

# new covenant Voice

EVERYONE, AT SOME TIME OR OTHER, FINDS HIMSELF ABLE TO SING IN SOME DEGREE; THERE ARE SOME TIMES AND OCCASIONS OF JOY THAT MAKE ALL PEOPLE READY TO EXPRESS THEIR SENSE OF IT IN SOME SORT OF HARMONY. THE JOY THAT THEY FEEL FORCES THEM TO LET THEIR VOICE HAVE A PART IN IT.

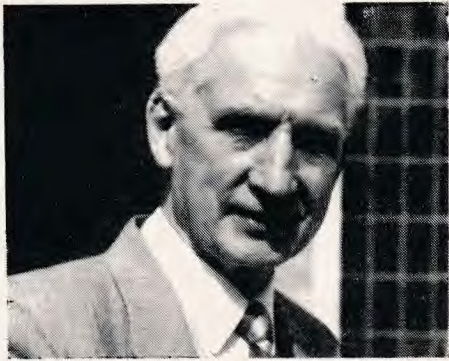
WILLIAM LAW

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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# BOOKS

## By G.W. North

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# NEW COVENANT PROSPERITY

GEORGE W. NORTH

In company with most of the ills presently affecting the churches, much of the misunderstanding underlying modern prosperity teaching springs from failure to distinguish between the Old and New covenants: this is nothing new. To read the epistles of the New Testament is to be convinced that this has ever been the case. The most controversial issue affecting the churches at the beginning was the practice of circumcision. It was being taught by some of the most highly regarded teachers of the day that circumcision was necessary to salvation. This was having such serious effect among gentile believers that all the apostles and elders came together at Jerusalem to consider the matter. The unanimous decision of this meeting was total rejection of the practice, followed up immediately by widespread communication of that fact to the churches everywhere. The subject under consideration here is not so clear-cut as that, it is far more subtle, and for this reason is all the more dangerous. It is spreading like a plague throughout the whole world, affecting churches everywhere.

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## AN APPEAL TO THE NATURAL

Wherever Christian people gather for conversation, sooner or later, generally before very long, this subject crops up. By television, by radio, by sermon, by pamphlet, by magazine, by book, by personal advocacy, everywhere and at all times this error is being ceaselessly propagated. Its devotees find no difficulty in spreading the infection, they find ready acceptance and eager audiences among all peoples; its appeal is irresistible and its success undeniable. What makes it so acceptable to hearts is that, almost without exception, this doctrine is associated with, if not accompanied by, signs and wonders. These are regarded by many as the certification that all that is being taught is correct, for, they reason, God would not show His approval in such a powerful way if the men who did the miracles were in error. This seems to be a reasonable enough approach, and quite natural. Indeed the whole appeal of this thing is to the natural. It is natural enough to want to be successful and to be well off, if not rich, and to improve one's personal or family style of living is a matter of natural instinct.

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## FLESHLY OR SPIRITUAL ?

Of course men and women want better homes, better standards of living, more money, bigger and better cars, heated swimming pools, lots of lovely clothes, and to live in affluence so that their children can be brought up in better conditions and have better

education, get better jobs and run more successful businesses than they themselves did. There is no end to the ambitions of the human heart to which teachings of prosperity make their appeal. But not one of these things is spiritual; without exception they are all of the flesh. The strange part about it is that they are all spoken of, included in and pronounced to be the evidence that the person enjoying or pursuing these things is highly spiritual. This is the more so if this idea is supported or justified by attestations and even proof that all this accumulation of wealth and pursuit of personal gain is for the purpose of promoting the work of Christ.

