

# new covenant Choice

I FEAR, WHEREVER RICHES HAVE INCREASED, THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION HAS DECREASED IN THE SAME PROPORTION. THEREFORE I DO NOT SEE HOW IT IS POSSIBLE, IN THE NATURE OF THINGS, FOR ANY RENEWAL OF TRUE RELIGION TO CONTINUE LONG. FOR RELIGION MUST NECESSARILY PRODUCE BOTH INDUSTRY AND FRUGALITY, AND THESE CANNOT BUT PRODUCE RICHES. BUT AS RICHES INCREASE, SO WILL PRIDE, ANGER AND THE LOVE OF THE WORLD IN ALL ITS BRANCHES.

JOHN WESLEY

**But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to GOD the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect and to JESUS the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel See that ye refuse not him that speaketh**

**HEBREWS 12:22-25**

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# ANOTHER VESSEL

GEORGE W. NORTH

## CREATED OF GOD, BUT IN TROUBLE

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Isaiah was a prophet raised up of God to bring comfort to His people; they needed it very much. At the time it seemed to them that they had little or nothing with which to comfort themselves. Everything had gone wrong and they couldn't understand why or how. They felt that they should have an inheritance. They had been told about their right to it, but they, with their teachers, were in captivity. Nothing was working out in their lives as it ought. Nothing. What a word of comfort then Isaiah's message must have been to them: 'Now thus saith the Lord that created thee O Jacob, and he that formed thee O Israel, Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine'. The prophet was telling them that God was full of love for them, and continues in the next verse, 'When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee, when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour' - and so He continues. Let us pause a moment to lay emphasis on the word 'through' - 'When thou passest through' - you have to be in them in order to pass through them, but you are only in the waters to pass through them. God had decided that the time had come to remind these people that He had created them, and that having created them, He had formed them into the people He had desired. That must have been a wonderful word to them, they had not been created a nation to be the shapeless, almost non-existent mass they were at that time. They could not understand it all, God was saying 'I did it, I did it all, I didn't take up somebody else's idea, I originated you and I formed you into what I wanted'. That surely is a glorious message for anyone to hear, but it couldn't have been very cheering to those who first heard it, they were a people in deep trouble.

This whole section of the prophecy is as full of meaning for us as it was for Israel:

'They are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison houses, they are for a prey and none delivereth, for a spoil and none saith, Restore. Who among you will give ear to this, who will HEARKEN AND HEAR FOR THE TIME TO COME? Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Did not the Lord, He against whom we have sinned? For they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle, and it hath set

him on fire round about, yet he knew not, and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart. But now thus saith the Lord that created thee O Jacob, and he that formed thee O Israel, Fear not for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee, when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, Thy Saviour'. Amen.

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## LET MEMORY TEACH YOU

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How true to life this is; is there anyone to whom this does not apply? God is talking about salvation in practical terms as it touches the real things of life. Not one of us is exempt from this. We all have to go through the fire, some of it intensely hot. We all have to go through the waters, some very deep - we all have to cross rivers and some of them are very wide. We have to go, we simply have to, there is no way round and no other way to reach the end God has in view. Recall God's ways. He first redeemed Israel in Egypt. He did so in order to bring them out of Egypt. Their destination and their destiny was the promised land. To reach it they had to cross the sea, they had to pass through the waters and pass by Sinai, that dreadful mountain of fire - experiences which almost frightened them to death. But God did not spare them, they just had to go. It was the way He chose and it was the only way, and they discovered that the fire never kindled on them and that they were not overflowed - the fire never burned them and the waters of the sea didn't drown them. Isaiah is saying to them, 'Look back into your history, let the past teach you, and being taught by the past, let the future become glorious to you'.

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## MY MAKER IS MORE THAN A FRIEND

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In chapter 54, verse 5, we read 'Thy maker is thine husband'. It is God speaking. God was to Israel as an ideal husband and we all know what a husband should do to be a real husband to his wife. He should husband all that is in her, the treasure she is to him, to perfection. In a slightly different figure, the Lord Jesus experienced this: He says of Himself and His Father, 'I am the vine and my Father is the husbandman'. 'He is husbanding me'. He says, 'My Father is bringing forth all the fruit that it is possible to get from me'. Jesus was God's creation.

He it was who created that precious body in Mary, He had to because she was a virgin, no-one else could have done it. God created the beginning of that life in Mary's womb, and then, using her natural processes, formed them into a body within her. Jesus was a miracle and if anyone passed through water and through fire in this world it was He. His Father God was over-watching Him; yet whilst being brought through to all the glorious perfection God required of Him, He went through unprecedented sufferings. Solemn though this is, it is wonderful and important to know it, for your Maker, your great Creator and Saviour and Redeemer, is your husband too. In His love and wisdom He has done everything that is good and right and best and proper for you. Do you believe this? Sometimes men and women look at themselves and say 'I am a complete failure'. Friend, you are not the only one in the world who has failed. You may be shocked to read this, but it should be a comfort to you - and here is something that will shock you even more - God has had his failures too. To many that may seem a blasphemous statement, but it isn't. God too has known failure.

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## FAILURE IN THE BUSINESS?

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In the 18th chapter of Jeremiah, God has recorded this failure for you and I and all the world to see, beloved; He has done so in grace and truth that we might take heart from it. 'The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying, arise and go down to the Potters House, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the Potters House'. Jeremiah did not know it but it was there he was to hear of the Lord's failure, it was a self-confession; the prophet was not expecting that.

It is most significant and very relevant to the situation that God did not say to Jeremiah as He said to Moses 'Come up'; He said 'Go down'. It was original! It was marvellous and fresh from God. He said 'Go down', because the message He had to give to Israel was a story of decline. Thank God it was not only that, but that is how it started. God wanted to show failure, both His and theirs, so He said 'Go down - go down to the Potters House'. The Potters House was down among the clay-pits. That is where he lived and worked, the potters business is with clay. On God's behalf at His command, Jeremiah had to go down to the clay, basic clay. The distinction is very obvious; 'Come up to glory Moses - go down to clay Jeremiah. Come up to the divine element Moses - go down to the human element Jeremiah. Jeremiah I want you to teach the people something of how deity handles humanity'. Jeremiah obeyed; 'I went to the Potters House' he says, 'and behold He wrought a work on the wheels, and the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter' - the potter had failed. Jeremiah saw it happen, he saw that the man failed to produce what he wanted. Till God explained it to him, he did not know that he had witnessed the decline and fall and total collapse of his nation, but he had.

That is not the end of the episode though, He continues 'So the potter made it again another vessel as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, O House of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter, saith the Lord, behold as the clay is in the potters hand, so are ye in mind hand, O House of Israel'. The message of the potter was delivered to Jeremiah originally for Israel at that time, but the principle of it is universal and timeless, just as relevant to spiritual Israel today as it was to natural Israel in that day. Watching in the Potters House Jeremiah could not but conclude that the potter failed. But surely the potter represents God doesn't he? And He cannot fail can He? It is generally agreed by all interpreters of this passage that the reasons for the failure lay in the clay. (How readily God's champions rush to defend Him, but He does not need them.) He never said that the fault lay in the clay; neither does Jeremiah say so, it is an assumption based upon observation and we all loyally believe it. Reading the wider context of the story we can find plenty of evidence to support the assumption that it was not God's fault but Israel's, but the immediate context does not support it. God's close contextual statements lead to the conclusion that the episode of the Potters House was a revelation of God's sovereignty. He discloses to Jeremiah that he is exercising His power and authority among the nations, creating both evil and good, plucking up and destroying, establishing and promoting according to His own will.

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## TIME FOR A NEW MODEL

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God's immediate design for Israel had changed. It is a great mistake to think that God does not and cannot change His mind. He can and He does. Scripture records phrases like this, 'it repented Him that He had made man'. He was sorry and He wished He hadn't done it, He changed His mind about it - witness the flood! That such changes of mind on God's part coincide with or are the result of deterioration on mans part may be true, but that does not alter the fact that God does change His mind with regards men and can and does often change His design for them. The Bible chronicle has scarcely begun before this fact emerges. God made Paradise in Eden for Adam and Eve, intending it for them and their posterity for ever, but He changed His mind about it and them and turned Adam and Eve out of it and later destroyed it. That was because of their sin we know, but precisely because of it His whole thinking and design for the race was changed. He knew about it beforehand of course; but though knowing in Himself what He would do when the time came, He did not fix it to happen. Men are not set in a remorseless time-scale of events by a God who had rigidly fixed His will to create evil as well as good though He does so (as He says). Quite spontaneously God speaks and does things that are only evil or good in effect, according to the thinking and condition of those to whom he directs His words, they alone are affected by those things.

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## BY THE SKILFULLNESS OF HIS HANDS

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It is in this sense that the lesson of the Potters House is of value to us all. God is resourceful, He is not only the Source, He is also the resourceful one and when things go wrong and do not work out consistently with the true beginnings from the original source, He recognizes the failure and starts all over again. In the long run He does not fail, but there is no denying that in the figure the potter did not achieve his purpose at the first attempt. Having shown this, God goes on to say both by word and figure that He still had a form and pattern in mind for His people at that time. He was also warning them that He was going to do so upon a different wheel. The potter has many wheels in His house, he does not work on the same one all the time. God has always worked on a great variety of wheels throughout time and says so - though not directly. Using Isaiah's language, He says 'I created thee Israel', it is true. He called Abraham from Chaldea. God worked on the Chaldean nation, He called a man from that culture, took him out and created a nation from him, and did it over a period of time, working on many wheels including the Egyptian one; but He created an entirely new nation which continues to this day. But O how many different spiritual shapes and forms has the nation taken through the years since those early days. Seldom has it been a vessel unto honour. Nevertheless throughout time He has held Israel in His hands to shape that nation on the wheels of time and circumstance into the vessel He wants it to be.

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## FAULT IN THE CLAY

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The sad, sad story is that always it has become marred. What the marring was in Jeremiah's day, or how it happened, the Lord does not directly say. The most puzzling thing about the whole episode is not that it happened, nor how it happened, but how it COULD have happened. How is it that a people held in God's hand, being wrought by Him into something which we can only assume was to be very wonderful, become so marred? It must be, of course, that the fault lay entirely with Israel and not with God, but it is not our purpose here to investigate all the reasons why God's people could possibly become so spoiled. Surely one of the most, if not certainly the most blessed feature of this story is that God did not reject the spoiled vessel. He made it into another vessel, glory be to the name of the Lord. Though it was a failure, He still kept it in His hands. Beloved, God is making something better of Israel, though at present it does not appear what it shall be - their last end is going to be better than their beginning. Everything lies in the hands of God, who works all things after the counsel of His own will according to the eternal purpose which He purposed. It was so with Abraham, it was so with Israel and it is so with every individual

in the Church. In His exposition of the figure, the Lord makes Himself the potter, the clay a nation (any nation), the wheels the constant whirling of international events and the house the world. He is working in the world, it is His 'house'. Let us all rejoice that it is and that He has not left it but is still working in it. He created it and it is still His 'workshop'. To Isaiah He said that He sits on the circle of the earth; the heavens are stretched out as a canopy for Him to dwell in, says another; the whole universe is the sphere of His activities. Israel though special to Him, was just one nation among many and though He was not working in any of the others to the same extent as He was in Israel, He was working in them nevertheless. God had three projects in progress in the universe working simultaneously and synchronously towards the fulfilment of His purposes in the earth.

