers, Sunday School teachers and Young People's leaders.

It all started because one father felt his need of the influence of the church. Sunday after Sunday he was a faithful steward of his churchgoing influence. He began a train for good that will sweep on and on, generation after generation until time shall be no more. The Judgment Day alone will determine the amount of eternal good done because of one man's good influence. One young man in the ministry in the Church of the Nazarene, six families reached for the church is only the beginning of good things that will come from one man being a faithful steward of his influence.

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INFLUENCE -- GOOD

1324 -- THE RIGHT WAY

More than a century and a half ago, the Highland Brigade of the British Army was obliged to march across the Egyptian desert by night to Tel-el-Kebir. It would have been quite easy to lose the route, but a young naval officer volunteered to lead by stellar observation. So the soldiers looked to the sailor, and the sailor looked to the stars. The journey was completed by dawn and the Brigade charged the enemy's trenches and took them. The naval officer fell in the battle, however. As he lay dying, he turned his face to the general, who was visiting the wounded, and asked: "Sir, I led them straight, didn't I?" Are we as Christians, leading men and women straight? -- The Pilgrim

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INFLUENCE -- GOOD

1325 -- THIS WAY PA!

I don't know but there may be a father here to whom God is speaking tonight, by His Holy Spirit, possibly like a father who took his little daughter in a boat and rowed out on the lake, set her down on an island and said, "Now, my child, you can run about, pick up the agates, and pluck the flowers, and I will go up the lake, and be back by and by." so the little girl amused herself a while, but by and by she looked up and saw that the thick fog was settling down upon the lake. She says, "Papa can't find me now." So she sought her way around to the place where she stepped off the boat, and there she waited and watched, and by and by she heard the dip of the oars, and presently, through the thick fog, she saw the end of the boat, and she leaned forward as for as she

could and cried, "This way, pa! This way, pa!" In that way he found her, and took her into the boat, and managed to get her home.

Not long after that, God called that darling one to go up and sing with the angels. Some time after her death the father had dream, and he saw in that dream many scenes for his dear child, and among other, that little scene at the boat; and before he awoke he seemed to hear the voice, "This way, pa!" and as he awoke amid that scene, it seemed as if God was speaking through the voice of that little child: "This way, pa! this way pa!" It was the means of leading him to the Lamb of God. Who can tell? Perhaps I am talking to some father or mother here tonight, some sister or some brother, whose darling one has gone, and the voice comes down by the Holy Ghost, "This way, ma!" "This way, pa!" "This way, sister!" "This way, brother!" Oh will you heed the call? May Christ help you, and will you help yourself, that it may be well with you? Give you heart to the Lord that he may take your sins away and save you. -- Albert P. Graves

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INFLUENCE -- GOOD

1326 -- TOGETHER THEY SOUGHT SALVATION

After Bishop Simpson, the great Methodist preacher, returned from college, he attended a camp meeting in Cadiz, Ohio. There he took an interest in a group of young men, and was anxious that they should be preserved from the temptations to which they were exposed. At the evening meeting, he observed some of these young men go forward to the altar. Deeply moved, he was regretting that he, whose life had been so guarded by Christian influences, should not experience the same emotions that they were under going. He saw, standing near the railing, a young man who was not a professed Christian. The thought occurred to Simpson that, while he himself was not being benefited, this young man might be. He laid his hand on his shoulder and asked him if he would like to go forward for prayer. The young man said he would go, if Simpson would go with him, and together they went to the altar and knelt down. It was after this, that Simpson became a member of the Church and dedicated himself to Christ. -- McCartney

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INGRATITUDE

1327 -- I DON'T HAVE TO GIVE THANKS

In his book Folk Psalms of Faith, Ray Stedman tells of an experience H. A. Ironside had in a crowded restaurant. Just as Ironside was about to begin his meal, a man approached and asked if he could join him. Ironside invited him to have a seat. Then, as was his custom, Ironside bowed his head in prayer.