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## KINGDOM TEACHING

This doctrine is usually associated with what has been called 'kingdom teaching', which in itself appears to be grounded firmly enough in scripture. The general idea is that if a person is living in the kingdom, there can be no questioning that God wants him to be prosperous; apparently that should be obvious to all. 'Yes, of course it is' says the carnal heart, 'very obvious'. When certain specious texts or selections of scripture are presented by able teachers, when popular preachers add their powerful voices also, and join to assert that this is the truth for this or any other generation, their combined 'authority' is difficult to resist. Their handling of scripture seems conclusive, their personal integrity is beyond doubt, and their whole-hearted givenness and convictions cannot be questioned; moreover the prospects are very alluring, and many there are that believe them and all they say. After all, did not John say something about this? - 'I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth'. That is clear New Testament teaching isn't it? Yes, it certainly is. Well, shouldn't we accept it then? Yes, but accept what? The text, yes, but not necessarily the interpretation of it. Now we have arrived at the heart of the matter and the reason for the statement which heads this article.

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## A MATTER OF INTERPRETATION ...

When discussing the Bible one day, an eminent German professor said, 'But so much is by interpretation'. How true. His remark is not true of the whole Bible, but it is certainly true of much of it. Some degree of clarification is needed here. The Bible contains much teaching which is itself an interpretation of passages formerly written. This is as much inspired as was the original statement and must be accepted as unequivocally as the statement it

interprets. All other interpretations of scripture, that is interpretations contained in teachings by non-Biblical authors, must be examined thoughtfully, with due regard to the whole content of scripture and what it explicitly says on the subject. Careful distinction must also be made between the Old Testament and the New Testament. This must be done with great diligence, for there is great difference between the two Testaments, as can easily be shown; so great is this difference that it is as great a mystery why so many (and among them so many men of repute) cannot see it.

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### THE POOR IN SPIRIT

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Once the Lord Jesus had commenced His public ministry, He lost no time in making this difference very clear to His disciples, often calling them aside from the crowds in order to do so. On these occasions He gave them instruction about the way into the kingdom of heaven, how they could find it and how they were to conduct their lives when they had entered it. Behold then the note He struck first of all, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven ... Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled', and so He continued; His whole emphasis was spiritual. The only direct reference He made to material things was about food and clothing; regarding these He told them to take no anxious thought about them. His attitude was (and still is) - 'don't let those things worry you one little bit, your heavenly Father knows you have need of them, let Him be concerned about these, look at the birds, look at the flowers'. Hearing these sayings, it is hard to see anything other than that He meant they should have very little of this world's goods, so little in fact that they might be tempted to believe they would starve or have no clothes to put on. However else can such statements be interpreted?

Is it not far more in keeping with the whole tenor of Christ's teaching at that time that those men were expected to have very little money and very few earthly possessions? He taught that, though under certain conditions they could inherit the earth, they should never have or expect to have abundance - even of the basic things of life. True he did not say that the poor in spirit and the meek of soul were to be poverty stricken in body as well, but it is not very easy to imagine a person rich in worldly possessions and poor and meek in spirit also, they do not often go together. Will he not rather think it wrong that he should have so much while others have so little, and many (oh, so many) are starving?

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### THE ATHEIST AND THE HYPOCRITE

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A hundred years or more ago the name of Voltaire was notorious in the civilized earth. This man was an enemy of God, an opponent of the Bible, and a

tomentor of 'the Church'. He was a confessed atheist, a rationalist, as he liked to be called; he was also a wit. French society, especially those who were radicals, made him their darling, for he with them believed in and advocated excessive forms of permissiveness then so popular on the continent. Upon one occasion Voltaire was invited to be a guest at a banquet to which also many others of repute, including the princes of the Church, had also been invited. His friends, fearing a public clash and knowing his wit and the power of his caustic tongue, pleaded with Voltaire to restrict his comments to as few words as possible, even setting a limit to them - to this he agreed. The banquet was a splendid affair. Everybody of note came. Lords and ladies, bishops and cardinals, crowned with tiaras and coronets and mitres, flashing with jewels, filled the place, rings and bangles twinkled on hands and arms everywhere. All was going well till a certain Prelate started speaking about Samson and how he had slain the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass. Irrepressibly Voltaire broke in, proclaiming with a loud voice that the Prelate had slain as many people himself, and with the same jawbone. Allowing the company time to recover, he went on to ask 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven', and said no more. He had said sufficient - it is still sufficient. In certain quarters Voltaire's words would be as unpopular today as they were then. He did profess to be an atheist, and he certainly acted like one, but he knew what the Lord Jesus taught, and mocked at the vulgar hypocrisy of riches in the Church of Jesus Christ. This seems to have had no, or very little, impact on his audience; perhaps it was because they knew he was an atheist, and anyone knows that we should not listen to an atheist!