1. The International.
2. The National.
3. The Individual.

These three projects are still operational now, plus at least two more, but more of those two later.

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## DESTROYED TO BE REMADE

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In His messages to Israel through His prophets God had been telling the nations for years that He was going to pluck up the kingdom and destroy it. What Jeremiah was saying was not new, it was a repetition of what other contemporary prophets were saying. The seriousness of the message was that it was the final warning Israel would be given. That is why this simple and most graphic demonstration was given to Jeremiah. The kingdom was going to be destroyed but it was also going to be re-made. God was going to re-make the nation and build it up into another kingdom. This is what inspired Isaiah to commence the last half of his prophecy on the note of triumph and comfort - 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people saith your God'. It was this great promise of restoration and re-making which filled hearts with the comfort of hope when the great national disaster struck and they were carried away to Babylon. God actually plucked up the nation by the roots because they were not rooted and grounded in Him. They had built up a kingdom as corrupt as themselves and had refused to repent of their ways though being given opportunities to do so times without number. God said that if they repented of their evil ways He would repent of the evil He intended to do them, but they would not. This (and other things like it) was the evil of the nation. It rejected God's mercy and brought evil from God upon themselves and their children - the innocent having to suffer with the guilty without knowing why and perhaps blaming God for their troubles. To ponder sympathetically over the laments and prayers prophetically recorded in Isaiah for us to read, is to enter into the heartache of a generation that suffered

for their fathers sins. That is an evil thing, but that is how sin and its consequences and God's punishments thereon works out in the human race.

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## THE CLAY HAD REBELLED

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Israel was a nation of clay among nations of clay. The difference between Israel and the other nations was that God was holding them in His hand. The wheels were turning, national and international politics and intrigues were at work, kingdoms were clashing and warring, rising and falling, but the Lord was holding Israel's kingdom steady. He had been doing this for centuries despite the fact that it was not the kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy, that He intended. The Kingdom was not the Kingdom of God, it was the Kingdom of Israel. Israel had rejected God - the clay had rebelled against the potter - the vessel was marred - the kingdom was not the kingdom God wanted so He destroyed it. A kingdom is not better than the people who comprise it, A land is not a kingdom, the people and he who reigns over them are the kingdom. Whether in earth or heaven, the kingdom of God is there, whether in this universe or beyond it, it is international and eternal. So it was that while He was on earth the Lord Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is here. That was because the King from heaven was here. This is also the reason why at the beginning the promised land was as heaven to Israel, even though at the time Jeremiah wrote his prophecy it was more like hell than heaven. Canaan was not heaven of course and God never called it that. What He told Israel was that their days should be multiplied as the days of heaven upon the earth. This is the reason why he led them to Canaan, it is also the reason for the WAY He led them into the land.

When God brought out His people from Egypt He did so in haste in the darkness (possibly within an hour after midnight), by sacrifice and bloodshed and a fiery burning pillar. It must have been an unearthly, perhaps un-nerving sight. But when He at last brought His people into the land of promise, everything was different. There was no sacrifice or bloodshed, no haste, no darkness, no pillar of fire, instead broad daylight and the ark of the covenant, the pillar of cloud resting upon it and Joshua standing by the ark in Jordan's dry bed. The people had to come almost to the throne of God to pass by it into the land. The mercy seat on the ark was the place where God sat and reigned over Israel in mercy. His throne was covered, they were not allowed to see it and the one leading them into the land of His choice. There He, with His people, should establish the kingdom of God on earth and their days would be as days of heaven on earth. But soon, too soon, it became Israel's kingdom (as it is called this day) and heavenly days faded and died. God failed to retain His position because His people would not keep theirs. They refused to let Him reign over them, His vision of the kingdom was marred, the work that He had put into making it all that He wanted it to be was ruined. He decided to end it.

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## THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME

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In the eastern potters method there always has to come a time when the clay leaves his hands; he must throw the clay onto the wheel. This is purposely done and when it occurs, for a moment or two, the clay is out of his hand. Unless he does this he could not possibly make the clay into anything, it is absolutely necessary to the whole process. Before he does this he always makes sure that the wheel has reached its greatest speed, it must reach maximum rotation, the faster the better. The whole process must be done with the utmost energy and skill so that when he throws the clay, it lands on the exact centre of the wheel directly above the spindle. Great care and exact precision are absolutely essential at this point so that the clay should remain perfectly stationary. Should he fail to place the clay absolutely central on the wheels it would be beyond his power to make it into a perfect vessel, indeed any vessel at all. If the clay were off-centre it would go round in large or small circles at an astonishing speed, according to its position on the wheel. To place the clay in the perfect position in the centre above the spindle is the great skill essential to the whole process of pottery. The ideal state for the clay to be in is central, unmoving, yet spinning on a wheel turning at unvarying speed. If the clay should be only slightly off-centre it would be fatal to the potters designs. The vessel would then be eccentric, mis-shapen, marred in his hand. Probably this was the kind of marring to which God was alluding. He had placed Israel central on the wheel originally but they had moved further and further away from it till now the hands that at first had shaped the nation and kingdom perfectly could only make it mis-shapen. He just had to let them go whirling around and away.

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## A SAFE PAIR OF HANDS

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Yet they were never out of His reach, for though they took themselves out of His hand in one sense, in another they could never get out of His hand. They rebelled against Him and chose other gods, gods of the nations, gods of man made by men, they even made gods themselves, filling the land with them in defiance of God. But God is the God of the nations, He is the God of the whole earth, the whole earth is filled with the glory of God, His hand and His handiwork is everywhere. Worlds upon worlds hang upon His hands, His hand is universal, who then can remove himself from it? God still held Israel. Whatever a nation does or wherever a man goes he is always in the hands of God. Marred though they were, Israel were still in His hand. He let them go - more, He threw them down onto another wheel, the Assyrian wheel, and they were carried away to Babylong. Did they not realize that God works on many wheels? He uses all at His convenience. His throne is on wheels, wheels within

wheels. He reigns from above the wheels. This universe is a wheel, this earth moves around a wheel called an orbit, the world is a wheel spinning upon its own axis, each nation is a wheel turning around its central government, each family is a wheel revolving around its parents, the individual is also a wheel revolving around itself and all are upon the wheel of God. The throne of God is upon and over all the wheels of time and man and nations. He is reigning over and above them all, the stretched-out arm of the Lord works His will on every one of them. He is the Great Potter; Israel could never get out of His hand. They refused His special, intimate, exclusive touches and moved away from the centre of His will, but they only succeeded in removing themselves into His general will and providential workings, that's all. There He let them stay till deep repentance came to their heart and they cried out to Him for forgiveness and restoration, then He restored them.

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## THE POTTER A SAVIOUR

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Isaiah's marvellous message of comfort from God to Israel was delivered to the prophet whilst they were being held in captivity. He does not describe Himself to Isaiah as the Potter, but calls Himself the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, preferring rather to remind them of the ground of their salvation and of the restoration He had in mind for them than to tell them about the wheels on which He was working. 'I created thee O Jacob, and formed thee O Israel', He said, thereby stating His basis of claim to the nation. He owned them, they were His, 'I called thee by thy name', He said, 'thou art mine' - they were. But beside stating the reason for His claims on Israel, by this statement the Lord also revealed the order of His workings with all men, namely, first creation, then formation. It was so in the beginning; first He created the earth, then He formed Adam of the earth He had created and from Him made (built up) a woman. This is another way of saying He was the potter, for a potter does more or less the same thing, he does not create the clay he works, but he 'builds up' the vessel from the spinning mass. God the great Potter does all, He both created and formed the nation by casting Jacob on the wheels and forming Israel from him, building him up by hand as he spun round on the centre of the flying wheel of national circumstances. By these God forced Jacob into Egypt, He 'threw him' down there by sending famine upon Canaan; Jacob and his family had to go down to Egypt in order to sustain their lives. There God built up that little tribal family into the nation which He finally brought out by the miracle of redemption. His next move was to form Israel from Jacob. This He did by giving them His law that by obedience to His commandments they may be conformed to His will in all things and become God's prince, His son and heir that should inherit the fulness of His blessings.

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## AS SEEMED GOOD TO THE POTTER

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For a while things went according to plan. Israel stayed in God's hand and He was shaping them nicely for His purposes in the earth, but then came the great shift, they moved off-centre, they wanted to be like all the other nations. They didn't want God's plan for them, they wanted their own kingdom and to have their own way. God did His best for them under the circumstances. He chose a fine figure of a man from among them, gave him a new heart, turned him into another man, gave him the gift of prophecy and touched the hearts of many in the nation to follow him. Things looked good for Israel. God had selected the king, Samuel the prophet obviously approved of him, the heart of all Israel was set upon him. Everything was just perfect - but both God and Samuel knew that it was doomed to failure. Again and again afterwards He sought to correct His peoples hearts - He was always seeking to make the clay into the vessel He wanted, but He failed, they would have none of it. So finally He said He would make another vessel from the clay and this time He would make it to please Himself - 'as seemed good to the potter to make it'.

This often happens in the life of an individual as well as in the life of a nation. The lessons learned in the potters house are timeless, they apply to us all.

Every one of us born into this world by the God created method of procreation is born a Jacob. The purpose of God is that before we leave this earth, we should be formed into Israel, a prince with God. Through Christ's redemption God is able to take up every one of us in His hand in a special and individual way and make us what He wants us to be. He is the Potter, Christ is His wheel, we are the clay, the House is the Church. He wants to form us all into princes having power with God and man. Therefore He takes us in hand to change us, and you know, beloved, He starts with us a long time before we are aware of it. He's very patient and strong and tender and He loves us, He is our maker and husband, He is faithful and He has the whole future in His hands too. He will do great things for us all beloved, if we let Him take possession of us and have control over us. He it is who controls the wheels beloved - just let Him take you up again and place you in the centre - exactly. Don't keep on going round and round on the edges in the same old way. What a complete waste of time that is and oh the failure of it all - complete failure.

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## NOT FINISHED YET

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No. Not a complete failure, only a temporary one. You are not the finished article yet, still wet clay and in His hand; it is alright - yet. Somehow, don't ask how or why, this is the way to success. The Lord has to teach us all the seemingly contradictory lesson

that failure is the way to success and to apply that lesson to us very very deeply. We fail and fail and fail till all seems failure, then suddenly - success. Is that right, or is anybody saying 'success is the way to success'? Cry out through the world 'What man is it that has never had a failure?' No man, not even Christ. Not even He said that! He lost Judas! He said so. He also wept over Jerusalem, 'I would, you would not', He said. He failed. Anxious to defend His and His Father's name and character and safeguard salvation, we may hasten to say, 'the fault was not on His or His Father's part', and of course everyone would agree. Beloved, scripture is a record of truth for us to read. Recall the occasion when God told Moses on Sinai that He would destroy Israel and make another nation out of him. At that time the Lord was under serious provocation and He meant what He said. Though He had so recently redeemed Israel from Egypt, they had already made an idol and had substituted it for God and He was full of anger, justifiably so. He was prepared to end the nation and start afresh and told Moses so. To God the whole thing was a failure and He had not succeeded in what He set out to do and He was about to end it. Presumably except Moses had said no, God would have gone ahead and done what He said. In which case there would have been no nation of Israel - there might have been a nation of Moses - who knows? This is not an isolated incident. Right from the beginning failure upon failure ended many of God's projects and frustrated His designs. This raises many questions, but it also points to much undiscovered truth about God and leads to greater understanding of Him. Does God change His mind? Doesn't He fix His will never to alter it?