When he opened his eyes, the other man asked, "Do you have a headache?" Ironside replied, "No, I don't." The other man asked, "Well, is there something wrong with your food?" Ironside responded, "No, why?" "Well," the man said, "I saw you sitting there with your head

down and I thought you must be sick, or that there was something wrong with your food." Ironside replied, "No, I was simply thanking God as I always do before I eat." The man said, "Oh, you're one of those, are you? Well, I want you to know I never give thanks. I earn my money by the sweat of my brow and I don't have to give thanks to anybody when I eat. I just start right in!" Ironside said, "Yes, you're just like my dog. That's what he does too!"

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INHERITANCE -- SPIRITUAL

1328 -- FROM BEGGARS TO WEALTHY SONS

Evangelist J. Wilbur Chapman recounted a testimony given by a man in one of his meetings. The man said: I got off at the train depot one day as a tramp. For a year I had begged on the streets. Badly in need of food, I touched a man on the shoulder and said, "Mister, please give me a dime." As soon as I saw his face, I recognized my aging father. "Don't you know me?" I asked. Throwing his arms around me, he cried, "Oh, my son, I have found you at last! All I have is yours!" Think of it -- I was a tramp who begged for 10 cents from a man I didn't know was my father, when for 18 years he had been looking for me to give me all he possessed!

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INNOCENCE

1329 -- MIRACLES ON THE GALLOWS (FIRST STORY)

The following true story appears to be a remarkable instance in which God miraculously preserved an innocent man. -- D.V.M.:

The miracle occurred at Columbia, Miss., on February 7, 1894, when Will Purvis, a 21-year-old farmer, was hanged. In Marion County in 1893, a secret band was terrorizing planters and Negroes. The men called themselves White Caps and their latest crime was to horsewhip a Negro who had left a widow's farm to work for Jim and Will Buckley for more money than the widow could afford to pay. The Negro recognized some of his torturers, and the Buckleys announced that they would report the names to the grand jury.

The White Caps threatened the Buckleys with death if they did, but Jim and Will were brave and angry men. Unarmed, they went to town and testified before the grand jury. The White Caps ambushed them on the way home. Will Buckley dropped from his horse, shot to death; Jim escaped. He said that two men had hidden behind a clump of bushes, and that the one who fired the fatal shot was Will Purvis.

Will Purvis was from an old family for whom the nearby town of Purvis was named. Three relatives and two neighbors testified that he was at home when the murder was committed. His shotgun hadn't been fired for months. But the jury doubted the testimony of relatives and friends, and the verdict was "Guilty." Purvis was sentenced to be hanged.

On the day of the hanging, 3000 men, women and children thronged the scene at Court House Square. The Sheriff and his deputies, experienced in their duties, had seen to it that the trap door and the rope were carefully tested with sandbags, and the hangman's knot expertly tied. Everything was ready. Will Purvis was led up the steps. Deputy sheriffs tied his hands behind him, tied his ankles together. One held the black hood ready. The Sheriff, who had arrested Will and believed firmly in his guilt, asked grimly, "Would you like to say anything?" In a clear, cool voice, Will declared, "I didn't do it. There are men out there who could save me if they would."

Near the Court House steps was Rev. W. S. Sibley, pastor of the Columbia Methodist Church. He had visited Purvis in jail and converted him; until then, Will had belonged to no church. The minister believed the condemned man was innocent, and so did scores of others. Throughout the months while Will's futile appeals to higher courts were being heard, Rev. Sibley and church members prayed for him every Wednesday night in the little church. At first only a handful came to the meeting, but the attendance grew until the church was crowded. Their one hope was that God would act. The night before the hanging, Rev. Sibley held a prayer meeting by torchlight in the Court House Square where hundreds knelt. After this meeting Rev. Sibley went to pray again with Will. The condemned man, chained to the floor, was completely calm. "I have no worry," he said, "over the destiny of my soul."