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### 'SELL ALL THOU HAST ...'

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The Lord's words are as unanswerable today as they were the day He uttered them; by them He said as plainly as possible that the man who heaps riches to himself, under whatever pretext or for whatever cause, is making it nearly impossible for himself to enter the kingdom of heaven. The Lord makes no exceptions. Many years ago, at a ministers' fraternal in a certain town in Kent, the Lord's words to the 'rich young ruler' were quoted as standard teaching for Christian living. Responding to this, a certain minister was quick to say that the Lord was answering one particular man and to this most others there heartily agreed. The man was quite right. It is strictly true that the Lord was speaking only to that rich young man when He said 'Go thy way, sell all thou hast and distribute to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, take up the cross and follow me', but He said it in the presence of His disciples and many others who were there at that time. What that minister had either forgotten or ignored was that the Lord had said the very same thing in almost the same words to His apostles some time earlier. They knew He was not just selecting this teaching for this rich

young man only. He was acquainting him with the same terms of discipleship which He had earlier laid down for them. The minister ought to have said, 'the Lord's words were His answer to one particular man AT THAT TIME', but he did not, and so misled his hearers and evaded the point. It is this kind of thing that is so distressing; how it must affect the Lord we cannot really tell, we may only guess.

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### **MATERIAL PROSPERITY OR ...**

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When Christ spoke of riches and the great handicap they were to men who would enter the kingdom, His apostles were completely baffled. 'Who then can be saved?' they asked. To them material prosperity was a hallmark of God's blessing. Look at Abraham, look at Job, at Joseph and David and Solomon; surely these were men blessed of God. He gave them riches in abundance. He promised to bless them with fulness, and He did - but now this! What did it mean? Those men reasoned that way because they had Old Covenant mentalities; they could not think as the New Covenant man thought, He was a stranger to them. Yet common sense advises, if it does not dictate, that the man who spoke as He did on the mount of beatitude must take this attitude and speak like this about riches. On the mount, they had discovered His whole approach to the Old Covenant and their beloved Moses. 'It hath been said' ... 'But I say unto you': 'Ye have heard' ... 'But I say unto you'. He had not challenged or contradicted Moses, but He had not hesitated to add to what was said, giving it an altogether new spiritual interpretation. He put into words what every serious seeker after truth knows Moses must have meant, certainly it is what God means and when He said it the disciples knew it was right.

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### **... THE PROSPERITY OF CHRIST**

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Jesus is always right. He knew how subtle the heart of man is though, so, following His exposition of the laws of the kingdom on the mount, He repeated some of them to His disciples at a later date lest they should miss the point or turn it aside, before it pierced their hearts and shattered their imaginations of the kingdom. By this time He had chosen His twelve apostles, selecting them from the rest of His disciples, and it was particularly to these that He addressed His words. They were all standing down on the plain at the time, and a great company of people from all around and afar off were gathered there to hear His words and to benefit from His miraculous power. Again He made them wait, and turned to His own men: 'Blessed be ye poor', He said, 'for yours is the kingdom of God'; 'Blessed are ye that hunger now for ye shall be filled'. He seems to be repeating Himself, but not quite; He missed out the words 'in spirit' and 'for righteousness'. Why? Did He fluff His lines, or was it deliberate? The question is rhetorical. The Lord did nothing of the sort, He is

referring to natural hunger and earthly poverty this time. When these are received as blessings from God their whole aspect changes, they are a sign of prosperity, the prosperity of Christ.

