

THE PATHFINDER

A CONDENSED LIFE STORY OF DAWSON E. TROTMAN

By Lorne C. Sanny



“It is not always given to the men of vision to perfect their dreams. As pioneers and pathfinders they map the country, prepare the plans ... others must do the actual work of constructing.”

- John S. Fisher in A Builder of the West

ABOUT THE PATHFINDER ...

When my good friend Timothy Dudley-Smith asked me to write a serial for CRUSADE magazine on the life of Dawson Trotman, I thought of it as virtually impossible. To me, presenting the life of this man in a few pages would be like attempting to present the ocean through an oil painted seascape or through a test tube of salt sea water. At best, it could be but the condensed view of a transoceanic flight.

This panoramic view is what I have attempted in THE PATHFINDER. The real “voyage” must wait until God selects one to tell the full story. But because of the warm response to these articles and the request of many who want a personal copy, we have reprinted them in this booklet.

The work of The Navigators has grown considerably since God called Dawson into His presence. Many things he foresaw and planned for are now reality-the moves into Kenya, into Latin America, into India, for example.

The mission the Lord gave Daws was that of a pioneer-to clear some of the paths long grown over with the tangled vines of history and tradition. This mission is finished, and he has moved on while others continue the work, widening the paths and constructing highways. But he had envisioned their job, to a surprising detail.

Although their outworking may be different, the changeless spiritual principles I learned from Dawson Trotman as I worked at his side for fifteen years guide me now as I direct the work. To name some ... his courageous belief in a God of the impossible, his conviction that every person in the world must hear the Gospel, his burning desire to see every Christian nurtured to full maturity in Christ.

Whether you knew him personally, I trust you will be challenged, by what this booklet gives of Dawson Trotman's life, to a deeper trust in his God.



**Reprint of a biographical study serial on the life of Dawson E. Trotman, founder of The Navigators. Reprinted by permission from CRUSADE Magazine, London.*

Dawson Trotman ... the pathfinder

On the afternoon of June 18, 1956, ten people who were attending a Christian conference in upstate New York were speeding in a power boat across Schroon Lake. Suddenly a wave struck the boat, hurtling two of its occupants into the water. The man held the young girl's head above the water while the boat circled back to them. Just as she was lifted to safety, her rescuer sank beneath the waters and disappeared from sight.

The man who thus died saving the life of a girl whose name he did not know was Dawson E. Trotman, founder and director of The Navigators, designer of the counseling and follow-up program used by Evangelist Billy Graham. In his thirty years of service for Christ he had been used to bring back into focus for the Christian world some foundational New Testament truths, the influence of which had only begun to be felt during his own lifetime.

His close personal friend and colaborer Billy Graham said, "I think Dawson Trotman touched more lives than any man I have ever known. We today are only representatives of thousands of many races and languages and cultures that have been touched by this great man. .. There could not have been a more dramatic and characteristic way to die. He who spent all of his life in bringing salvation and upbuilding to others ... spending his last moments in saving the life of one who could not swim."

This intense interest in others had been characteristic of Dawson Trotman ever since his conversion at the age of twenty. Every person was important to him as an individual. It was not unusual for him to empty his wallet for someone in need, or to involve himself in some personal risk to help one in trouble. He seemed to see ways to help people that others did not see. So intense was this focus on the individual, that many whose lives he touched considered him their closest friend.

Dawson Trotman was born in the mining town of Bisbee, Arizona, in 1906, the son of an Englishman who had come to America in the romantic 1890's in search of adventure. The father had traveled the great West as a cowboy, married and settled in Arizona. An atheist named Dawson so profoundly influenced his life that he chose that name for his son. Singular indeed was the fact that the son so named met Christ and later proved in his own life the power of the God denied by the one whose name he bore.

His father's cold indifference to God remained, melted only after years of patient waiting and prayer by those who loved him. Finally at the age of 78 he received the Saviour and became a "new creature in Christ" (II Corinthians 5:17).

Dawson grew to have his father's love of adventure, a trait which followed him through life. No doubt the young man's life was much influenced by his wiry, energetic father, who never rose later than five in the morning, and who was the friend of children and grownups alike in the small town of Lomita, California, near Los Angeles, where the family moved when Dawson was twelve.

From his mother he inherited fine sensibilities and an artistic nature that later revealed itself

in his appreciation of artistry in the smallest detail of his work. Even the most prosaic of tasks was ill done in his opinion if not done artistically.



Slight of stature, with reddish hair that stood somewhat on end, young Trotman won the nickname “Porky” from his schoolmates. But though his frail physique denied him athletic honors, he excelled in his classes and in making friends, and was elected student body president in his senior year. His ability to win the cooperation of others was singled out by a rival high school, who invited him to come and demonstrate his successful student body meetings in their town.

God used this ability in later years as Dawson was to present more serious issues to men of mature judgment, with greater consequences at stake.

All-out for Pleasure

The path to God was rugged and eventful. After high school Dawson began to work in a lumber yard and lived characteristically all-out for self and pleasure. Often he would drive his “Model T” Ford down the streets of Lomita with the throttle wide open, steering from the back seat with his feet!



*Narbonne High School Band, Lomita, California, 1920-21.
Dawson Trotman behind the bass drum.*

Twice in his teens he had made what was considered a decision for Christ. He had joined the church at the age of fourteen, had joined the Boy Scouts and taken the oath to be “trustworthy, helpful, friendly, courteous, etc.” yet nothing had changed inside his heart. His high school valedictory speech was on the subject “Morality versus Legality,” yet he was stealing from school funds entrusted to him at the time.

He felt he must be one of those people who could not live a good life and he gave up trying. He began to drink. Two months after his twentieth birthday, Dawson was arrested and on his way to jail under the influence of liquor. He thought of his mother, ill at home, who was praying for him. She had expressed to him a fear that she would die if she ever heard he was in jail.