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## YOU BELONG TO ME

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The answer to the first question is 'Yes, He does.' The answer to the second is 'No, He does not'. What do you think God is? Do you think He's wood, or hay, or stubble? Or do you think God is really a living Being? We're in His hands beloved. He wants you to love Him. God wants you to look upon Him as the most wonderful Being there is and see that Jesus Christ is the most glorious personality this world has ever known. When Jesus was on earth, He often changed His mind. When Jairus came to Him to plead for his little daughter do you remember what happened? Jesus changed His direction. He wouldn't have done that unless He had changed His mind. Instead of going the way He was going, He turned about and followed Jairus. HE followed Jairus, (Jairus didn't follow Him) and He followed Jairus right down to the point of his pain and need on the borders of darkness and death. Even when He was going there He was halted in His progress by the woman who came and touched the hem of His garment. She was seeking healing and she obtained it. But the point to notice is that she turned Him about - a woman, just an ordinary woman caused the Christ to turn around. God is not some fixed, solid, immovable THING. He is not an idol. God is most easily moved

and utterly responsive. In nature, in righteousness, in love, in holiness and in His eternal intentions He is unmovable and unchanging. He cannot be moved from these, but oh beloved, He'll come to your need. He'll stoop down to you. He'll listen to you. He can be moved by you. He loves you. 'I formed you for Myself' He said, 'I have called you by your name, you are Mine. You started off by being called Jacob - I have called you Israel'. You say, 'But Lord, I've not been a true spiritual Israelite. I know I haven't'. 'Yes', the Lord says, 'that is correct, I know, it didn't work out did it?' We get so stiff with doctrinal ideas and peering through them dimly make Him out and declare God to be the same, but He is not. Here is the whole point. He loves us. He chose us - 'You are Mine' He says, 'You are Mine', and that seems to be His reason for doing everything for us. There is a wonderful word for us in the New Testament, Jesus says 'Is it not lawful for Me to do as I will with My own?' Is there anyone who disagrees with His claims, are they not all acceptable to us? He will do His own will with us according to His own laws. You and I are on the wheel, we are in His hands and He is going to make another vessel from the same old clay, as it pleases Him.

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## LET GO AND LET GOD

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That surely must come to every heart as wonderful news. An essential requirement for this though is that the mind be cleared of any image it has conjured up of the kind of person you are or want to be. God can change us, He can eliminate the imperfections and remove obstructions and draw us back into the centre of His will, but only on His conditions and according to His mind. He deals with human nature, the person we are, not who we think we are and what we think we want to be. He is able to take up a man when all others have let him down and neither they nor he can do anything about it; men have their limitations, God has none. Stay on the wheels, there are wheels within those wheels you see or think you see whirling round, and stay in His hands; the Lord's hand is holding you there, above all stay in His hands. If you have to say, looking back, 'Lord I don't understand it all; Why? How?' know that it doesn't matter, beloved. He may answer your questions. He may not, but don't jump out of His hands, He's going to make you another vessel. You have come a 'cropper' and everything has crashed simply because you've formed those ideas, perhaps on a hodge-podge of verses and peoples 'prophecies' over you. Hadn't Israel been prophesied over? Hadn't they had all the best verses in the world written to them? They'd had everything. They'd had the greatest prophets, they'd had the finest kings (and the worst). They'd had everything, the good and the false, the right and the wrong. Many 'potters' had spun their wheels for Israel and plied their skills on them, so God says 'Now Jeremiah, you go down to the Potters House. I want to show you something there, failure and success. Now watch that potter.

Don't cry to me about this. If Moses and Samuel were to try to intercede for these people I would not listen to them - they couldn't alter it. I've decided to make another vessel. Don't pray to Me that it shall not be, let go of your cherished thoughts and ambitions, let them go. If you and all the saints prayed I would not listen. I am determined to abandon the present design. I am not abandoning my eternal purposes, only the present work. Ultimately all will be well in the end. What appears to be present failure will be seen to be absolute success'.

When prayers fail you and men have let you down, when you can't make head or tail of your circumstances, remember this, you are not in the hands of a prophet or at the mercy of circumstances, nor subject to the whims of a king, you are in the hands of God. You are not what other people think you are or what you yourself thought you were going to be - you are just plain you. 'I love you and you are in My hand'. To change to Isaiah's figure, when he takes you through the waters and through the fires, don't shrink back. You're not for burning, the flames shall not kindle upon you, you're not for drowning, the waters will not overflow you. What God has to do is flood out all your pride and burn all stupid notions out of your head. He says, 'Let you and I get down to the fact that you are just you and I am that I am and I am going to start all over again with you'. Isn't that wonderful beloved? Hallelujah! The collapse is in the hands of the potter. 'You go and tell all this to Israel' He said to Jeremiah 'I'm not the kind of God that they THINK I am, I am God and they are the kind of people I think they are'.

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#### NOT MINE OWN

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That's the word of God to all hearts. The Lord enrich it in everyone. The latter end is going to be greater than the beginning. 'I created you' He says 'I formed you into Israel, I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name. I am the Holy One of Israel, I am your Saviour. You are Mine'. Hand yourself right over to God this minute and stop trying to work out your own ideas for your life. Take this right into your heart and say, 'Lord I am thine, I take my hands off my own life, I will not try to shape myself any more. O Lord, you've had a tough job with some of these set ideas I've had, I do not wonder the vessel's been so marred'. When He receives the true response from you He will instill into you His truth and make you all that He wants you to be.

Now everyone must come to honesty about this. Haven't you been trying to form yourself, clinging to ideas you've had about yourself, vainly trying to bring them to pass? You have, haven't you? The best thing to do with all your own ideas is put them to death. You are not for burning, but they are, the Lord said He was going to burn up the chaff. The Potter will not have chaff in His vessels, when He has made them they have to be vessels unto honour, meet for the master's use'. Each of God's vessels is being made by Him in His own great house not in some other persons house. Israel may have thought they were being shaped in their own house, but there were some who had a much clearer view of things than that. David was one of these, he said 'I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever'. Contrary to general ideas, he did not think that going through the valley of the shadow of death had to do with the process of physical death, he passed through the shadow of death many times. David went into the valley of the shadow of death when he went to face Goliath. Goliath had slain all Israel - in heart they were all as dead men, before him they couldn't do anything. David went down into the valley though, he walked through that valley of the shadow of death that day and came out triumphant. Amen.

Whatever you do, take yourself out of your own hands and out of the hands of everybody else and put yourself in the hands of the Lord again. 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people' is God's word to us. Whatever God has to do with you today, let Him do it. Whenever we break the bread and drink the wine of communion we receive a communication too. These are symbols of the man who went through the darkest of all valleys that His Father should raise Him from the dead and make Him again. Oh, what He made Him. Jesus had to go, He just had to go. He didn't say 'Father I can't' - He knew He could and He went right through. He did not hold back and say, 'Oh but what will happen to everything if I do this'. Instead He said 'Destroy this temple'. He knew the 'Potter' would make it again another vessel. He placed Himself in His Father's hands, and before He left the earth, He placed His disciples there too. He proved His Father to the utmost degree. Will you do that? Will you put yourself right in His hands? Don't hold back for fear or doubts. Don't hold back because of pre-suppositions and don't hold back because somebody has heaped all kinds of flattering things upon your head. 'O Lord who is like unto Thee? What engineer, what scientist, what artist, what sculptor is like Thee? Thou Creator of all things and me. Lord I am in Thy hands'. Amen. He will make something wonderful of us all.

GWN

#### NOT A NEW COVENANT VOICE

Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms.

BERTRAND RUSSELL

# GOD IN THE MIDST OF THINGS

BERNARD HULL

## IN CHRIST IN 'THINGS'

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It is amazing to observe the way the Lord chooses moments, incidents and happenings in our lives as a background against which to reveal truth concerning Himself which is most life changing. One of the chief joys of those who are going on in the Lord is to watch for, and see the masterly workings of God in the affairs of men, of individuals, churches, nations, indeed in every phase of human life. One of the greatest results of knowing that 'Christ is in me', is to begin to see that I am 'in Christ'! I am not in the midst of the haphazard, tossed around in a topsy turvy world. I am 'in Him' in this world; indeed, this world is in Him even though it lies in the wicked one! It is in this way that we are progressively set free from the notions of fate, fortune, chance and every alternative explanation to the meaning and non-meaning of things. Instead we awake to the fact that 'all things are now at work for me', and in them I find God to be 'all in all'.

## BORN FROM ABOVE AND GIVEN PERSPECTIVE

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Here I am then, one in whom the Lord dwells, yet left down here in this world - and why? Chiefly that here, in the midst of all things, I should discover God. To find Him as He discloses Himself in manifold ways till all my heart is filled with the wonder of Him. Yes, it is true that we are looking for a city - certainly we are here to serve Him and to make Him known. However, to find out the greatness of His loving heart is the best of all. If our heart is on this route of discovery then things seemingly disjointed and muddled begin to be aflame with purpose and things carelessly disposed here and there are seen to have shape, form and beauty. God is at work; nothing is vague or without its place. The Lord Jesus declared that it was impossible to see the 'realm' (kingdom or ruling hand) of God unless a man had been born from above. He went even further than that: He said that unless a man had been born from above he could not enter into that rule and realm of God, that is, into full and glorious co-operation with that which the Lord is doing. How can we co-operate with that which we cannot see? How can we enter in and partake joyously in that which is hid from us? So, in regeneration, among other things, the power of God works to make us alive to see the workings of the Lord in the apparent chaos of things and to discern the hand of the Lord in the ebb and flow of the tides of

events in our personal lives and the history of the world. Seen with the eye of faith things cease to be meaningless, a chaotic jumble! It is not that the Lord makes us become intensely mystical, investing things with great spiritual import. Rather, we come to trust that in all things the hand of our loving Shepherd is at work to perfect us and to display His own great heart. An old saying once common in Christian circles was 'He silently plans for you in love'. That captures something of this truth. It is most precious and true.