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### **'LET US BE ... CONTENT'**

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Three times in the New Testament we are exhorted to be content with such things as we have. One imagines that this would hardly be received with joy in some quarters. Contentment is the opposite of such views as avarice, covetousness, envy, jealousy, greed; the contented heart does not seek riches or possessions, it has all it wants. 'Be content with such things as ye have': 'having food and raiment, let us be therewith content'. These are exhortations of apostles, surely they must be right. Ought we not therefore to view with concern these 'apostles of prosperity' who campaign for things contradictory to the teachings of the apostles of Christ? How can they be right when they preach things directly opposite to the Lord, and things given in command to His holy apostles? To cite the words of the great apostle John, as a text for preaching all that certain men would make him say, is as heartless as it is reprehensible; he was one of those who followed the Lord and heard and received His doctrine. He took up the cross. Who says John was speaking of earthly, worldly prosperity when he said his will was that Gaius should prosper and be in health even as his soul prospered? It is an assumption at best, and an accusation at worst. Is it likely that a man who left all and followed the Lord would seek to promote worldly wealth in another, and encourage him to seek it? By all the laws of the Spirit and of sanity the answer to that must be 'no'. How would John ever have been able to forget a lesson his Lord had taught the disciples one day in the temple?

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### **THE WIDOW'S MITE**

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He was sitting by the treasury, watching how people were giving to God; as usual many passed by, casting in their gifts while the Lord watched, without comment. Presently one person came along who caught His eye; she was evidently a poor widow and had practically nothing to give. As she came up to the chest He saw that she was clutching two mites in her hand, they were all the money she possessed, and she cast them in. Immediately His heart was touched and He started to talk, 'This poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury' He said to His disciples, 'they did cast in of their abundance ... she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living'. There is no other record in the Gospels that the Lord ever commented in similar language or with so plain a meaning and intention as this on people's giving. He praised that precious soul above all, leaving His disciples and all men in no doubt as to His attitude towards giving.

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## THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

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In view of many things being taught today, one might be excused for thinking that the Lord ought better to have reproved the woman, or at least have corrected her. Had they been there, some modern teachers would have said that if she had enough faith she need not have been in such penury; He was not so cruel, or so self-contradictory and carnal. Instead He praised her, held her up as an example, and had it written in scripture as His tribute to her and His testimony about giving for the whole Gospel era. Had He reproved her He would have given the lie to His own life-style which He enforced on all who wanted to share that life with Him. If material prosperity is the hallmark of spirituality why did God 'force' His Son to be born in a stable? Why did He have to perform a miracle to have sufficient money to pay His own and Peter's tax, and why (seeing He had plenty of faith) did He not produce a thousand pieces of money from one or a thousand fishes. Why did He walk and make all His disciples walk all over Palestine when He could have at least provided donkeys for every one of them to use on the journey if He had enough faith? The list of questions could be added to almost endlessly, for if there is one thing that can be asserted with absolute certainty about the Lord Jesus it is that He was born a poor man, lived a poor man and died a poor man; He was not even middle class!

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## PROSPERITY AND FAITH

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The unfortunate thing about this modern heresy of prosperity is that, in the lives of its exponents, it is so closely allied to faith. Years ago the saying going the rounds was, 'If you came to this conference in a Ford it is your fault, if you had enough faith you could have come in a Cadillac'. What an unfortunate thing that possession of status symbols and marks of opulence should be connected with faith. We have reason to be glad that the Lord Jesus never talked like that. He once said, 'to the poor the gospel is preached', which does not mean that He had no word for the rich; He had, as we have seen. There is only one gospel, and it is the gospel of God concerning His Son, as Paul says. Jesus is the way, Jesus is the truth, Jesus is the life, Jesus is the Saviour, Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter, the man of Galilee. He said, 'they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately are in kings' courts'. The only time He went there was to stand mock trial for His life. He was a king, but He refused to be born in a palace; a manger was good enough for God's Son; so God and all heaven thought.