The next day, as the black hood was placed over Will Purvis' head, Rev. Sibley and those who doubted Will's guilt again prayed together aloud: "Almighty God, if it be Thy will, stay the hand of the executioner." The black hood was placed over Will Purvis' head. The Sheriff said, "God help you, Will Purvis," and threw the lever. The crowd cried out as the body shot down through the opened trap door and the rope jerked hard.

Then there were screams and shouts as they saw that Purvis lay on the ground under the gallows, the black hood still over his head, his hands and feet still bound. He was very much alive, and the hangman's noose swung high above the open trap door -- empty. What had happened? No one can put a noose tied with a hangman's knot around a man's neck in such a way that the man's head will slip through as his body drops. If the knot slips, the noose becomes tighter. And the Sheriff performed no trickery, for he believed Will Purvis was guilty. Yet Purvis had fallen free of the noose.

Later he declared, "I heard the door creak, my body plunged down and all went black. When I regained consciousness I heard somebody say, 'Well, Bill, we've got to do it all over again.'" And the two deputies dragged him like a sack of potatoes back up the steps to be hanged again. As they reached for the rope, Rev. Sibley leaped to the scaffold and cried to the crowd, "People of Marion County, the hand of Providence has slipped the noose. Heaven has heard our prayers. What do you say, friends? Shall Will Purvis be hanged again?" "No! No!" they shouted. The miracle had changed their minds. They began to sing, to shout, to praise the Lord.

Undoubtedly they would have rescued Will Purvis had the executioners tried to go on with their work. So the bewildered and frightened Sheriff took Will Purvis back to jail. The Governor, no believer in miracles, ordered an inquiry. The investigators exonerated the Sheriff; the preparations for the hanging, they reported, had been thorough. They couldn't explain why it wasn't

successful. But Will Purvis had been sentenced to hang until dead, and the Governor, believing him guilty, refused to commute the sentence.

Will's attorneys pleaded that he had been hanged once and that he could not be hanged again until he was convicted in another trial. However, three appeals were rejected by the State Supreme Court and Will was sentenced to be hanged again on December 12, 1895, nearly two years after his life had been spared. Most men would have lost their minds under month after month of such torture. Will Purvis, praying constantly, was sure that the Lord would save him again.

No new evidence was discovered, but public opinion turned. The God-fearing citizens of the community were convinced that a sign from Heaven had declared Will Purvis' innocence. And now the hand of man took hold. Will was granted an extraordinary favor by officials of Marion County. He was transferred from the strong Columbia jail to the shabby little prison in his home town of Purvis, "so he could be near his friends for the last weeks of his life. " Probably the officials were not surprised when, a few days before Will's sentence was to be carried out, a mob overpowered the guards at midnight and rescued him.

The Governor, furious, offered a reward of \$750 for Will's capture and \$250 for evidence that would convict his rescuers. But the rewards were never claimed, although almost everybody knew who had broken into the jail and almost everybody knew that Will was living with kinfolk in the forests and hills.

Then a new governor was elected. During his campaign he had declared that a miracle had been performed, and he had promised to commute Will's sentence. Will gave himself up, and his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Two years later, in response to a petition signed by thousands of citizens, including the District Attorney who had prosecuted him, Will was pardoned. He was free not because any new evidence had been found but because the majority of the people of Mississippi believed that God had overruled the jury's verdict.

He moved onto a back-country farm, and a few months later married the daughter of a Baptist minister. They became the parents of 11 children. Every Sunday Will and his wife went to church and gave thanks to God for saving his life. And then when Will was 47, the last chapter in this amazing case was written. An old planter named Joe Beard, dying, confessed that he and another member of the White Caps had committed the Buckley murder. The news was a Mississippi sensation and for weeks those who had believed Purvis was innocent went around saying, "I told you so," to those who hadn't. The State Legislature paid Purvis \$5000 to atone for the State's errors.