He thought, with sobering fright, of the promise he had made to God just a month ago when he and a girl friend had nearly drowned trying to swim across a lake in the California mountains. He had forgotten that promise. Now he promised again, “God, if You will save me, I’ll do what You want.”

The big policeman looked down at him and asked, “Do you like this kind of life?” “Sir, I hate it,” the young man answered. The officer let him go with a promise to do better. On the following Sunday night Dawson went to church.

He found the young people were having a contest, in which points would be won by memorizing verses from the Bible. The two sponsors of the group had carefully selected ten verses on salvation, with another group of ten verses on Christian growth to follow the first. One of the two sponsors was Dawson's general science teacher from high school, who had prayed for him every day for six years!

With a wholehearted desire to win the contest, Dawson learned the ten verses by the next Sunday night - and he was the only one to learn them! He learned the second group of ten verses as well. This drive to win was visible in any enterprise he attempted throughout his life, and made him a rugged competitor, causing discomfort sometimes to the halfhearted. "Don't play just for the game's sake, play to win!" was his continual challenge.

During the third week of his renewed interest in church, Dawson was on his way to work, with the twenty verses of Scripture stored away in his memory, when something happened. He had gone back to the old way of life, frequenting the taverns on week nights even though he attended church on Sunday. As he walked to work that day, lunch pail in hand, the truth of one of the verses he had memorized penetrated his mind in all the power of the Holy Spirit. It was John 5:24. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life . . ."

"That's wonderful," he thought, "*hath everlasting life!*" For the first time he prayed when he wasn't in trouble. "Oh God, whatever this means, I want to have it." Then in a flash another of the memorized verses came to mind: "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name" (John 1:12). Immediately he responded, speaking again to God, "Whatever it means to receive Jesus, I do it right now."

He did not understand what had happened, but he did know a distinct change had taken place in his life. At work, he no longer enjoyed the dirty stories that were told, and it hurt him to hear the Lord's Name used in vain.

Growth through the Word

The verses he had learned on Christian growth began to help him as the Holy Spirit brought them to mind. When he swore or lost his temper his heart condemned him, and he humbly claimed the promise of I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins ..." asking his new Lord to forgive him.

The experience of coming to know Christ in reality and then beginning to grow in the Christian life through the Word of God hidden in his heart demonstrated a principle he would use with thousands of people in years to come. Memorization of Scripture for the purpose of victory and growth had no greater champion in later years than this young man who had seen its remarkable power in his life.

Realizing a hunger for more of the Word, he began to memorize a verse a day, a practice which he continued for three years. He also began to witness to others about Christ, to share with

them his newfound joy. When they asked him questions he could not answer, he sought help from his pastor, who told him there was an answer in the Bible for every excuse a man could give for not coming to Christ. Dawson began to search for these answers, for he was determined never to be tripped a second time by any question.

One of Dawson's first responsibilities as a Christian was to teach a class of six boys in Sunday school. In giving him the class, the superintendent of the Sunday school said, "We will pray for you, for this class has `killed off' two teachers already."

"What do you mean?" asked Trotman. "Two teachers have already given up," the superintendent replied. "They could not get these boys to listen."

"Lord, give me an idea."

Dawson taught them the first Sunday, and they did not listen. He took this matter to the Lord in prayer. "Lord, You made little boys. Give me some idea that will help me hold their attention."

God gave him an idea. He went to see the boy who was the ringleader and talked to him alone. "The devil didn't have to be in Sunday school last Sunday," he told the boy. "He just used you to draw the attention of the other boys away from the Word of God. You helped him."

The following Sunday the ringleader was back in class, a changed boy. In time he and each of the other boys in the class came to know Christ. Dawson had learned, in answer to simple prayer, an important principle. A boy is different when you talk to him alone. He used this principle throughout his life accomplishing the greater part of his ministry in individual time with people.

Interest grew. The boys not only met on Sunday but on a week night. Before long there were 225 junior high school boys meeting week by week in Bible clubs and the Sunday school had grown from 100 to 400. God had found a man who would hide His Word in his heart, learn how to bring others to Christ, and who would pray, "Lord, You made little boys. Give me an idea."

By this time Trotman had begun to attend the Bible Institute of Los Angeles. One of the two schoolteachers who had been used to bring him to Christ now helped financially so that he could use his spare time for the boys' clubs. On Saturdays he mowed their lawn, then as they ate lunch he asked their counsel on his work with the boys.

During his year at Bible school and the following year at seminary, Dawson's extra-curricular activities increased. He helped in the local Fishermen's Club, a group of men whose object was to learn to win people to Christ through individual witness. He later helped to organize Fishermen's Clubs in other harbor towns.

His vision was growing during these formative years, and as soon as a new or more effective means of service appeared he was likely to abandon the former direction of his energies and throw himself into the new project. With single-minded devotion to the cause he would be

absorbed in exploiting every possibility to the full. For this he was often criticized, for many things half done were left for others to carry on while he went on to a new field. Yet in doing so he drew many people into leadership in his wake, while he pioneered new fields of opportunity for others-always driving himself with strict discipline and keeping “everlastingly at it.”

The Word of God was foremost in his thinking, and he saturated himself with it ... memorizing a verse a day, studying it, reading it, praying over it. He found promises like Jeremiah 33:3 and Ephesians 3:20 and wondered at their depthless possibilities. “Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee *great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.*” “Now unto Him that is able to do *exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think*, according to the power that worketh in us ...”

Claiming God's Promises

If these were God's promises they were meant to be claimed. Dawson asked a friend if he would join him in asking God for some of these great things. The friend agreed, and following the example of the Lord Jesus in rising early, they met in the hills at five o'clock every morning of the week. They prayed until seven, and were at work by the scheduled eight o'clock Dawson as a truck driver and the other man as a plumber.