## DESIGN IN CHAOS

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Looking back over the previous paragraphs I notice that I have used the word 'things' ten times already! It seems that our lives are full of this or that 'thing'. 'Things' are always happening to us! Perhaps that is not entirely true, there are times when we complain that no 'thing' is happening! Everyone of us can testify to many ordinary things taking place in our lives, and perhaps just a few extraordinary things. We all have the habitual, mundane, and some would say boring 'things' happening from day to day. A great transformation begins in the heart that comes to see that there is no 'thing' which the Lord is not ordering unto good. God is leading us to greater knowledge of Himself, of His ways and of His grace. Our God is the great original mind. He is genius. There is no 'chance' in Him. His great design is being worked out. Even in things against us, He works for good, making them to serve His perfect end. He is majestic in all His ways. In all He does, in the midst of all the muddle, He is able to reveal Himself to our hearts as we are ready to receive. He knows the moments when the heart is ripe to receive some disclosure of Himself. His self-disclosures are progressive, they depend upon our obedience to that which He has already made known to us. His fixed intention is simply that we may 'grow up in Him in all things'. Steadily our hearts are brought to the knowledge of Him. If this be worked out in us He shall be satisfied and we shall be in perfect rest. Our God orchestrates the incidents and events in which He will make something of Himself more fully known. Life is not a series of vague happenings. Nothing is coincidence. God oversees all. Often His timings and doings towards us are surprising. We had not expected that He would make Himself known to us there, or in that! Sometimes the most profound discovery of Him is made in the midst of the mundane. All discovery of God is profound: there is nothing shallow and certainly nothing mundane.

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## THE GREATEST DISCOVERY?

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Perhaps the greatest discovery God grants us concerning Himself is that HE IS. 'I AM' is His chosen Name; 'the Great Unchanging One', He who is, who was and is to come. It was to Moses that God first declared His name to be 'I AM THAT I AM'. Not to a strong and virile Moses, full of a sense of destiny, zealous to fulfil his mission, did this disclosure of God's being come. Rather to a humbled eighty year old, walking in the midst of ordinary things. In the sublime and rugged heights of the mount he saw and heard the extraordinary - he found God to be the Great Unchanging One who had been pursuing His wise purposes whilst Moses has been wandering in the land of forgetfulness. What amazing things Moses had passed through in his eighty years. From fugitive infant loose upon the waters of the Nile to pampered prince in Pharaoh's palace. How long ago that all seemed to him now. How things had changed. He had exchanged the palace for a bedouin tent and lived in quietude, wondering where he had gone wrong? Had he misinterpreted the strange instinctual sense of destiny that had been with him from earliest days? Surely he had; certainly the God he dimly knew had withdrawn Himself, displeased. It was all so humbling. The great 'I' of Moses had become meek; he was a different man. In earlier years 'I am raised up to deliver the people' had been his cry. Now, that note is heard no more. What a wonder then to turn aside and see the bush that burns and is not consumed, and find that God is unchanged as to His purposes, still burning in His will to deliver the people. God the great 'I AM'. How full of awe are these moments when the God of the fixed purpose is discovered to the heart; it is frightening, yet wonderful, and much more, that words cannot describe.

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## THE COMFORTED WOMAN

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God always has been and ever shall be the 'I AM'. However, there is a 'first time' for us to be shown of God that HE IS. The first time that the Lord Jesus revealed Himself as the 'I AM' was to a woman. That is significant. It is another aspect of the redeeming work of God. The devil used woman first; made himself known to her and then through her to the man Adam. The essence of the devil's temptation was, 'you shall be ... gods'. By following his philosophy the woman and man would discover that they were 'I am'. It was a terrible discovery which plunged mankind into darkness. Witness now the coming of the Lord Jesus to redeem. He shows how the woman who had been thus used of the wicked one shall be lovingly used of God to be the vehicle for the truth that God is the great 'I AM'. It is the redemption of the woman's vulnerabilities. The occasion that the Lord showed Himself as 'I AM' took place by a well. Knowledge of God is the fountain of life! To the woman it was an ordinary day. She was engaged in her common tasks.

Her life was morally corrupt but she was a thirsty heart. She had longed for love and the security love brings, but such a love had eluded her. She was unsatisfied. She got on with her business, little knowing that the God she dimly knew had her in His eye and was to choose such a day to reveal Himself to her in a life changing way.

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## 'I AM'...WATER FOR THE THIRSTY

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We know the story so well. It is recorded in John's gospel chapter four. A lonely woman, broken in heart, rejected of society and sick in soul. She thirsted for a love she had never yet found. She sought for a relationship with one who could be a great secure rock in whom she could hide and be safe. Her life had been a series of transient commitments; 'thou hast had ...', they had come, then gone, and she was left with nothing but memories and hurt. So many 'things' had taken place in her life yet there seemed no shape or form at all, no place to anchor, no rest. The Jewish stranger who engaged her in conversation seemed to put His finger directly upon the basic needs and insecurities of her heart. He spoke of water that He could give which would satisfy, once and for all, the elemental thirst of her soul. She knew He was a prophet, one speaking from the depths of spiritual understanding. Perhaps this seer could answer a question which has irked her much. She had some religious security in her life, a sense of God, hazy it is true, but nevertheless she knew that God is. 'Where is God to be worshipped?' This was her query; in the Samaritan-built temple on Gerizim, or in the place in Jerusalem which the Jews use? Where could she find the face of God, the place where, in His presence, she could be brought to rest from all her turmoils and guilt? Calmly and kindly Jesus answered the woman. He shared something of the being of God: 'God is a spirit'. He is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, not in this place or that. He is not limited to a geographical spot, bound to a locality; He is everywhere, accessible to all who will turn to Him in their spirits in reality. Even now He is seeking such to worship Him, longing for those who will move to Him wherever they are.

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## A DAY OF DAWNING IN THE MIDST OF 'THINGS'

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To the woman at the well these utterances of the Lord Jesus are amazing; they are too much for her really. She knows that there is One to come, 'the Messiah', 'when He is come, He will tell us all things'. It is most precious to note that she had faith that One would come who would interpret all 'things'. He would show their meaning and make known the pattern in the chaos of circumstances as it seemed to her. Jesus said to her, 'I that speak to thee AM'. Did she catch what He said? Did the wonder begin to dawn at that moment? The 'I AM' was here with her. The Rock had come, everlasting security was hers in Him. He had drawn near to her and disclosed Himself to her. In doing this God had shown her that

He saw her, knew her, and loved her. He had not forgotten her but had heard her prayers and knew the unspoken longings of her heart too. The mind of man cannot catch up nor contain the implications of the revelation of God as 'I AM' when it comes. Again and again we need to see Him thus made known to our hearts, but there is always a first time. It is always an intensely private moment; it was for her. Everything stood still, all was answered and peace had

come. In the midst of the middle of the circumstances of this woman's life the Lord showed Himself to her! Light of God dawned in the midst of a mundane day. The great 'I AM' came to a lonely, lost woman when all was ripe in her to receive. It was an eternal moment. It was the closing of that which was passed and the opening of that which was to come. Her heart had found its rest in God.

BH

## EDITOR

### A-Z OF SMALL BIBLE WORDS

#### A = AMEN

Transliterated into Greek, and modern language, this Hebrew word has continued a liturgical usage which originated in Old Testament times, at least as early as the Exile in Babylon (cf. Deut. 27:15 ff, Psalm 106:48). In the Gospels we find a different, though related, meaning; 'truly' (AV and RV 'verily') giving a solemn emphasis. This is common, and confined to utterances of Jesus. In John's gospel the AMEN is always doubled.

Elsewhere in the New Testament the original liturgical sense predominates, and it expresses assent to a prayer or wish. Paul uses it five times at the end of one epistle, and this is copied in other epistles. Almost without exception, the New Testament AMEN expresses the feeling of an individual, but we find the corporate usage in Rev. 5:14 & 19:4 (cf. 1 Cor. 14:16, 2 Cor. 1:20) and there is no doubt that the practice of the early church followed that of the synagogue expression of congregational activity.

(Once in the New Testament 'AMEN' is a title of

Christ, Rev. 3:14, because through Him the purposes of God are established. 2 Cor. 1:20. W.E. Vine Expository Dictionary) ED.

#### ONE BAPTISM

There is only one baptism in the Church of Christ - just as there is one Lord, one faith, one Father, one Spirit and one body (Eph. 4:4). Baptism is a symbol therefore of the outward act of an inward grace that pictures the universality of Christ: as nations and classes drink of the one Spirit: Jew and Gentile, master and servant are baptized together (1 Cor. 12:13, Gal. 3:27 f). All Christian baptism is baptism of the Holy Spirit, the outpouring from on high of the Messianic age: indeed, that is what distinguished it from the baptism of John, which was baptism only in water (Mark 1:8, Matt. 3:11, Luke 3:16, John 1:33, Acts 1:5, 11:16 & 19:1/7). In the baptism of the individual Christian, he was ordained to the ministry of Christ's Church and given his personal outpouring of the Spirit to enable him to fulfil his God-given ministry (1 Cor. 12:4-13, Eph. 4:7). He was 'sealed' with the Holy Spirit, and he was anointed King and priest in the new Israel of God.

ED.

Thy business is, if thou wouldst have salvation, to see if Christ be thine, with all His benefits; whether He hath covered thee with His righteousness, whether thou art planted into Him, and whether thou have faith in Him, so as to make a life out of Him, and to conform thee to Him.

JOHN BUNYAN

#### REVIVAL AT REDRUTH, CORNWALL, WHICH CONTINUED FOR NINE SUCCESSIVE DAYS IN 1814

Hundreds were crying for mercy at once. Some remained in great distress of soul for one hour, some for two, some six, some nine, twelve and fifteen hours before the Lord spoke peace in their souls - then they would rise, extend their arms and proclaim the wonderful works of God with such energy that bystanders would be struck in a moment and fall to the ground and roar for the disquieture of their souls.

SELECTED

# THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

NORMAN MEETEN

This morning before I sat down to write this article, the word from 1 Cor. 2:2 came with significance and conviction:

'For I am determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified'

Jesus is the one great central theme of the Gospel. Jesus is the Gospel. In Him we move and have our being. He is our all in all. Apart from Him nothing has any eternal significance or meaning. Christ is our life. In Hebrews 13:21 we read:

'Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen'.

Here we have God's great plan 'to make you perfect'. We find the same truth in James 1:4 'But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing'. Peter points us to the same truth in 1 Pet. 5:10, 'But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you'.

The Apostle Paul expresses it as his wish in 2 Cor. 13:9, and in verse 11 it comes as a command 'Be perfect' - catching up the Spirit of Jesus Himself when He said in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:48) 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect'.

Many argue with the word perfection. One hardly dares mention it before being accused of the error of 'sinless perfection' - but the word and theme is repetitive in the New Testament. Paul says 'That ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God'.

Jesus is the ultimate perfection, but in Hebrews 2:10 and 5:8/9 we read of Him being perfected. Perfection - perfected! His perfection was manifested in His ministry. It is beyond what the human mind can comprehend. His purpose is to bring us into His perfections. It is a continuous state. Paul says in Phil. 3:12/14, 'Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect ... I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus'.

If we are ever to attain unto that which God has in view for us, then we need to agree with this aim and identify ourselves with it. God's aim is to make you perfect - unto that our God works all things (Rom. 8:28). John tells us in his first letter, chapter 3:2

'Beloved, now are we the sons of God and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is'. The psalmist says a similar thing in Psalm 17:15 'As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness'. We shall be like Him - perfection!