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## AS HAVING NOTHING

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Specious teaching aside, there can be no doubt that when God decided to bring in the New Covenant on to the earth, He turned utterly from Old Covenant

doctrines of prosperity. Riches and worldly success were no longer to be the signs of His approval; for that matter, neither was poverty, but all the indications were that, when the greater than Solomon came to earth, he would be among 'the poor and mean and lowly', all the time He sojourned here. His forerunner was a poor man, his home was in the deserts, and he lived on locusts and wild honey, a fitting herald for the introduction of the king of the gospel. 'Art thou a king then?' asked Pilate; a suitable question to a man standing in someone else's clothes, crowned with thorns, His blood running from Him. 'Thou sayest', He answered. Had Pilate not been so afraid, he would have scoffed at Him; the man had nothing. He possessed all things, but He stood there as having nothing; He could afford to. Because all things were His, He never reached out for anything; He had learned to be content. He taught His disciples to be content too.

It was Paul who coined the phrase, 'as having nothing and yet possessing all things' - he learned it from his Lord. It is not an apostle's calling to look back at Old Covenant saints in envy, or seek to become their disciple; apostles have to follow their Lord. In an inspired passage to his young protégé, Timothy, Paul wrote, 'having food and raiment let us be therewith content ... they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare ... the love of money is the root of all evil ... thou, O man of God, flee these things'. What counsel: 'run away from them, do not even stay in their presence, leave alone consider them as being commendable or possible for yourself'. That seems fairly conclusive, and there is more like it.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians on one occasion commending to them their brethren in the churches of Macedonia; they lived in deep poverty, he said. Although he thought that the rich ought to help the poor, and at times expressed his views very strongly, he did not beg for the Macedonians, neither did he say that if they had more faith they would not be so poverty-stricken. Instead he said things which appear to mean that this very poverty was made a means of blessing to them; 'the depths of their poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality!' What an extraordinary thing. Notice, he did not say they gave great riches, he said that their liberality was rich - (perhaps every one of them gave two mites!). Oh, and a further thing he said - they lived in great joy. Another extraordinary thing about it is that he called it grace, and likened it to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; this, he said, they all knew.

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## 'HIS POVERTY ... MAKES US RICH'

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What a wondrous thing is this grace of Christ; 'though He WAS rich, yet for our sakes HE BECAME poor, that we, through His poverty, might be made rich'. Paul's wish for the Corinthians was that they should abound in this grace also, and what was THIS grace? According to Paul it was becoming poor in order to

make others rich. It is an extraordinary thing that it should be thought that the Lord became poor in order to make us rich in worldly wealth. There are treasures in heaven, but as far as we know, there are no banks, no gold-mines, no veins for the silver, bauxite and uranium are unknown there - heavenly treasures have no value in this world's markets, micro-chips do not record them, nor do men want to know about them. Grace is never marked up in the world's stock exchanges, yet the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is the only hope of mankind. Grace is for all men, but THIS particular grace is the grace of being and doing exactly like our Lord. Paul is not speaking here about the Lord's forgiving grace, but His giving grace; not His saving grace, but His sacrificial grace, which in the end made him our Saviour. It is His poverty that makes us rich, and if we should find grace sufficient to follow His example we too shall make others rich, that they in turn shall follow the heavenly example, and become poor too.

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### THE WEALTH OF GOD

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James says that God has chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith. To some this may appear an anomaly - the teaching they have received insists that it is not possible to be rich in faith and, at the same time, be one of the poor of this world, but this is manifestly wrong. If this were true, then Jesus Christ had no faith, Paul had no faith, C.T. Studd had no faith, Hudson Taylor had none, George Muller had none, and millions of others who have lived and died for Christ on the earth, were faithless. Is it not true that it requires more faith to live without earth's riches than with them and because of them? Why did Christ point His disciples to birds and flowers when He spoke of them of life in the kingdom? Surely it was to tell them to forget about themselves and providing for themselves, and trust their heavenly Father. Shortly before He died, the Lord Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world'. We may be sure then that, wherever the topic of riches and prosperity arose, neither He, nor any of those He commissioned to preach, taught or were referring to earthly, worldly wealth. Riches of grace, riches of mercy, treasures of wisdom and knowledge, the fulness of God: these are the wealth of God and His people.