The two determined to continue until they were sure God would show them some of the great and mighty things He had promised. They prayed at first for the boys in the Bible clubs by name . . . and for the towns nearby from which requests had come for help with their boys. Then they prayed for cities up and down the California coast. As they prayed, God enlarged their vision, and they began to ask that God would use them and other young fellows in each of the 48 States.

During the sixth week God put it into their hearts to pray for the world. With a map before them they put their fingers on Okinawa, Formosa, Germany, France, Turkey, Greece ... praying that God would use them in the lives of men in those places.

After 42 days the burden lifted. There was nothing left to ask, and they knew their purpose had been accomplished. Weeks later Dawson was on his back in bed with time to think -while he recovered from oak poisoning.

It was then that God gave him the idea which led to the Minute Men, out of which later grew The Navigators. He contacted six like-minded Christians and formed the Minute Men teams. Their bond was a mutual responsibility to be ready to counsel someone on spiritual matters at a moment's notice, and to do this they put themselves under rigorous spiritual discipline.

At this point Dawson began to realize with disappointment a fact that shaped his ministry for the rest of his life. Though he had gained momentum in winning souls for Christ, he saw few of them follow on with the Lord. He began to meet people he had led to the Lord, whose Christian lives had not developed. Except for those he called the “survival of the fittest” there was not the diligent searching of the Word of God that he had experienced in his own early life ... the hunger for prayer and for knowing God better ... the seeking of counsel from older Christians, and the drive to win others for their Lord.

An Important Principle

His life was full of profitable activity ... soul winning, teaching of Christians. But follow-through was lacking with those he won to Christ. He now saw for the first time another important principle-the *need for parental care for every newborn babe in Christ*.

Again he sought God in simple faith for the answer. Part of it was given in the Minute Men idea.

Through the years the rest of the answer came as principles were “discovered” and put into practice through The Navigators and in work with the Billy Graham team. By the time of Trotman's death Navigator representatives were using these principles in fifteen main cities of the United States and in thirteen foreign countries. Urgent calls were on hand from more than forty countries for Navigator-trained men. The work was still strong and growing in the U. S. Armed Forces. And on the day of his death his men arrived in Africa to begin work among the Mau Mau.

The counselor training and follow-up system he designed for Billy Graham has been used for six years in campaigns in the U. S. and Great Britain, as well as in the Orient. Pastors and Christian workers around the world have been stimulated to a new vision of their own ministry and its potential ... challenged to reconsider their work in terms of ultimate fruitfulness.

“Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My Name, He may give it you” (John 15:16).

Navigators Under Way

“Thus saith the Lord, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters.” - Isaiah 43:16

The two young men pored over the open Bible in earnest conversation. “Do you believe that?” asked one of them. Thoughtfully, he read the verse again. *“Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” – Jeremiah 33:3*

“I believe God meant what He said,” his friend replied. “Then are you willing to join with me in claiming it?” asked the first.

On the strength of this expansive promise, and others like it, they prayed for two hours early each morning for forty-two days ... in the Southern California hills ... until they were satisfied they had asked all that they could ask. They prayed for God to use them and young men like them in every part of the world.

The year was 1931. The young man who asked his friend to join him in claiming great things from God was Dawson Trotman. The way God honored his obedience to the commands of His Word is evident by the countless testimonies from men and women around the world whose

lives he influenced for greater devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Many have called him a pathfinder ... but not because he discovered new ways or had unusual revelations from God. He was considered so because he cleared away the debris from old yet ever-new spiritual truths and believed God to make them fruitful in his life and the lives of others. The simplicity with which he defined them, the diligence in applying them, and the clarity in working out ways for others to learn and apply them were what made his ministry unique.

The Wheel

One such principle is illustrated by the Wheel, which includes four basics of the Christ-centered, Spirit-filled life : the Word, prayer, obedience and witnessing. These four elements, used in balance in the Christian's life with Christ in the center, comprised his most frequent message to Christians-no new principle, but a focus on spiritual laws as common and sustaining as bread and butter.



Dawson had applied to his life immediately and wholeheartedly all that God had taught him thus far, thus keeping himself in readiness to learn more. And during this period of his life God also allowed him to crystallize some of these principles into truths which could be passed on to others. God had found His man faithful, and now He was enlarging both his vision and his responsibility.

Immediately after his conversion Dawson threw himself into the young people's work at the small community church and became an ardent witness for Christ. As he took young people to their homes after the meetings he would often speak personally to them about their relationship to Christ.

“Are you a Christian?” he asked a 13-year-old girl after a Sunday night meeting. “I've gone to church all my life,” was her confident answer. “I didn't say, `Are you a churchian ?' but `Are you a Christian?’” “I've been baptized,” was her reply, somewhat less confident. “But are you a Christian?” he pressed again. “Then I don't know what a Christian is,” she confessed.

He explained to her the simple gospel story and how she might simply receive Christ and have

eternal life. Later Lila Clayton told him that at two o'clock that morning, as she was still awake pondering the matter, she knelt beside her bed and asked Christ into her heart.

Young as she was, her life was transformed. She accepted the challenge to memorize Scripture and to establish a daily prayer life in fellowship with her Lord. She responded readily to the personal discipline of the Christian life which Dawson practiced and taught to others.

When at 18 she became Dawson's wife, Lila's practiced dedication to the Lord made her a fitting teammate for her husband right from the start. To both of them, the Lord and His work were always first, their partner second by deliberate choice.

It was in the year before his marriage that Dawson and his buddy had met for six weeks in the early morning prayer meetings. The idea then came to them to seek out young men like themselves who would be willing to go all-out for God. As a result, six young men formed a team called the Minute Men - men pledged to be ready at any moment to witness for Christ, or to help someone with a spiritual problem. Their self-imposed personal schedule was rigorous: they agreed to spend an hour each day in prayer, read the Bible, memorize one verse of Scripture daily, touch one life daily for God, and keep business matters and correspondence up to date. They met for early morning sessions of prayer, then headed out on motorcycles in pairs or teams of three to witness to individuals or to speak to church groups. Always with them was their "ammunition" - a Bible or New Testament, and gospel tracts to give out.