Many say this is an impossible standard. We are setting the standard too high. The prophet said 'Lift up lift up a standard for the people' - that standard is Jesus and by His Spirit His desire is to reproduce that standard in you and me. Jesus says 'If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto Me'. Historically this was done at Calvary - free for all - but its outworking and continuity is to be manifest in us. The Apostle Paul speaks of himself 'the evidence of Jesus Christ and Him crucified'. He was the proof that what Jesus did on the cross really works. His life was the demonstration that the truth of the Sermon on the Mount was realizable now - from one degree of glory to another.

Now anyone who has failed to live up to God's standard as it is revealed in the New Testament will have come to one conclusion: they are miserable failures. It is impossible. The only person who can live the Christian life is Jesus. This is simply what He has come to do in you and me. What we can't do - He can. The glorious truth of the Gospel is not what I can do, but what God in Christ can and will do in and through me as I believe in Him. Hebrews 13:21 says 'working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight'. 'God worketh in me' says Paul - 'According to the power that worketh in us' he writes to the Ephesians. This is the great 'mystery' 'Christ in you, the hope of glory'.

Being a Christian, seeking to attain unto perfection is realized not by my working for Jesus, but by allowing Him to work in me. This is why the phrase 'Through Jesus Christ' is so significant and wonderful. It's all going to be accomplished 'through Jesus Christ'. What I cannot do, He will accomplish - make you perfect, (do you believe it?), through Jesus Christ. In the last two chapters of Hebrews, there are five wonderful truths that will give us a greater understanding and realization of what God is seeking to accomplish in our lives - 'make you perfect'.

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## 1. LOOKING UNTO JESUS...

### CONSIDER HIM (HEB.12:2,3)

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The context illustrates our truth from the field of athletics. In my younger days I was an athlete -

today my eldest son has taken up long distance running. Sometimes I go to watch him. I see him start, and I see him finish. Both he and I know that he would never win a race unless he set his heart and eye on the goal. Jesus is our goal - look unto Him. He is perfection. One glimpse of Him and you will be spoilt for all lesser things. The reason why many fall by the wayside and so never attain is because they are looking at lesser things. They compare themselves with others. They are like the man who plants a seed and keeps digging it up to see how it is getting on. They look at themselves. That is guaranteed to cause you to despair. Look unto Jesus. He is the author - the great initiator of our faith - our salvation. Before we ever were, He knew us. Before we ever sinned He made provision for us. 'The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world'. He has a plan of love in heaven for us.

In John 4 we have the story that is commonly known as the woman at the well. But it is not the story of the woman at the well, it is the story of Jesus at the well. Jesus was there first. The woman had been there many times before - more than she could number, but it hadn't made any difference to her. It hadn't cleansed her guilt, it hadn't comforted her loneliness, it hadn't taken away her fear, it hadn't delivered her of her demons. It hadn't solved her relationships, it hadn't met her need. She was still ashamed, unclean, desperate, lonely, empty, afraid. All the ravages of satan and contamination of sin tormented her heart and soul and body. But then Jesus came. Oh! what a difference. When Jesus comes, everything changes. Her night was turned to day. Her sorrow was turned to joy. Her fear was replaced by comfort - her despair to hope. Her loneliness was banished by the presence of Jesus. He had come. He met her need - cleansed her sins - put springs of living water within, so that when she went home she was able to say, 'come, see a man' - the man Jesus. He had taken the initiative in her life. He is the author. Look unto Jesus. Not only is He the author, but also the finisher, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, and the first and the last. What He begins, He commits Himself to complete. Phil. 1:6 'Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ'.

It is so wonderful that God is not like many of us. How many things do we start but never finish. There is an old saying 'A new broom sweeps clean'. We all like new things - new beginnings. But that for which God looks is consistency - stickability - steadfastness - the ability to see a thing through. 'He who endures unto the end shall be saved'. That is what Jesus did and continues to do in relationship to you and me. We will only win the race as we look unto Jesus - then we will obtain the crown - perfection.

Look unto Jesus - the author and finisher. He will take care of all that goes in between. He doesn't

only promise to save us - but 'keeps us from stumbling' (Jude 24) and in that great day will present us 'faultless before His throne with exceeding great joy' - perfect!

'Jesus is the mediator' (Heb. 12:24)

'Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the City of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerate company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born which are written in heaven and to God the Judge of all and to the spirits of just men made PERFECT and to JESUS the mediator of the new covenant'.

In the Hebrew Epistle, Jesus is revealed as God's great High Priest! In this role His function is two-fold. He is our surety before God. Having fulfilled His role as the Lamb/Victim He then becomes Priest.

'Both Priest and Victim'

He took the blood of His own offering from the altar of Calvary and bore it away to heaven and presented it at the Throne of Grace for the redemption of the whole human race. When the Father saw the blood He was satisfied. Jesus' offering was sufficient. Heb. 10:14 tells us 'For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us'. Having accomplished this great act, He received in exchange for the blood the Holy Ghost and having received the promise of the Father (Acts 2:33) He became:

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## 2. MEDIATOR FROM GOD TO MAN

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'There is one mediator between God and men and that is the man Christ Jesus' (1 Tim. 2:5).

By the Holy Ghost, Jesus the mediator is dispensing all the benefits of the purchased blood of Jesus - all the content of the new covenant of grace.

'All things are yours - and you are Christ's - Christ is God's' (1 Cor. 3:22/23).

He promises He will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly. He gives the Spirit without measure. Everything that you or I will ever need to enable us to live godly lives in Christ Jesus is available unto us all, (2 Pet. 1:3). It's not dependent upon our resources but His. We must not limit God. That was the sin of Israel - Jesus is our mediator.

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## 3. 'JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME' (HEB. 13:8)

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This tells me that Jesus doesn't change - He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

'As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen'

But how many really believe that? What God says in the beginning He says at the end. He never changes His mind. He is constant - consistent, undeviating and wonderful! Where would we be if He was always changing His mind? One of the secrets of Bible Study is to discover God's original thoughts, ideas and words in the scripture. Genesis is the book of Beginnings. Underline His thought on each new subject and then follow it through the scriptures. You will end where you begin. Let me give you just one example of this. Perhaps one of the most important -

'Let us make man in our own image' (Gen. 1:26)

That was God's first statement concerning man. That was His desire for man - that was His will. Sin came and spoilt all that. Man became so much less than God intended him to be. But that hasn't altered God's mind or plan. 'He changeth not'.

When Jesus came into the world He was called 'the image of the invisible God'. He was the first man ever to be what God intended all men to be. As the Son of God He shows us what God is like. As the man He showed what man can and should be like.

Jesus was God's first normal man. There were no 'real' men between Adam and Jesus. Adam was God's first man. Jesus is God's second man - but He is also called the first born of every creature (Col. 1:15) - because Adam failed to realize the full potential of manhood and Jesus perfected it.

As a result of the death, resurrection and glorification of Jesus, and the sending of the Holy Ghost, Paul tells us in 2 Cor. 'Here are all ... changed into the same image from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord'.

As Romans 8:29, 'For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren'. By the Spirit we are re-instated back into that position that Adam forfeited at the fall. God's original purpose is perfected in Christ and is being perfected in us in Him.

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#### 4. WHEREFORE JESUS ALSO ... WITHOUT THE CAMP (HEB. 13:12,13)

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Jesus has accomplished everything for our perfecting. His desire is now that we should be involved and committed to Him 'that we might fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the Church' (Col. 1:24)

Jesus has saved us to involve us in the economy of His kingdom. 'We are workers together with Him' (2 Cor. 6:1).

As His body on the earth we become the instrument of the expression of His nature - His will. 'Present your body ... that you might prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God' (Rom 12:1/2).

This is only possible as we live dependently upon Him. Apart from Him we can do nothing - it's all 'through Jesus Christ'.

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#### 5. OUR LORD JESUS - THAT GREAT SHEPHERD

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The picture of Jesus as the shepherd is one of the most beautiful in scripture. 'The Lord is my Shepherd' - the most well known and loved psalm.

In John 10 He is called the Good Shepherd.

In 1 Pet. 5 He is the Chief Shepherd.

In Hebrews 13 He is the Great Shepherd.

The teaching of Jesus in John 10 surpasses all other. In verses 1/2 He is portrayed as both door and Shepherd. That is true. There is no inconsistency or muddle. The Shepherd lay in the hole in the wall of the sheepfold at night, as the door to protect the sheep. He gives life - abundant life to the sheep. He lays down His life in order to accomplish that. He knows all His sheep by name. He leads them and feeds them. He cares for them and ultimately declares that there are other sheep, 'Them also I must bring'. Oh! What a Shepherd - He seeks and saves that which is lost with one great end in view - that He should make you perfect - Through Jesus Christ.

NM

## WITH NO DARKNESS AT ALL - PART FOUR

GEORGE W. NORTH

WHEN OUR LORD spoke to the woman who could in no wise lift up herself in the synagogue that Sabbath day long ago, he set the whole matter of healing and deliverance in true perspective. He said, 'Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity'; thereby giving

His personal authority for the distinction between these two equally important ministries. For whereas the ruler of the synagogue thought she needed healing only, saying '... Come and be healed', Jesus said she was 'bound by satan', and acted accordingly.

Perhaps it is significant that it is Dr. Luke who records this incident, for undoubtedly medical science would have given a suitable Latin name to her affliction, or else, perhaps, the name of its discoverer. Almost certainly she would have been given some form of treatment considered best for her need - and what a debt of gratitude we owe to the medical profession! What would the world have done without it? - But the Holy Ghost records that she had a spirit of infirmity, and that she was bound by it, and there is no medical, surgical or therapeutic treatment for that!

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## PHYSICAL SICKNESS

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So clear is it that she was bound and only needed 'loosing from this bond', that our Lord deliberately likened His action to unloosing animals from their stalls and leading them away to watering. There was not the slightest suggestion that the animals were in any way sick or needed healing. Jesus was plainly saying to the ruler of the synagogue and to all who have ears to hear, that just as an animal is tied with a rope by a man, so this woman was tied up, physically bound, with a spirit of infirmity by satan - and had been so for eighteen years.

It must not be supposed that Luke was using an archaic form of speech when he referred to this woman's affliction in such terms, nor that the Lord was merely accommodating Himself to the primitive thought-forms of the day. Surely if He had lived in the twentieth century He would have said exactly the same things in the same words. He spoke eternal truth; so did the Gospel writers. That doctors today do not use such expressions only reveals their ignorance or unbelief, not the Holy Spirit's.

Careful meditation on the truth of this incident will furnish much enlightening detail relating to the whole field of knowledge concerning the ministry of deliverance. For the moment just one further point will suffice. The Lord, by this miracle, leaves us in no doubt as to His attitude towards people so bound: quite simply, they ought to be freed.

Whatever the Pharisees or the people thought; whatever the place or the day; Jesus' view was that this woman ought not to be bound by satan; and for three very good reasons: (1) The desires, intentions and concern of God towards men as revealed in Jesus Christ. (2) The fact that she was a daughter of Abraham, which qualified her for all that God had committed Himself to, and intended by, His promises to the patriarch, now being fulfilled in Christ; and (3) She was a believer according to her understanding of the light then shining. True, it is unlikely that she knew what her privileges were, or that she was victimized by satan and bound by a spirit power; nevertheless, with Jesus present, her darkness and ignorance were discounted, her day of deliverance had dawned. She came at His call, was loosed and thereby healed.