Will Purvis died two years ago, a respected citizen of his community. Doubt if you will that his life was saved by a miracle. Call it an accident, an accident that might happen once in the history of the world. But Will Purvis has testified, "God heard our prayers. He saved my life because I was an innocent man." Will Purvis believed. And it was his neck. -- "Miracle On The Gallows," Reader's Digest, January, 1945, by Jerome Beatty (Adapted by Beatty from an article by Charles F. Furey in 1934 and from the "True Life Story of Will Purvis" published by Will Purvis in 1935)

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INNOCENCE

1330 -- MIRACLES ON THE GALLOWS (SECOND STORY)

Not long ago, The Reader's Digest published an account of how a man was hanged and didn't die. Incredible as it sounds, a similar miscarriage of a death sentence occurred in England. John Lee, of the village of Babbacombe, in Devon, was accused of the murder of a Mrs. Keyes, who was found hacked to death in her bed. The evidence against Lee was damning, but the prisoner repeatedly said to his guards, "I did not do it. And they can never hang me for it." When the court sentenced him to be strung up, Lee said: "The Lord knows I am innocent. He will never permit me to be executed. He has told me not to be afraid."

On the day of execution, crowds pressed against the fence that enclosed the gallows. A dummy was hanged to test the rope. Judge Marcus Kavanagh of Chicago, who published his investigation of the case in 1932, says witnesses testified to him that the gallows worked perfectly with the dummy. But when guards put the cap on Lee's head and pulled the lever, the trap failed to fall. A warden took the condemned man's place on the trap door. When the lever was pulled, the warden fell through and broke his leg.

Lee was returned to his cell. They tried the dummy again, and it obediently fell through the trap. Then Lee was brought back for a second attempt to hang him. Again the trap door wouldn't work. Now the frightened sheriff telegraphed the Home Secretary for instructions. The reply came: "Proceed with the execution." By this time, the mob outside the jail was indignant. They thought the whole thing should be called off. But the Home Secretary's orders must be obeyed.

Four successful trials were made with the dummy. Then Lee was put on the trap once more, and the sheriff himself pulled the lever. He pulled it again and again. Lee fainted and was carried back to his cell -- still unhangd. On the following day, a telegram came from the Home Secretary: "The death sentence of John Lee is commuted."

And Lee? Later, his life sentence was also commuted. He came out of prison, married, and turned evangelist, preaching faith in God for the rest of his days. -- Anthony Abbott, Reader's Digest, December, 1945

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INNOCENCE

1331 -- MIRACLES ON THE GALLOWS (THIRD STORY)

The Following story, taken from the December, 1945 Reader's Digest also tells of a possible escape from the death by hanging. However, this story better illustrates how, through

clever inventions, the wicked often attempt to share in a deliverance of which only the innocent are worthy. Yet, in the end the wicked will not be delivered with the righteous:

It is doubtful if the whole truth of the following case will ever be known. Back in 1921, a man known in Chicago as Il Diavolo had a band of young thieves for whom he planned holdups. He divided the loot evenly, then gambled with his dupes and got most of the money away from them. Yet they continued to work for him because they feared him. They even killed for him; and that was what got them into trouble. One of them, a youth named Viana, confessed just before he went to his doom on the gallows; and as a result Il Diavolo himself was brought to trial and condemned to death.

In prison, Il Diavolo, whose real name was Cardinella, went on a hunger strike. He lost nearly 50 pounds. No one suspected that this was a trick until, on the night of his execution, there came an anonymous telephone call to police headquarters. A man's voice grated: "Cardinella's friends are going to grab his body right after the hanging and revive him. They know they can do it, because they did it before with Viana."