Time was when God's kingdom WAS of this world; His people inherited an earthly kingdom, in which He dwelt with them as an earthly king. His people were rich, they lived in luxury, the land flowed with milk and honey; to be poor was exceptional, though the Lord made provision for that even then. All the people had to do to be blessed was to remain faithful to Him under the terms of the Old Covenant. He required of them no more than that. But Jesus changed all that, 'Now is my kingdom not from hence', He said. From whence was it then, and of what does it consist? Paul might have answered - Righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. May not those verses in John's third epistle simply mean that, since Gaius' soul prospered in spiritual things, John desired that his health may prosper likewise? In other words, was Gaius a man of poor health, whose body lagged far behind his soul in prosperity, and John was saying, 'I wish you were as fit in body as you are in soul'? After all, if financial gain was in John's mind, he did not express himself as explicitly as he might have done. A better way would have been to have said 'I would that you should prosper financially, and prosper in health'; that would at least have made it as clear as the Lord made His statements - to the opposite effect.

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### NO CONTRADICTION

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The truth is that there is no contradiction here; John was not speaking contradictorily to his Lord, he was expressing his concern for his dear Gaius. If John had no material prosperity in mind, on no account would he have said, 'I wish above all'; an apostle of Jesus Christ would never have made financial prosperity and physical health his greatest desire for anyone, never! What? above Christlikeness, above saving souls, above many other far more important things? Whoever suggested that John meant financial wealth when he wrote to Gaius did not know John, nor the truth of the New Testament. In the end it all boils down to this - people do not know to which covenant they belong; they approach the New Covenant with Old Covenant mentality, and must inevitably go wrong therefore. The Lord deliver all His people from it, and establish us all firmly in the New Covenant as the Worthies of old were established in the Old Covenant, and grant us grace never to confuse the two.

GWN

### CREATED ANEW

**THEREFORE IF ANY MAN BE IN CHRIST - A true believer in Him. THERE IS A NEW CREATION - Only the power that makes a world can make a Christian. And when he is so created, THE OLD THINGS ARE PASSED AWAY - Of their own accord, even as snow in Spring. BEHOLD - The present, visible, undeniable change! ALL THINGS ARE BECOMING NEW - He has new life, new senses, new faculties, new affections, new appetites, new ideas and conceptions. His whole tenor of action and conversation is new, and he lives, as it were, in a new world. God, men, the whole creation, heaven, earth, and all therein, appear in a new light, and stand related to him in a new manner, since he was created anew in Christ Jesus.**

**JOHN WESLEY - comment on 2 Cor. 5:17 in his 'NOTES ON THE NEW TESTAMENT'.**

# NEW BIRTH - PART ONE

## NORMAN MEETEN

'There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, 'Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him'.

Jesus answered and said unto him, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'.

Nicodemus saith unto Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?'

Jesus answered, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit'.

Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, 'How can these things be?'

Jesus answered and said unto him, 'Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen: and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved'.

John 3:1-17

I want us to look afresh (perhaps for some, for the first time) at the great truth concerning New Birth.

It was when God opened my eyes to see what the scripture really taught on this lovely subject, that I came to the realization that although I had been convinced for a long time that I had been born again; in fact I was not. It was a shattering experience and it took some time for me to come to the end of my arguing with God about the matter and agree with Him and His word.

It is right to praise God for all that we know to be true and all that we already enjoy and has been our experience.

There is a lot which happens before birth. We sometimes talk about 'being saved' and relegate that precious term to that moment in time when we first began to appreciate what it meant to be saved, failing to realize that the doctrine of salvation does not just speak of a moment in time which we call an 'experience', but describes the activity of God from before the foundation of the world unto eternity.

The various points at which you and I tune in to God's great activity by the Spirit brings us into further and greater and richer realization as to what it is all about. The human mind has a capacity to limit things: God has an infinite capacity to manifest the greatest of His all-providing Nature.

Three times in this passage Jesus says a very similar thing. In verse 3, 'Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God'. Verse 5, 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God'. And then the great Divine imperative, 'Ye must be born again'.