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## SATANIC BONDAGE

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If we take the view that by commandment of God only basic and necessary duties were to be done on the Sabbath day, then it is clear from this incident that Jesus considered it absolutely necessary for people to be delivered from all satanic bonds as part of God's normal provision for mankind.

As in this case, an evil spirit was causing infirmity of the flesh by binding its victim in satan's name, so today all sorts of people are bound by all sorts of spirits, manifesting themselves in many different ways. This is one of satan's chief ways of bringing the human race under bondage to himself. For whilst producing symptoms which we may recognize as physical, mental, nervous or emotional, these spirits remain undetected and indeed to the human mind, undetectable, in spite of all its scientific attempts at diagnosis and prognosis.

Many people today, thought to be in need of healing only, have a far deeper need, spiritual in character, invisible in substance, evil in nature, binding in power, sickening in effect, and destructive by intention, all originating from satan. In all such cases the spirit-being which is the cause of the trouble must be sent away, cast out from the person upon whom it lives like a parasite and binds like a slavish animal.

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## THE FIG TREE SYSTEM

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This account is recorded in Luke's narrative following the parable of the Fig Tree and preceding that of the Mustard Seed. It is the centre piece; and a most important and highly significant one too. It reveals far more of spiritual principle and scriptural truth than the bare facts of the miracle itself indicate. For it illustrates why, after some three years of ministry to His nation, followed by a further period of intensive labour up until His barbaric crucifixion, the Lord in the end had to submit to the cutting down of the Fig Tree.

The attitude of the ruler of the synagogue showed that all he stood for, of which the fig tree was a symbol, was just cumbering the ground, getting in God's way and occupying good space that could better be taken up by something more useful. There was no longer any sensible reason why the Jewish system of religion should continue to function. Fruitless over hundreds of years in the past, it failed to respond even to the patient toil of its Husbandman-God, now manifest in the flesh. There was therefore no spiritual, moral or political justification for its existence.

The nation that should have stood for and been the instrument of deliverance was blocking the way of its

greatest Son as He sought to redeem its name and bring deliverance to mankind. So Jesus condemned their hypocrisy; but they were stung too deeply and He was crucified for His great love to them.

Cast out and crucified by His own nation, this was the very planting of God. The vineyard was to be given to others who would render the fruits in their season. 'Did ye never read in the scriptures', asked Jesus, 'The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? ... therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof' (Matt. 21:42/3).

That nation is the 'chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people ...' of which Peter speaks and constitutes the Church in the New Testament meaning of that word. So the Church is now to take the position and privileges of the nation it has replaced by the direct action of God, and must bring forth the fruits he is seeking.

Tragically enough and prejudicing this objective, there abounds in the churches a lot of needless and unwarrantable ignorance concerning the whole matter of spirit activity. And consequently great fear possesses many hearts and confuses many minds. Thus satan is able to foster precisely the right spiritual, mental and emotional atmosphere for the operation of his own evil hosts. May God grant a great breath of spiritual understanding and sanity to sweep over us all so that a basis of truth and love be laid, and ignorance and fear be banished from all hearts.

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## A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

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To this end it would be good if we paid serious attention to our terminology with a view to revising our forms of speech on this important subject. Certainly, it would be better if such phrases as 'you have a devil' or 'you are demon possessed' were virtually dropped from our vocabulary, except in cases where it is DEFINITELY REVEALED BY THE HOLY GHOST as being specifically true of a person. And this for love's sake as well as truth's. For, even when such a state is attested by the Holy Ghost as being the case, it is not always wise, much less loving, to say as much to the person in question.

One can scarcely comprehend the horrifying shock that floods a person upon hearing that he or she has a demon. It is overwhelming and frightening in the extreme to many sensitive souls just to realize that there is even the possibility of such a thing happening to them - let alone that it is actually true.

Careful comparative Bible reading makes plain that whilst some are possessed, many more, in fact by far the greater number may be affected only to a degree, small or great, by evil spirits. To be possessed by a demon is to be 'demonized' which may be defined as

taking on the nature and expressing the character and personality of a demon. That is one thing. And by comparison, merely to be 'oppressed' or 'vexed' or 'bound' by an evil spirit is quite another thing. Patently, these latter words are descriptive of conditions far less comprehensive or frightening than the former.

It is said that a little knowledge is dangerous, and indeed we must all confess merely to know in part; and we must discipline ourselves in charity to put away such things as the childish abuse of spiritual gifts. Such abuse quickly reveals to the penetrative observer a lack or even a complete absence of real love without which all spiritual gifts are but sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.

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## GUESSWORK - OR DISCERNMENT?

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Though there are certain well-defined symptoms, readily observable to the knowing eye, which allow almost conclusive diagnosis to be made in many cases, much damage can be and has been done and many mistakes have been and will continue to be made, except the indispensable gifts of 'discerning of spirits' and the 'word of knowledge' be in operation. It is therefore imperative that the utmost caution and love be exercised in what we say to those we minister to; remembering that even if the Holy Spirit has vouchsafed clear understanding in any particular case, this does not mean that such information is to be blurted out for all to hear.

Moreover, since the Holy Spirit classifies and makes distinction between those who are 'lunatic' and those who are 'demonized', beside those who are 'oppressed', or 'vexed', or 'bound' it ill becomes us to lump together everyone who manifests peculiar traits and/or periodic abnormal symptoms into one heap and label them all 'demon possessed', or even to use some phrase less offensive. Neither, indeed, are we to assume that all such abnormalities are necessarily of demon origin at all. Presumably the brain can be physically injured just like the rest of the body; and also one can be emotionally sick through events which only indirectly can be attributed to the devil.

For too long there has been far too much idle speaking, often by complete 'amateurs' in this ministry, using loose phraseology. Of course, the intention behind it has been good enough; there was nothing malicious about it; it was just lamentably ill-informed - that is all - but often with devastating consequences, of which, many a time, the 'amateurs' themselves have been quite oblivious - it is left for others, more mature in these matters, to minister loving restoration.

There is another widespread and fundamental error common enough in this realm, namely, failure to discern between what must be exorcised and what must be crucified. There is a great lack of understanding here. Without question, failure to distinguish

between these two equally vital needs has been one of the greatest causes of abortive effort in the realm of deliverance.

Certainly the 'old man', the adamic nature, is the natural haunt of evil spirits, their bridge-head for interference, their ground for possession in all unregenerate men. It was to discover if there was any possible ground of this kind in Jesus Christ that the devil tested our blessed Lord. But there was no trace of the adamic nature there, nor was satan able to 'lie' it into Him. He was able truthfully to say, 'the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me'. But so long as that old nature, conceived from satan, remains in a man the possibility of some degree of demonic interference remains also.

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### CRUCIFIXION - OR EXORCISM?

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It is therefore of major importance in this series, that we understand clearly the relationship between 'nature' and 'possession'. For even as we know that 'the new man' is the ground of the fulness and total possession of the Holy Spirit; so also 'the old man' is the ground of the fulness and total possession of unholy spirits. But, even as it is lamentably true that many born again persons are not totally possessed by God, so also it is equally true, fortunately in this case, that many unregenerate men are not totally possessed (that is, indwelt) by evil spirits. In fact, it may be that only a very few are. But it does appear that most are in some way or another affected by this means from the devil (See Eph. 2:2/3); and if personal observation is to be relied on, this condition is on the increase in this country.

But to return to the matter in hand. When the presence of something evil is recognized, one must decide whether it is caused by something that needs to be crucified, to be loosed, or to be cast out. Often, we are saying, an error is made in seeking to cast out what should be crucified; or in seeking to crucify what should be cast out. Both are attempted, no doubt, in good faith, but perhaps the common mistake is failure to recognize that the human spirit, being unregenerate, is evil enough of itself, quite apart from any demonic activity or presence whatsoever.

When a man becomes regenerate he does not thereby or thereafter lose his basic human appetites, his natural, normal soulish and bodily desires. These are just part of the make-up of a human being. In themselves they are neither good nor bad. James is referring to these in his first chapter, verses 13-15. Unfortunately in the A.V. the meaning is clouded because of the use of the word 'lust'. This word in modern speech has come to have an evil content; but this is not usually the case in the New Testament. The Greek word is 'epithumia' and literally means 'over-desire'. It is the word used (in verb form) when in the upper room Jesus said: 'with desire (over-desire) I have desired to eat this passover with you' (Luke 22:15).

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### WANTED .... APOSTLES AND TEACHERS

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Now, these normal human desires do not constitute 'the old man' nor do they constitute 'the new man', but merely 'human nature'. Admittedly, the 'old man' flourishes in and manifests itself by them; but the 'new man' can adapt and use them, and in no case must these two essentially spiritual natures, 'the old man' and 'the new man', be confused or identified with these basic characteristics of the human soul and body. Paul did not say that he buffeted and brought into subjection his 'old man', but his body; that is, he refused to let his human appetites dominate him, but made them serve him. And few there be that do the same.

Even though we know that our old man is crucified with Christ, we may be assured that if we do not keep a watchful eye on these 'over-desires', with a view to disciplining them to the normal functional order consistent with the life of Jesus Christ in our mortal bodies, we shall not be able to maintain that freedom from sin which is our inheritance in Christ. Satan, taking advantage of our laxity will turn his attention to these strong desires with the direct intention of exploiting them for his own purposes and our downfall.

When a man is tempted, says James, he is drawn away from the highest by his own 'over-desire' into self indulgence; and at that moment the devil simply introduces an enticing tit-bit as a bait - a feeling, an imagination, some subtle rather than a blatantly obvious thing, such as a word, a suggestion to an appetite to create a response from within - Then, adds James, when the 'strong-desire' has conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.

Sadder still; this carnal death provides once more the natural conditions for demons to infest, exploit, lodge in, or even to indwell; thus further complicating the already serious state of such a person. Nevertheless, though such an one even degenerate apparently into a state of being seemingly 'possessed', and his conduct necessitate that he be handed over to satan for the destruction of the flesh; yet being truly regenerate, his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (See 1 Cor. 5:5).

It is fitting, therefore, that we bear in mind that no Spirit-begotten child of God can become totally possessed unto ownership by the devil. The body and soul for many reasons and for various causes may be so possessed, but not the spirit. A regenerate man may be bound, darkened, crippled, diseased, twisted and perverted by demons; but he cannot finally and fully be possessed or destroyed by this means -

- Or so it seems. This whole matter needs much prayerful study and further amplification. The churches are in great need of apostles and teachers authoritatively to establish and instruct them in truth, putting down error, that knowledge and understanding replace ignorance and guesswork in this field of ministry.

GWN

# THE BIBLE SAYS:

## DON'T COUNT ON TOMORROW!

DO NOT BOAST ABOUT TOMORROW, FOR YOU DO NOT KNOW WHAT A DAY MAY BRING FORTH.