Quickly guards were posted, especially in the black alley behind the death house. Three minutes before midnight, when Il Diavolo was to swing, the hearse that was to take away the body drove into the alley. With drawn guns, the police seized the driver and opened the hearse. Inside they found a man wearing a doctor's coat and a woman in a nurse's uniform. On a cot was a rubber mattress filled with boiling hot water. There were heating pads attached to a portable electric battery, an oxygen tank, a shelf of hypodermic syringes and a large basket filled with hot-water bottles.

So it was true. Il Diavolo had fasted so that he would not weigh too much when he was hanged, lessening the danger of breaking his neck. Today, Chicago's underworld still declares that Viana was actually resurrected to prove that the trick could be done. Then, because he had been a squealer, they blew out his brains and threw him into the lake. -- Anthony Abbott, Reader's Digest, December, 1945

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INNOCENCE

1332 -- THE VEIL OF INNOCENCE

In an article dealing with the habits of tigers in a country of the Far East, the author tells of a man who, overcome with the heat, left the shelter of his cabin and lay down to sleep in the open with only a small, frail mosquito netting stretched over him. Awakened by a mysterious warning such as men sometimes get, he saw approaching his place of bivouac a tiger, his eyes glaring in the night. Closer and closer the tiger came, and then he was joined by another. Repeatedly they came up to that mosquito netting, until their very breath made it quiver, but each time they drew back, mystified and alarmed, until with a wild roar of fear the man frightened them off.

The veil of innocence which God has wrapped around the soul will save it from destruction -- until a man rends it himself by his own deliberate will and invites the foe to come in.
-- McCartney

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INSTABILITY

1333 -- WHY THE PIGS GOT LEAN

A farmer's herd of swine was often spoken of admiringly by neighboring farmers. They were sleek and roly-poly. In feeding his pigs, the farmer would go to the edge of the pasture, knock sharply with a stick on the trough which was filled with grain. All over the pasture, the pigs, hearing the farmer's knock, would lift their swinish snouts. Then they would run squealingly in the direction of the well-filled trough. All was well with the pigs until some woodpeckers began to make their homes in the dead trees scattered over the pasture. The pigs mistook the pecking on the dead trees for the farmer's knock on the trough. They ran from one dead tree to another. Rapidly, they became poor and scrawny.

How many of God's dear children become spiritually lean running hither, thither and yon, "Carried about with every wind of doctrine," sampling this speaker and that one. Unanchored, and unsettled, they are never able to say, "My heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord!" -- W. B. Knight

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INTEGRITY

1334 -- HOW GOOD IS YOUR WORD?

In January 1987 the U. S. Army disposal unit at Fort Bliss, Tex., sold several crates at an auction to scrap dealer Pedro Salas in Juarez, Mexico. When Mr. Salas got back to his scrap yard, he found a live rocket inside one crate. Checking further, he found another rocket, and another. Finally, he had discovered 23 live, high-explosive missiles designed to be fired from helicopters, capable of spraying thousands of fragments on detonation. How did such potentially dangerous munitions end up being sold inside "empty" crates. An investigation revealed that a young lieutenant had signed a statement that he had inspected the crates and that they were empty. Because of that false statement; the lieutenant's career may be over, the U. S. government was embarrassed, and worst of all, human lives were endangered. -- Dan Ames

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INTEGRITY

1335 -- THE MAN IN THE GLASS

When you get what you want in your struggle for self

And the world makes you king for a day,
Just go to a mirror and look at yourself
And see what that man has to say.

For it isn't your father or mother or wife
Whose judgment upon you must pass,
The fellow whose verdict counts most in your life
Is the one staring back from the glass.

Some people might think you're a straight-shootin' chum
And call you a wonderful guy.
But the man in the glass says you're only a bum
If you can't look him straight in the eye.

He's the fellow to please, never mind all the rest
For he's with you clear to the end
And you've passed your most dangerous test
If the guy in the glass is your friend.

You may fool the whole world down the pathway of years
And get pats on the back as you pass
But your final reward will be heartache and tears
If you've cheated the man in the glass.