The dedication of these young laymen to the Lord and His work may be sensed through this excerpt from what one of them wrote after one of their early morning prayer meetings

"... We felt the desire to be enabled to preach the Gospel clearly; to make every tract count; to suffer the afflictions of the Gospel; be patient with others; definite in confessing sin; wise in considering our `feelings'; chary regarding overeating, believing that to be a sin ..."

To Multiply a Ministry

Dawson's personal spiritual discipline spread to these others, and with the growth of the Minute Men his own vision grew. Whereas before he had been primarily concerned with winning individuals to Christ, he now sought to train soul winners and challenge Christians to greater fruitfulness. The emphasis of soul winning in his own life continued; but with it was a growing desire to multiply his ministry through the work of other men.

At times the Minute Men found the schedule too rigorous. An entry in their journal laments: "For many reasons the work has not been prosecuted as zealously during the last few weeks, and we felt the need of checking up on our own standards and again being faithful to the standards for our lives which the Lord has led us to take." As Dawson later observed, the error of assigning too much was an error on the safe side, rather than on the side of natural human indolence by expecting too little.

One night after Dawson had retired he realized he had not spoken to one person for Christ that day. So determined was he not to break his covenant with God that he arose, dressed

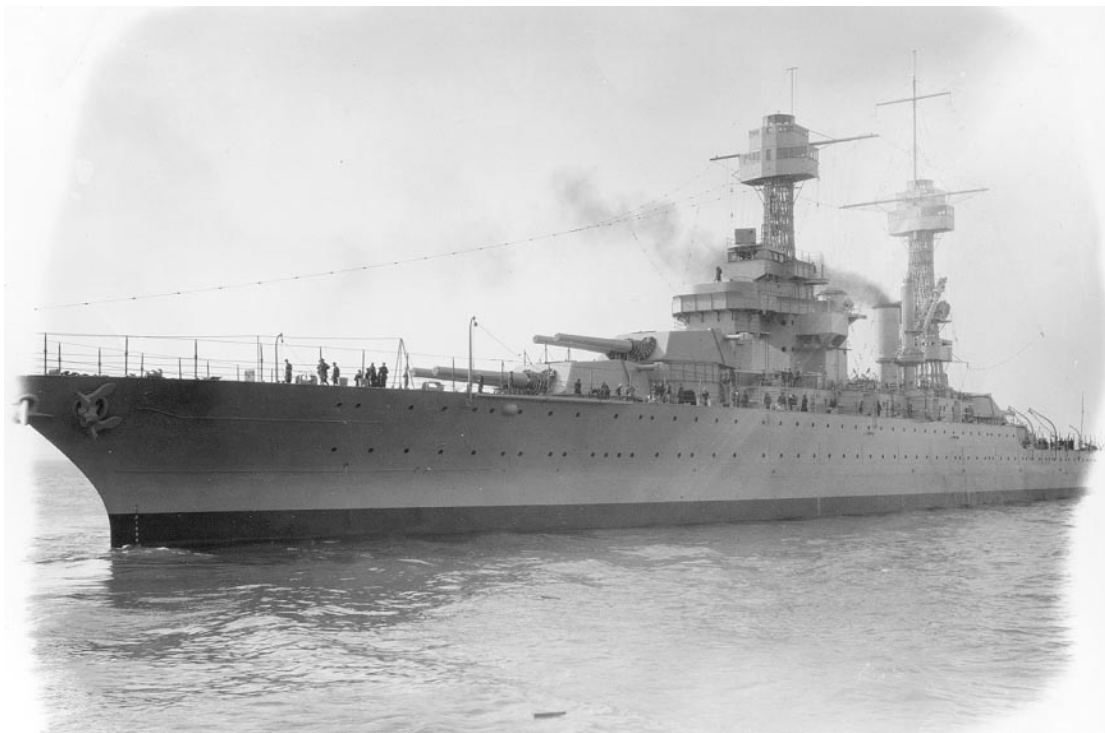
and went out, asking God to direct him to the person to whom he should witness that night. As he drove he saw a man who had just missed the suburban train home, and offered him a ride. The passenger was obviously surprised to have his benefactor inform him that he had come expressly to tell him a story-the story of what Christ could do for him.

His awed reply, “That's what I've been waiting a long time to hear,” probably brought greater surprise to the driver.

Then and there the man gratefully made his decision for Christ. God had honored His Word and the faithfulness of His servant.

Lester Spencer

The first sailor to join the Minute Men was Lester Spencer, a young man on the USS WEST VIRGINIA whom Dawson had been asked by a friend to contact. The lad was invited to Dawson's home for dinner, and later watched as he led a police officer to Christ, turning deftly in his Bible from one Scripture to another.



USS West Virginia

“I'd give my right arm to be able to do what you did tonight,” said the sailor. Dawson began to teach him how, spending many hours with him over an open Bible during his evenings in port ... and sending him out to sea with the same assignments the Minute Men were given to dig into the pages of Scripture, to pray and to witness.

Lester followed through, and developed spiritual “sea legs” in the months that followed.

Since he was in port two weeks, then two weeks at sea, Dawson learned precious lessons in follow-up-in helping and guiding a young Christian toward maturity. This later became a keynote of his work for Christ.

After three months Lester brought another sailor, who he said was ready to learn. With the wisdom which led Lester and many sailors after him to be “spiritual reproducers” Dawson said, “*You teach him!*”

So Lester taught the second sailor, and the two of them each taught another. Soon a number of men aboard the WEST VIRGINIA were moving ahead for God in a disciplined, Bible-centered Christianity. The influence of the “Navigators” as they began to be known, spread to other ships and shore stations as men were transferred about.