Come now, you who say today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and get gain; whereas you do not know about tomorrow. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and shall do this or that'.

The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully - and he thought to himself ... I will say to my soul, Soul you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your

ease, eat, drink, be merry. But God said to him, Fool! this night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be? So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God - see the man who would not make God his refuge, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and sought refuge in his wealth! - lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.

What man can live and never see death? Who can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol?

The night is far gone, the day is at hand, let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day - so then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober - making the most of the time, because the days are evil.

REFERENCES: Prov. 27:1, James 4:13/15, Luke 12:16 & 18/21, Psa. 52:7, Matt. 6:20, Psa. 89:48, Rom. 13:12/13, 1 Thess. 5:6, Eph. 5:16

ED.

# THE ANOINTING - PART THREE

GEORGE W. NORTH

The truth concerning the Anointing is fully portrayed in scripture in the account of the tabernacle (and later, the temple) and the priesthood.

In Leviticus chapter 8 we may note the two-fold use of this Anointing. Moses anointed the tabernacle and its contents (v 10) and also Aaron (v 12). The first was permanent; the second was to be oft repeated. The former established the tabernacle as the place of the unchanging God's residence; the latter appointed His 'house-servants' who were not 'suffered to continue by reason of death'.

The unfolding purposes of God at a later date necessitated the tabernacle in the wilderness being replaced by the temple in the promised land. By this time the nation had multiplied and with it the number of priests. These resided in the cities of refuge whence they went up in their courses to serve in the temple and to return home again. The Anointing was the basis of their office and as many times as they reported for duty, so many times had they to be re-anointed. All of which finds its counterpart in this age of the Spirit; for real as such things were in those days, they foreshadowed the substance ordained for us now.

## ABIDING UNCTION...

John in his first epistle plainly speaks of the Anointing or Unction which abides. This corresponds

to the permanent Anointing of the tabernacle. 'Babes' as well as 'young men' and 'fathers' receive it. We are not told how to receive it; on the other hand we are assured that we have it and are exhorted to let it remain in us. Obviously, it is intended to be permanent, without need of renewal; obedience to it, and abiding in it, as it abides in us, are the two indispensable qualifications for its retention. The development of eternal life in us depends upon it.

This Anointing is that gracious TEACHING FACILITY placed within all God's children whereby they 'know' and 'know of' all things. By the Anointing we 'know' (Note! 'Know' not 'believe') the substance, nature and quality of persons and things. To prove it fully, it must be utterly relied upon and never negated or contradicted. By it, even a babe in Christ may determine his actions and reactions on all occasions. It works involuntarily and intuitively and is the sure guidance of the Spirit.

This Unction is independent of the human understanding and owes nothing to man's intellect, nevertheless it works through these media, teaching them all things, leading them into all truth. In the obedient child the will acts in conformity to the knowledge thus gained, whereupon character is formed. As the habit of obedience is practised, growth is promoted unto 'fatherhood' and maturity. This is that 'walking in the light' of which John speaks and is the only path of Life known to him. Being led unto truth he walks in it voluntarily.

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## ...BUILT-IN RADAR!

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When some thing or person or spirit is rejected by the Unction within, a person becomes aware of a complete inward inability to be at one with (or: to feel at peace about) that thing, person or spirit. Recognition of this and obedience to it will unfailingly keep all God's children from evil. Understanding of the working of this Anointing has been attained when we recognize that what it unites with is of God and is of its own substance, nature and quality. What it rejects is false.

Thus it was in the tabernacle. The furniture and furnishings were all made exclusively to God's pattern and were under no circumstances to be reproduced or copied. But the mark of their genuineness was not correct size, shape, quality, weight, material, weave or colour - exact as those had to be. The Anointing alone was the hallmark of acceptance. All those oddly shaped and assorted things bore the distinctive stains. They were united in one common bond. Diverse objects became a unity by the Anointing.

In this way the Unction that we have received distinguishes and unites God's children. As each drop of the sacred oil contained the virtue of the whole, so we who are 'at one' with Christ, become 'at one' within ourselves. A harmony is attained between spirit, soul and body of the same kind that exists between Father, Son and Holy Ghost. And out from this as each merging drop flowed together in one volume of Anointing, there springs a harmony with each member in the body of Christ. This is the consummation of that inward 'knowledge'.

All activities of the spiritual life must function within this Anointing. Apart from it they are quite useless. The outgoing ministries of prophet and king, equally with the in-working ministry of the priest, must function within and 'as from' this original and fundamental Anointing. The Anointing is the specific 'centre of gravity' of all the spiritual life; the secret, basic qualification for all further Anointings for service.

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## IN THE MANNER OF MARK 16...

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It is vital at this juncture to grasp the significance of the Anointing for service AS DISTINCT FROM THE INITIAL BAPTISM-ANOINTING. Prior to Pentecost during the earthly life-time of Jesus, first the twelve apostles and later the seventy other disciples functioned in what may be described as deliverance ministries under the direct authorization of Christ.

It is important that we notice two things about them: (1) They did not know or preach a 'full gospel' as we know it today, for Jesus had neither been crucified nor raised from the dead. (2) They were not baptized in the Holy Ghost, for as yet the Lord Jesus was not yet glorified. Despite these very great

handicaps they were commissioned to preach the gospel, heal the sick, cleanse the leper, cast out demons and raise the dead. This they did in a manner seldom, if ever, witnessed among us today - certainly not by the writer.

This points to a fact perhaps not sufficiently recognized amongst us - that, strictly speaking, sign or miracle ministry is not by the baptism in the Spirit but by the Anointing with the Spirit.

In those days repentance, forgiveness, personal acknowledgement of and allegiance to the King were sufficient for the privilege of a place in Christ's kingdom and promotion to official representation. By right of His own Anointing the Lord empowered others to act in His name, delegating authority to as many of His chosen subjects as He would. But now it is by the initiating baptism in the Spirit that the enabling power is bestowed (Acts 1:8).

Formerly from without, it is now from within. The King now works through identification rather than delegation. The Anointing upon this basic power-condition is the authorizing enablement to serve the Lord IN THE MANNER DESCRIBED IN MARK 16:17-20 AND BY THE MEANS RECORDED IN 1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 12.

Peter, chief spokesman of the early Christians specifically stated that they did nothing by their own power or holiness. These people lived and loved and did everything in the Anointing that remained in them as the constant renewal of their inaugural baptism.

Ideally, as in Exodus chapter forty, the tabernacle and its ministers were all anointed together. So ideally today, the Anointing that remains and the Anointing that is renewable should be our experience at the same time - all the time! But under the old order, sometimes men were brought into the heavenly ministry by personal Anointings years after the original one. So today, on the basis of the original baptism-anointing, men may experience renewals of that Anointing for other or continued or extended service for the Lord.

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## ...BY THE MEANS OF 1 COR. 12

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King David, himself an anointed man, seeking to hold together his many subjects and weld them into one holy people wrote a Psalm in which he reveals his grasp of the truth we are considering - Psalm 133. He saw the spiritual significance foreshadowed in Aaron's Anointing and wrote of it thus - BRETHREN DWELLING TOGETHER IN UNITY ... LIKE THE PRECIOUS OINTMENT (ANOINTING) ... UPON THE HEAD ... RUNNING DOWN ... DOWN TO THE 'MOUTH' OF THE GARMENTS ... AS THE DEW ... THAT DESCENDS UPON ...! There, by such means, under such conditions, through such a 'mouth', God commands the blessing, even life for evermore!

David saw that the deepest truth taught by the Anointing is unity based upon union. We have

previously noticed that the anointing oil itself was a blend of spices compounded in olive oil - a union. As the oil flowed down over Aaron's head and beard and clothes it brought its own unity to the separate articles of clothing he wore, joining each into a whole. This is a picture of a church - Brethren dwelling together in unity ... God commanding the blessing.

It is also the truth about the Anointing. The Anointing must be that which is upon the Head - the blessed Lord Jesus. Moreover it must come down - it cannot be worked up! It is soft, gentle, flowing, persuasive, penetrating, saturating, settling like dew in the gathering dusk of the silent night. Precious as the holy ointment on Jesus' head, exquisitely peaceful as the lighting of the Dove on His shoulder that day in Jordan.

This is the Anointing. Only this can make a meeting or a man or a moment useful for God. We may have known a mighty baptism in the Spirit, engulfing our being and captivating our emotion so that our heart became intoxicated with the surpassing loveliness of Christ - but all this can only be made normal and stable as a factor of permanent blessing in our churches by the Anointing. Charging the atmosphere with power as it fills the heart with love, it settles like dew upon the soul and changes upper rooms into Mount Zions!

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### COMMUNAL ANOINTING

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Then wondering hearts cry with holy awe and joy - WE ARE COME TO MOUNT ZION ... THE CHURCH ... THE CITY OF THE LIVING GOD ... THE SPIRITS ... MADE PERFECT ... TO JESUS ... THE NEW COVENANT ... THE BLOOD ... BETTER THINGS ... Hallelujah! Thus a local church knows its union with the universal Church.

John in his epistle is only restating in another way what he has already recorded in his gospel, 'Abide in Me and I in you'. The usefulness of a church as a branch of the Church depends entirely upon this. Made up of individuals each absolutely dependent on the guaranteed inward Unction, a local church depends for its corporate Anointing on the united Unction of its many members.

As with a branch of the vine there are five observable stages or conditions in usefulness, so with the church - no fruit, fruit, more fruit, much fruit and remaining or abiding fruit. The degree of fruitfulness of a church is an indication of the fruitfulness of each member in that church. When the Lord spoke through John to the angel of the church at Ephesus He said: 'I know thy works'. Thus the fruitfulness of the branches corresponds to the 'works' of a church. Careful reading of John 15 and 1 John 2 will reveal that the Anointing or Unction is the secret of both fruitfulness and works.

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### COMMANDED BLESSING

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When every branch in the vine is joined with all the other branches in a common unity - then the Unction will be manifest through each and all in both fruit and works. The lack of manifest Anointing in a church is the measure of the failure of each member to walk in obedience to the inward Unction. Consequently there is no flowing together in the public meetings - no Anointing. The result is a sad lack of the basic and greatest of all spiritual miracles, the new birth - because under those conditions the Lord cannot COMMAND THE BLESSING - LIFE FOR EVERMORE. Vainly and to our cost we substitute men, gifts, singing, prayer and praise, events and 'specials' for the Anointing. None of these can meet the need, though all may, under the Anointing, be of use to God and of power unto salvation in His hands. But they can ever only be means. The Anointing alone brings the touch of God on a meeting, being the only unity in which men's spirits meet with God and each other in His name.

The Anointing which abides in each and unites in all is the only background in the church for the operation and service of anointed men. In this atmosphere God reveals His heart for love and compassion, His arm for strength, His hand for healing, His finger for deliverance, His voice for the Word and His Spirit for Life. Father, Son and Holy Ghost combine to work with the works of God in every conceivable realm of human need.