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INTENTION

1336 -- NO ACCIDENT!

When a cowpuncher applied for an insurance policy, the agent began quizzing him, "Have you ever had any accidents?" After a moment's reflection, the applicant responded, "Nope, but a bronco did kick in two of my ribs last summer, and a couple of years ago a rattlesnake bit me on the ankle." "Wouldn't you call those accidents?" asked the agent. "Naw," replied the ranch hand, "They did it on purpose!" In a sense the cowboy had a point; it all depends on how you look at it.

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INTERCESSION -- OF CHRIST WITH THE FATHER

1337 -- AN ANCHOR THAT HOLDS

"This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast." Hebrews 6:19 In this world of sin and death, we need a strong anchor to keep us from drifting into an ocean of fear. Knowing that Jesus prays for us is such an anchor to all who trust Him as Savior and Lord. The 16th-century Scottish preacher, John Knox, depended on this truth, especially during his final days

on earth. As Knox lay seriously ill, his wife would read John 17, a chapter of Ephesians, and Isaiah 53 (prophecy of Christ's death). A little before noon on what would be the last day of his life, Knox asked her to read I Corinthians 15, that great keystone chapter on the resurrection. As she finished, he remarked, "Is that not a comforting chapter?" Four hours later, recognizing that his earthly stay was almost over, he said to his wife, "Go, read where I cast my first anchor." Immediately she knew what he wanted. She turned to John 17 and read one last time the comforting reminder that Jesus is the Christian's high priest.

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INTERCESSION -- OF MAN, WITH FELLOWMEN

1338 -- FROM EARTH TO HEAVEN

An incident that occurred in Boston, some years ago, where a friend of mine was preaching. At the close of a meeting one night, a lady arose and said, "Sir, can I have the privilege of reading a letter that I received today from my old home in Wales, where I was born and brought up, and united with the church?" Permission was given, and this was the extract:

There had been a special religious interest in that town. At the beginning of the services, the minister stood in his pulpit one day, and announced the meetings. Then he said, "Brother, will you take such a soul to pray for?" He was a man who knew the town well and Sister, will you take such a one?" And so he went on through his congregation, giving, as she supposed, each a soul to pray for, and directing that they should not cease praying until that soul was saved. He dismissed the meeting.

As he was going down the aisle, a humble servant girl looked up into his face and said, "Pastor, you did not give me anybody." "Didn't I?" I thought I gave every one a soul to pray for. Is your mistress converted?" "No, that will do, pastor." She went out, attended to the domestic matters at home, and the mistress retired to her room, and the servant girl to hers, as was supposed.

In the night the woman awoke, and said to her husband, "I never had such impressions about my sinfulness nor my soul's danger as I have now; won't you get up and go for some Christian to come and pray for me?" "This is very strange," said the husband, "you never had such feelings as these before. Can not you wait until morning?" She said "I will try." He went to sleep again, but there was no sleep for her. By and by she awoke him again and said, "This pain is so great, it seems as if I would die and be lost forever. Can not you go and get somebody to pray for me?" "Well," said he, "isn't our servant girl a Christian?" "I believe she is," said the mistress. "Well, we will get up and go to her room," said he. So they got up and put on their clothes and went to the servant girl's room, but there was no servant girl there, and the bed was undisturbed.

They were disconcerted for a moment. Then the mistress said, "Sometimes she goes up into the upper room and perhaps, she has gone up there and fallen asleep; we will go up there." They went up, and as they approached the door they heard these words: "Oh God, my mistress is very dear to me, have mercy on her soul! Oh God, my mistress is very dear to me, have mercy on her soul!" There that dear girl, for hours, in the darkness of the night, had been offering that earnest

heart prayer. She was into the garden of Gethsemane, in her heart, with Jesus. "My husband," said the mistress, "this is the trouble." The door was opened and they entered; and you may be sure salvation came there. -- Albert P. Graves

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THE END