Dawson and Lila Trotman lived in a tiny room in an auto court. He negotiated for a small automobile service station, by which he could earn their livelihood and have more time for his men. More and more he came to realize that at conversion the work had only begun. The new life must be nourished. He now began in earnest to build in the lives of these sailors, in whom he saw possibilities of reaching the entire fleet—the same principles which had paid such dividends in his own. This meant not only that he should challenge them to study and memorize Scripture, to pray, to witness, but that he should teach them *how*. Some of the Bible study methods now in use around the world in the languages of a dozen countries are the same as those developed in the little service station with a handful of sailors and their Bibles.

Hospitality was characteristic of the Trotman home. Early in their marriage they claimed together the promise of Isaiah 60:11 for their home, “Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night . . .” Even in the the auto court days Lila Trotman prepared meals and served them to the sailors at the service station.

The Trotmans soon moved to larger quarters where servicemen could be invited to come when on liberty. From that time on the Navigator Home became a key center of operation in the ministry. Today Navigator Homes in the main cities of the U. S. and in several other countries are the scene of strategic work for the Lord. Here young men and women are trained in a close family atmosphere for the work of training others for Christ.

Daws and Lila Trotman read together many times the lives of J. Hudson Taylor and George Muller and were deeply challenged by the great faith of these men. Following their example of trusting God for daily provision, they decided to make their needs known only to God and trust Him to provide day by day. This resolve led to some thrilling experiences of answered prayer, when often God would provide at the exact hour of a need. Once after the couple had retired at night, expecting God to meet their need for breakfast in the morning, one of the sailors who was a guest in the home knocked at their door and handed them a gift of money, saying that he felt he must give it to them before he slept that night. Dawson dressed and slipped out to buy groceries for breakfast, none of the sailors knowing that God had so provided.



The Navigators' work was under way, and with it Dawson's burden and desire to build strong men for God increased. The work on the WEST VIRGINIA spread ... man to man ... to the MISSISSIPPI, the NEW MEXICO, the SARATOGA and other ships, until by December 7, 1941, and the attack on Pearl Harbor, there were Navigators on about a hundred ships. One day Dawson was amazed to discover that the Navigators had reached men from every one of the 48 states-the answer to that specific prayer of the early days!

“Better than the next ...”

These men-who took as their motto *“To know Christ and to make Him known”*- aimed to do their work aboard ship better than the next man, thus demonstrating Christ in their own lives. On the USS ASTORIA Vic McAnney, often referred to as a “first-class baker and a first-class Christian,” led Bible classes on the deck beneath one of the 8-inch gun turrets. Afterwards under the South Pacific stars, the men sang hymns and talked of having found peace with God through knowing Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. Before the ASTORIA sank off the Solomon Islands, Vic had led 40 of her crew to Christ. Another sailor, who later became a missionary to South America, reached ten percent of his submarine's crew for the Lord. More than one Navigator was asked to serve as volunteer chaplain aboard his ship.

At the end of World War II, Dawson discovered that something was lacking in the work among the men. The original emphasis-that of one man teaching another and the second teaching a third in such a way as to equip him to pass on the same to a fourth-had been largely obscured. Many men were teaching Bible classes, which Dawson acknowledged as good in itself, but they were not producing spiritual “reproducers.” He began to speak wherever he went on the theme of II Timothy 2:2, which revealed St. Paul's method of training Timothy in the work of the Lord : “And the things that *thou* hast heard of *me* among many witnesses, the same commit thou to *faithful men*, who shall be able to teach *others also*.”

This principle of spiritual reproduction, the multiplication rather than the addition of Christian disciples, remains today the keynote of Navigator ministry. It is being practiced not only in the Armed Forces but on the college campus, in the church, among businessmen and laborers.

God was still at work in the life of His servant. Early in 1945 Dawson and Lila learned that their fifth child, a son, would be mentally undeveloped all his life. Though this fact crushed the hearts of the two, they immediately recognized God's hand in the circumstance, claiming Psalm 115:3: "But our God is in the heavens : He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased." The lad's ministry in their lives was evident-there was more understanding, a mellowness and patience not yet seen to so great a degree.

Another severe trial of faith at the same time came in the form of a slanderous attack on Dawson through the mails, turning the hearts of many of the men in uniform against him. The sustaining grace of God in the one trial upheld him in the other, and the result was to prepare him for a much wider ministry in the days immediately ahead. God often tries his men in the crucible of unthought-of circumstances, perhaps that He might through "the fellowship of His sufferings" prove "the power of His resurrection" in their lives.

*"Great truths are greatly won. Not found by chance, Nor wafted on the breath of summer dream,
But grasped in the great struggle of the soul Hard buffeted with adverse wind and stream." -
Horatius Bonar*

Outreach Overseas

As the war ended and servicemen began to go back to civilian life, many of them sought Dawson's counsel as to how they might best serve the Lord. The Navigators as yet had no foreign mission program, nor even an established work, but Dawson saw clearly that the contribution these men could make to the cause of foreign missions would be incalculable. It was the desire of his heart to see the Gospel get to every creature-regardless of the agency-and to that end he encouraged and promoted the cause of other organizations devoted to Christ as ardently as if they were his own. On the basis of the Scriptural command, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others ..." (Phil. 2:4) he accepted the responsibility of serving on the boards of a dozen Christian organizations.

Of the first five Navigators, one became a pastor in the State of Washington; one a missionary to Africa with Africa Inland Mission; one is translating the Scriptures into the Yaqui Indian language under Wycliffe Bible Translators; another joined the China Inland Mission and labored in the mountains of Tibet. Lester Spencer, the first sailor to come to the Trotman home, now directs the missionary program of American Sunday School Union, whose ministry is to establish Sunday schools in rural America and build them into churches.