GWN

## BIBLE STUDY (2)

RON BAILEY

## DIVINE LOGIC

2 TIMOTHY

In Acts 26 Paul stands before Agrippa, and is permitted to speak in his own defence. His only 'defence' was that he had been apprehended on the road to Damascus, and given a divine commission. His simple justification for his behaviour was '... I was

not disobedient unto the heavenly vision' (Acts 26:19) In answer to such a claim the world only ever has one comment. On this occasion it fell to Festus to voice it .. 'thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad' (Acts 26:24)

We began our study in 2 Timothy (NCV mag. issue 1) with the thought that these were Paul's final recorded words, and consequently of special significance, or at least worthy of particular attention. His counsel to Timothy (and to us) is in the context of the outworking of the eternal purpose of God, and his points of reference are not the statistics of success or failure, but rather his obedience to a heavenly vision. His point of view is different to the world's, and his reasoning is based on different premises.

In 2 Tim. 1:8, 2:1,3,10,21 & 4:1 we find the word 'therefore'. Someone has said that whenever we find this word in the scriptures we should examine what it is 'there for'! In a mathematical proof we sometimes use a triangle of dots as a symbol for the word 'therefore'. It implies that what follows will be a logical outcome of what has gone before. This next step is absolutely obvious to the mind of the one who takes it. God has His logic too. It often seems most illogical, and even madness to those who think according to the world's logic.

In Rom. 12:1, Paul brings the words 'therefore' and 'reasonable' together.

'I beseech you THEREFORE brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your REASONABLE service'.

As far as Paul reckons things, any other kind of service would be unreasonable. ('Reasonable' is the Greek word 'logikon' from which we get our English word 'logical').

To embrace God's logic is part of that continuing transformation which is effected by the constant renewing of our minds.

'and be not conformed to this world: but be (being) transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may (ap)prove what is that good, and perfect, will of God' (Rom. 12:2)

Isaac Watts' hymn has an often altered last line. He wrote:

'love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all'

He was simply restating what is obvious to the renewed mind. No other response is 'reasonable'. Sometimes this straightforward black and white logic of God's case comes through as though the writer could imagine no alternative.

'We who died to sin, how shall we continue to live in it?' (Rom. 6:2) R.V.

This is Paul thinking in the way that God thinks. How could anyone think differently who has seen what God has done?

In four of the 2 Timothy references, a charge or command is preceded by the word 'therefore'. God's commands are never arbitrary or illogical. He never says 'fear not' without giving a reason, and behind all His commands there is good reason. God's reason.

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## A. 2 TIMOTHY 1:8

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The first instance is in 2 Tim. 1:8 where Paul encourages Timothy not to be ashamed. The 'therefore' in verse 8 takes us back to the 'reasons' of verse 7.

a. Calling into our 'ministry' is by the will of God (2 Tim. 1:1), and not dependent on our perceptions of fitness for that work.

b. Genuine faith dwells in Timothy. The kind that had dwelt in his mother, and in his grandmother before that (2 Tim. 1:5). Not all faith is genuine faith, but genuine faith is always 'at home' ('dwelt' is 'enoikeo' in Greek which means 'housed-in', with a sense of rest) in the believer. Real believers believe 'naturally' without striving.

c. There was a 'remembering' time when Timothy was aware of God's specific dealing, and equipping in his life. To 'stir up' what God had given is legitimate, and necessary. To stir up oneself out of sense of responsibility, or frustration is not.

d. God has given to us,

A spirit:

i - of power, 'dunamis'  
is the power inherent in a thing by way of its nature. The 'gift of God' is the Spirit Himself, who brings new nature. It is not a cowardly nature.

ii - of love, 'agape'  
is God's antidote to every kind of fear. It's the kind of love which goes on casting out fear continually (1 John 4:18)

iii - of a sound mind, 'sophronismos'  
comes from words which imply a saved, or whole understanding.

Because we have received a new nature, a new love, and a new understanding there is no need to be intimidated. There is no need to be fearful.

There are two clues to the pattern of Paul's reasoning in verse 8 too.

He charges Timothy not to be ashamed of -

i the 'testimony (or witness) of the Lord'  
Paul was aware of a particular time of the Lord's testimony when he wrote,

'Christ Jesus, who ... before Pontius Pilate witnessed (or testified) a good confession' (1 Tim. 6:13).

Pilate could see no further than the visible (Jn. 19:10). The Lord's vision took in the invisible (Jn. 19:11 & 18:36). Was Timothy's temptation to judge according to the outward appearance of things? cf. the 'reason' for Moses' steadfast endurance in Heb. 11:27.

ii 'nor of me HIS prisoner'

Paul reminds him of the testimony of the Lord, and slips in his own simple testimony. There was one king in Paul's life, and one will to which he bowed. You cannot enslave a man who is already a slave. You cannot imprison a man who is already a prisoner.

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## B. 2 TIMOTHY 2:1,3

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The 'therefore' in 2 Tim. 2:1 leads us back to the 'reasons' of chapter 1.

i Paul links Timothy's calling with his own.  
vss. 6,7

'I put THEE in remembrance ...  
... for God hath ... given US the spirit ...'

and vs. 14

'that good thing which was given unto THEE guard by the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in US'

Although there is a uniqueness in everyone's calling there is much that is common too. cf. 1 Pet. 5:1 & 2 Pet. 1:1 (like precious faith)

a. Paul's calling was:

- i 'through the will of God' (1:1)
- ii 'according to His own purpose' (1:9)
- iii a divine appointment (1:11)
- iv inevitably linked with affliction (1:8,12;3:12)

b. and the One who calls always equips:

- i 'according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus' (1:1)
- ii 'God hath ... given us the Spirit (1:7)
- iii '... grace ... was given us .. (1:9)
- iv 'death has been rendered powerless, and life and immortality brought to light' (1:10)
- v 'He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day' (1:12)

in the light of these established facts:

'therefore ... be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus' (2:1)  
'therefore ... endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ' (2:3)

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## C. 2 TIMOTHY 4:1

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'I charge thee therefore ... preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort ...  
watch in all things, endure affliction, do the work of

an evangelist, fulfil thy ministry.

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand ...'.

The 'reasons' behind this 'therefore' stretch back into chapter 3:

a. 'perilous times shall come' (2 Tim. 3:1)

The 'last days' have been here since Acts 2, and 'perilous time' seems to be an essential part of them. At every point in the history of the Church it has been possible for readers of these verses to identify with them.

i wrong 'reason' is behind all the wickedness of 2 Tim. 3:8,9

'.. these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith, ... their folly shall be manifest unto all .. cf Rom. 1:28.

ii wrong reason is behind all wickedness

'but he turned, and said unto Peter, Get behind me, satan: thou thinkest not (lit. trans.) the things that be of God but those that be of men'

Matt. 16:23

b. Timothy has had the advantage of seeing a different pattern in Paul (cf. 1 Tim. 1:16).

- i Paul's life and teaching synonymous 2 Tim. 3:10. cf 'my ways ...I teach ... 1 Cor.4:17
- ii 'fully known' can be translated 'a diligent follower of'.

c. Timothy has had the advantage of precious personal foundations.

- i He has been reared on the scriptures whose philosophy alone can make us 'wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ' (2 Tim. 3:15).
- ii The effect of the 'teaching, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness' which comes from the God-breathed scriptures is that the 'man of God may be both perfect, and perfectly equipped for every good work' (2 Tim. 3:17).

In the light of the barrage of pernicious wickedness, and in the light of the heritage that we have in our beginnings, and continual provision:

'... preach ... reprove ... rebuke ... encourage ministry'.  
2 Tim. 4:2-5

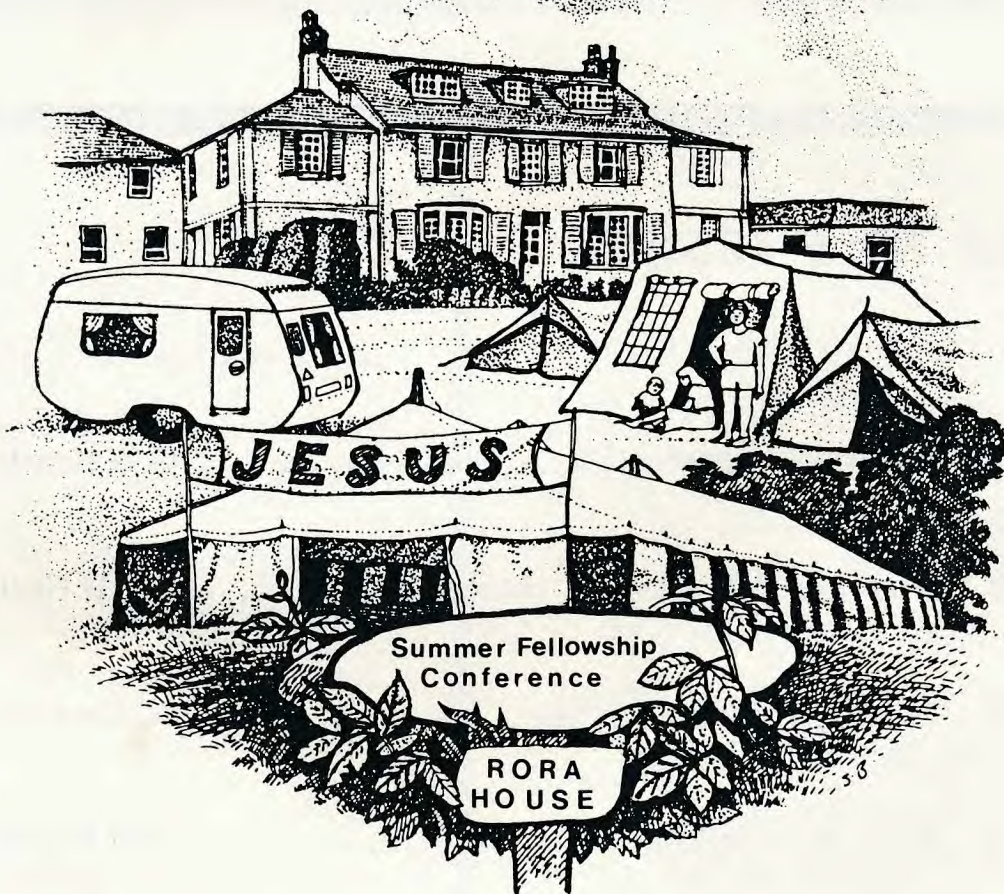
'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day'.  
2 Tim. 1:12

'Cast on the Lord that which He hath given thee, and He doth sustain thee'.  
Ps 55:22 (lit)

RB

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# SUMMER FELLOWSHIP CONFERENCE



**AUGUST 1st. – 8th.**  
**1987**

The Summer Fellowship Conference takes place again this year in the grounds of Rora House on the south-eastern edge of the Dartmoor National Park in Devon.

If you require further information please contact Mike Cross, Summer Conference Secretary, 5 Talfourd Avenue, Reading, Berks, RG6 2BP.

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## In this issue:

- 1 Another Vessel..... G.W.North
- 8 God in the midst of things.....B.Hull
- 11 Through Jesus Christ.....N. Meeten
- 13 With No Darkness At All..... G.W. North
- 17 The Anointing..... G.W. North
- 19 Bible Study..... R. Bailey