Ex-servicemen whose lives were touched in the service now serve under more than 25 mission boards in every major field of the world. Others joined the staff of The Navigators to give full time to this ministry, working alongside Trotman to help carry out the vision they now had of getting the Gospel of Christ to every creature and building every Christian into a mature, fruitful disciple.

As servicemen went home to their churches they took these principles with them. Soon there was a demand for the Bible study materials and helps in churches throughout the U. S., and the need for trained men to work with them. As a result of this need, the Topical Memory System was made into a correspondence course and used through the mail. Navigator Homes which had formerly been a shore haven for Christian sailors on liberty now became places for rallies, civilian Bible study groups, and the planning of area conferences. Servicemen's work continued side by side with the civilian growth. A nurses' branch of the work was flourishing.

Thousands of lives had by now been touched-not through the magic of a personality or the cleverness of methods, but by a man determined to find what God wanted and to trust Him for methods to carry it out ... believing His Word.

To The Uttermost Parts

“And They That Shall Be Of Thee Shall Build The Old Waste Places : Thou Shalt Raise Up The Foundations Of Many Generations...” Isaiah 58:12

High in the San Bernardino Mountains of California, the two friends scarcely noticed the pungent freshness of the pines along their path. “Daws, you *must* help these people,” pled one of them desperately. “The lives of ten thousand Chinese believers are at stake! ... and countless others in China ... India .. the Philippines ... Japan. `God so loved the *world*' ...”

The other man's eyes narrowed to slits as his mind raced from one thought to the next. This was the decision he had known he would have to make. Dawson Trotman had received the telephone call from Rev. David Morken a few days before, inviting him to bring his wife to the mountains where he and Mrs. Morken were resting after his strenuous evangelistic tour in the Orient.

Motoring up to the mountain resort area of Crestline, Trotman had turned to his wife and said, “Lila, Dave is going to ask me to go to China. What do you think?”

“If God leads you to go, go,” she replied calmly. Her husband admired this ... her quick and courageous response to whatever new turn of events was sent by the Lord. Devoted wife that she was, Lila Trotman recognized God's prior claim upon her husband's life and was willing to sacrifice precious days, weeks and months of time with him for the sake of his work for God.

At Crestline, the two wives remained at the cabin while the men walked up into the mountain solitude to talk and pray together. When they returned, the decision was clear: “I'm going to China,” was Dawson Trotman's simple but forceful announcement.

Both men knew that the issue was not simply a trip across the Pacific. Rather, bound up in this decision was a matter far greater-the expansion of a vision ... a work of God ... into other countries and from there to worldwide proportions.

An Overseas Vision

Dawson had long known that reaching out into countries overseas was inevitable. The vision God had given him for training men individually, and teaching each man to reach a man of his own

circle and train him in this principle of spiritual reproduction, must eventually be put into practice in every country by people of that country. But he had not felt it was time to start branching out. The roots must go down further, the foundation become stronger. The decision lay not in the *fact* of moving out, but in the timing.

But the clear message from God was, “Move out! Begin now!” Much earlier than Dawson had thought possible, the Navigators work must become international in scope. The moves into Africa and Latin America nine years later were in essence decided that day when he declared, “I am going to China.”

David Morken proffered the first hundred dollars toward the journey. The Reverend C. Richard Hillis, then in Shanghai as a missionary, gave the second. Mission societies extended invitations to come to China and help with follow-up of Chinese converts. On March 1, 1948 Dawson embarked for the Orient.

China

Four strategic cities of China were selected as conference points—Peking, Shanghai, Chengtu and Canton. Here missionaries of evangelical societies gathered for conferences on conserving the fruit of their evangelism in this land.

From Shanghai, Daws wrote: “The meetings have been great. Andrew Gih (Chinese evangelist who served as his interpreter) is most vitally interested. Last night I spoke to some 70 missionaries here. All seem to praise God for the emphasis on follow-up.

Later from Chengtu: “Thirty-five came forward to receive Christ the first night. I invited them to come early the next night for instruction. Guess how many came—thirty-five! They were all back again tonight and we reviewed. I gave the ten new ones the same help. Now I have three groups coming tomorrow. What will I do? ... Oh, there's so much China needs! Pray that I'll find what our Lord wants so we can all pull together to help provide.”

Near the conclusion of the trip, after visiting missionaries in many countries around the world, he wrote, “The job is tremendous! We've done the 1 percent, the 99 percent is left. Had it not been that my mind has been stayed on the Lord, I'd consider the need of China and the cry of people everywhere for follow-up help, and I'd be frightened. But God loved the world, started twelve apparently poorly-prepared disciples out and told them the world was their parish. It *can* be done—by His grace it *shall* be done.

“One big project is to pool our resources and men in America and begin to get some of our present Navigators who are preparing for the field thinking follow-up and followthrough in connection with the field.”

In many places the story was the same. The missionaries declared that they could not get the Chinese or the Japanese or the Indian Christians to witness to their own people. They could not get them to hide portions of Scripture in their hearts through memorization. Trotman's challenge on the principles of the effective Christian life, including the principle of “setting the

pace,” led many pastors and workers to consider more seriously their responsibility to hide the Word of God in *their* hearts and to set the example in personal witnessing.

“Send us a man to teach us these things,” was the invitation from each place, almost without exception.

The first Navigator representative to be sent abroad reached Shanghai in January, 1949. He was Roy Robertson, ex-Navy fighter pilot with experience in training individuals in the basic principles of the Christian life.

Trotman knew that his choice of the first overseas representative was an important one, for his success in accomplishing his mission would set a precedent for all who followed. But Robertson was qualified. He had proved in his life as a military man and as a Christian the personal discipline so vital to the assignment, and the stability he would later need to carry on his ministry under China's Red rule. He had won men to Christ, built them up in the faith and taught them how to win and teach other men. He knew how to keep his mind alert and his body fit under rigorous conditions.

Arriving in China, Robertson enrolled in the conventional missionary language study, established distribution centers for the Scripture memory course in Chinese, taught classes and set up evangelistic meetings. But in addition, he employed himself in that ministry for which he was primarily sent—the intensive, personal training of a few select “disciples.” By the time he left China 20 months later, the young missionary had invested much individual time in the lives of seven young men who by now had the vision of reaching and training their men in the same way.

As Robertson had worked unobtrusively under Communist eyes in Shanghai, his Chinese men must work with their countrymen after he left—one man must quietly teach another how to memorize and study the Scriptures, how to live the life of faith, and how to teach one more the things he had learned, including the principle of teaching them to another ... man to man. When public meetings are forbidden, this ministry can go on. And when Bibles are confiscated, the Word of God hidden in the heart can continue bearing fruit.

Formosa

In 1950 the call came for The Navigators to move into Nationalist-held Formosa to assist Dick Hillis with evangelism among the troops and civilian Chinese, and to provide follow-up for the many thousands who were deciding for Christ. Dawson again called on Roy Robertson to help set up the new work. As soon as the latter could be replaced he was sent to open a headquarters in Japan and to oversee the Orient work from there.

Hong Kong was the next center to which a Navigator representative went. Here at this commercial and racial crossroads he found eager young Chinese who were bilingual and who readily grasped the principles in which he trained them.

Then followed the sending of men to Korea ... the Philippines ... India ... Okinawa ... Viet Nam ...

each with its own thrilling story of a need, and an opportunity to meet that need with a trained, prepared man.

Meanwhile, a demand had arisen in Europe for some of the same principles of personal Christian growth that had been used first in the U. S. Armed Forces. A corpsman in the British Royal Army came into contact with The Navigators in New York and later introduced their Topical Memory System in Great Britain. For several years Joe Simmons acted as the organization's British contact, enrolling people in the memory system and training a few individually. By the time Simmons moved to New Zealand where he would lay new foundations in the same way, The Navigators had representatives in Britain, France, Germany and Italy. Later a headquarters was opened in Holland and one in Sweden.

Work with American servicemen overseas was another challenge, and early in 1952 The Navigators sent Bob Boardman to direct the servicemen's center at Yokosuka, Japan. As a burly tank driver of the First Marine Division, Bob had taken part in the Okinawa campaign in World War II until a Japanese sniper's bullet pierced his throat. A series of operations which followed brought his voice back to a hoarse whisper, which he determined to use in bringing the message of Christ to others. During his long period of recuperation he met Dawson Trotman. There developed a father-son relationship between the two as Dawson trained Bob and imparted to him some of his own burden and vision for the world.

Not long after Bob's assignment to Yokosuka, he was asked to go to work among GI's and nationals on Okinawa, the spot to which he had longed to return as a missionary since the day, years before, when he was shot down.

In mid-1952 a committee of Christian servicemen and missionaries in Naples asked Dawson to send a Navigator to open a servicemen's center in that port city. Dan Piatt, a Louisiana businessman, responded to the call and began to work with sailors and officers of the U. S. Fleet.

Before long the sailors who had been reached for Christ through the Naples center conceived the idea of setting up other centers in parts of Europe where large concentrations of American servicemen were stationed. As a result, other Nav men were sent to Europe, the Christian Servicemen's Centers of Greater Europe committee was formed, and new centers were opened in three cities of Germany.

With Billy Graham

In the spring of 1951 Dawson had faced a new test of his willingness to sacrifice time and effort for the work of others. Evangelist Billy Graham had talked to him a number of times about his concern for the growth of the converts from his citywide crusades. Finally he urged Trotman to help in providing some sort of follow-up for those who made decisions for Christ. "I am unable to sleep nights for thinking of what happens to these people," he said.

Already more than busy with his own expanding work in The Navigators, Trotman nevertheless felt compelled to respond to this call for help. For him this meant time - much time - because it was an unbreakable habit of his life to do with all his heart whatever he gave himself

to. His nature demanded a standard of excellence worthy of the Lord. He recognized in Billy Graham a man who followed hard after God, who was himself ready for unqualified sacrifice for the Gospel's sake. Dawson agreed to spend six months of each year, if necessary, to help with the crusades.

An outstanding event of Dawson Trotman's work with Billy Graham was the Greater London Crusade at Harringay Arena in 1954, where more than 34,000 went forward to register their decisions for Christ. Again the following year at Wembley the team rejoiced to see an average 3,000 inquirers a day individually counseled by trained British workers.



Dawson imparted the responsibility of crusade follow-up to his men. When Billy Graham toured Europe and the Orient, there were Navigator representatives in almost every place ready to provide trained counselors and to follow up inquirers from his meetings.

Gratifying as it was to furnish each new Christian believer with the means of growing in grace, it was a greater reward to Dawson's own heart to see Christians of many years become fruitful foster parents to these newborn ones. Some who had never been used to bring anyone to a saving knowledge of Christ now became soul winners and counselors to others.

Before Harringay, one lady said she could not possibly counsel and lead a person to Christ. Yet during that crusade she and her husband counseled 118 inquirers, some of them difficult cases. Six months later they could account for 114 of them going on with the Lord! There are many such Christians in the U.S., in England and abroad whose training and experience in crusade counseling have opened a new vista of Christian fruitfulness.

Glen Eyrie

Perhaps one of Dawson Trotman's greatest ventures of faith was in 1953, three years before his death. The Navigators work had continued to expand so steadily that a larger central headquarters was a dire necessity. They had outgrown the largest conference grounds available for summer conferences, and needed their own. Also, a need for a training base where young men and women might be personally trained for the increasing number of opportunities in the U. S. and overseas made it almost imperative to find a place which could meet all these needs in one.

The Colorado Rockies were chosen as a location central to most of the U. S., and the search began for a piece of property, perhaps a ranch, which would be suitable for the three purposes - headquarters, conference grounds and training center. The result of the search was beyond all expectations-Glen Eyrie estate, some 970 acres of glen at the mouth of Queen's Canyon, with a hewn-rock castle built in Tudor style and other dwellings ample to accommodate the Navigators staff.

The price was set at one-fifth the appraised value of the property, but there were two gigantic hurdles : others wanted the property; and if The Navigators made the purchase they must secure the down payment of \$110,000 in only six weeks!

Dawson spent a day with God on a rocky hillside overlooking the Glen, coming to grips with Him over the project. He reviewed the Book of Nehemiah - how the people had a mind to work, how strong opposition was valiantly overcome, and how the work was finished by a band of courageous people who believed God and worked hard. With divine assurance in his heart that Glen Eyrie was to be God's gift to The Navigators by faith, he went home.

Back in Los Angeles, he shared the vision of Glen Eyrie with the headquarters crew. The required down payment, just six weeks away, was more than the amount of the annual budget.

The staff was enthusiastic. Together with Dawson, they took the attitude of faith expressed by Caleb (Numbers 13:30): "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." Area representatives came together to pray and plan and took the story back to their key people in other cities. The news spread to Navigator friends far and wide . . . and before long the Glen Eyrie project was everyone's job. High schoolers, young married people, widows, servicemen ... all went to work.. Some servicemen took leave to help. Missionaries in foreign lands began to send their sacrificial gifts. Working people who heard the story withdrew savings, cashed bonds, sold things to make a contribution to the purchase of Glen Eyrie. More than 2000 people gave, and every gift counted. Most of them were small gifts and sacrificial. And on the day it was due-not one day sooner-the total amount of cash was complete.

The men of means who were involved in the sale of Glen Eyrie to The Navigators were impressed as never before with God's provision in answer to prayer for so great an amount in so short a time. One of them said, "I knew things like that happened in the Bible, but I didn't know they happened today!"



GLEN EYRIE, *Valley of the Eagle's Nest*, in Colorado, *The Navigators* main headquarters.

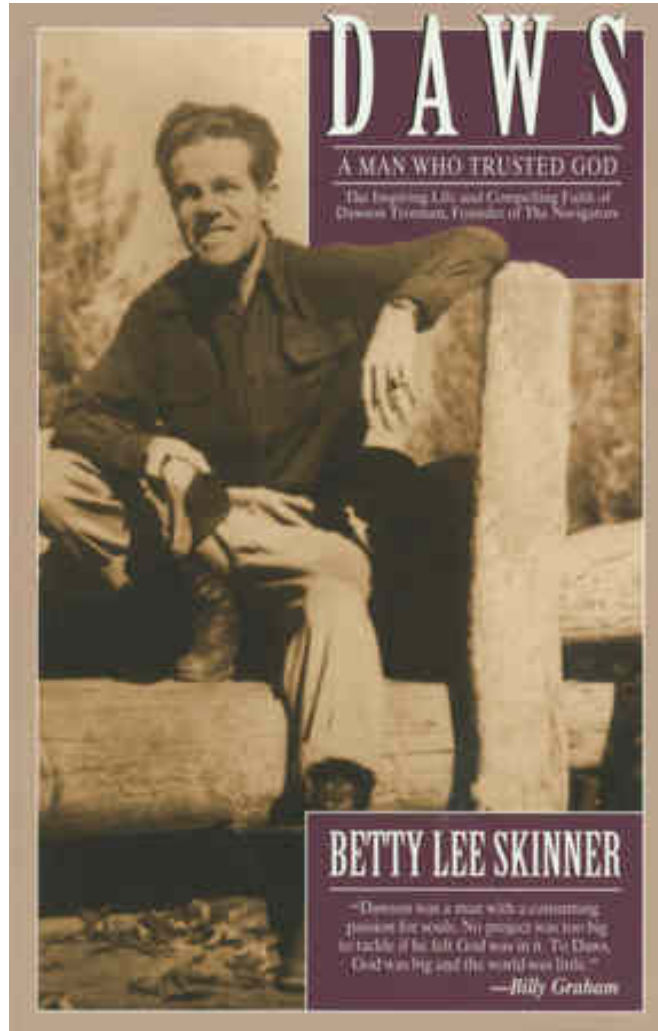
The World for Christ

Glen Eyrie has become the center of the Navigators work - where training for Christian discipleship is continuous the year around ... where the overseas and Stateside work is coordinated ... and the vision of reaching the world for Christ is kept foremost.

Faithful men and women planted in strategic places throughout the world are continuing the ministry of reproducing spiritual children and teaching them how to reach others. Dawson Trotman did not leave a life work completed with fruit that remains ... nor did he leave spiritual methods to set in motion and continue by themselves. He left rather a life principle that will multiply many times a mere "life work." He left this principle embodied in men who have found in it their own fruitfulness and vision ... the vision of multiplication person to person, with each person so reached becoming a soul winner and teacher of others, who will reach others.

As a pathfinder, Dawson Trotman's contribution to the progress of the Church and world missions may best be known when this principle of spiritual multiplication has told its tale in every country of the world.

"I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth; Even every one that is called by My Name: for I have created him for My glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him." - Isaiah 43:5-7.



To Know Christ And Make Him Known

A life well lived left behind a legacy that is still impacting the world for Christ today. From his youth as a liar, gambler, and pool shark to manhood as an indefatigable witness for his Lord Jesus Christ, Dawson Trotman revolutionized the practice of evangelism and founded one of the most widespread and respected Christian organizations in the world today.

What moved and motivated this extraordinary man of God? In this book from [NavPress](http://NavPress.com), you'll experience the convictions and passions that guided Trotman's life: his deep love of God's Word, his lifelong dedication to prayer, and his determination to live out the Great Commission.

This moving historical account, drawn from the memories of those whose lives he touched and from the author's firsthand knowledge, will both encourage you in your faith and inspire you to action.

[Order your copy from NavPress today!](http://NavPress.com)