Let us then look again at this glorious subject under three questions, and trust God to show us where we ourselves stand in considering the truths that are revealed to us.

1. Why do I need to be born again?
2. How can I be born again?
3. What is the evidence/proof that I am born again?

The first of these questions will be dealt with in this issue. The longer answers to the next two questions will be considered in subsequent issues as separate articles.

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### 1. WHY DO I NEED TO BE BORN AGAIN ?

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Simply because what God ordained for man in the Beginning was thwarted and aborted and rendered dead.

Romans five is quite a complicated and profound chapter. However, verse twelve makes our position outside of Jesus Christ abundantly clear: 'Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned'. Adam's disobedience, rebellion against God and rejection of God's ordained pattern and order for his life - 'as by one man sin entered into the world,

and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned'. God said if you sin, if you eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you will die. As far as God was concerned when man contravened God's order, God's law, God's will, and chose to behave in a way contrary to what God had said - what God said would happen, happened; and all died. God says men outside of Jesus Christ are dead. They have no life in them. That is the explanation for all the confusion, for all the corruption, for all the perversion, for all the blindness, for all that accrues from human experience outside of Jesus Christ. It all emanates from death. That only produces one thing - corruption. It is the outworking of sin.

Purely and simply, a man needs to be born again in order that he can come to life. Jesus uses a different analogy to say the same truth: 'Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it dies, it will bring forth much fruit'. Birth comes out of a recognition of death. A seed falls into the ground and dies and out of that comes resurrection life. Therefore, if you

have never been born again, as far as God is concerned, as far as things which are of eternal value are concerned, you are dead. It does not matter what you do or what you think. It does not matter what you say or where you go. It does not matter unto what heights you attain - it counts for nothing, it is as filthy rags in the sight of God; dead.

That is the answer to our first question, 'Why do I need to be born again?' I need to be born because until I am born I am dead, I do not exist. It is a wonderful thing to come to that realization, that I MUST be born again. Jesus was very emphatic about it. He said 'You MUST be born again'. He said that if you are not born again you will not see. Of course you cannot see if you are dead! That is why scripture says you are blind. You have no ability to enter into the kingdom of God.

All that God has planned for you, all that He has prepared for you, is beyond you; it is outside of you, it can never be attained unto. And therefore in order to realize it you must be born again. NM

## THE PRIORITY OF THE INWARD LIFE

BERNARD HULL

One of the dreadful results of sin in the heart of man is the chronic disorder summed up by the Lord to Samuel, 'man looketh on the outward appearance' (1 Sam. 16:7). In our twentieth century churches this same affliction continues and perhaps has increased in deceptive proportions. Effectiveness of church life is measured by the amount of people 'saved'; the rate of growth in a congregation is analysed purely on the basis of numbers. Services are judged by their attractiveness - 'Are they full of those things which will draw people along?'. It would seem that, if we could look upon the hidden, inward life of many, there would be a serious lack of quality there, but Samuel was told that 'God looketh upon the heart'.

The story of Jesus concerning the wise and foolish men gets to the heart of things. The difference between these two men did not lie in that which was seen but in that which was hidden from sight, the foundations! The wise man dug deep, found the rock, laid stone upon stone under the surface upon that rock and only then did the building begin to take shape and appear. The foolish man, on the other hand, made rapid progress and his expertise quickly appeared to all. However, as we know, the crisis of adverse conditions revealed all. It did not disclose defects in the walls, the roof, doors and windows, it revealed the want of a hidden, solid foundation.

We know that Jesus told the story in the context of both 'hearing and doing' His sayings, but the underlying principle applies in every dimension of the

Christian life. We are what we are inwardly. Do we have a true inward life with God in Christ? Are we well founded in Him? The real quality of a man's life is revealed when no one else sees him, when he shuts his door and has completed his duty, what does he do then? We must have a true and deepening inward life with God, there is no alternative but destruction. This is foundational. The absence of the fundamental inward relationship with God from which all true spiritual life springs will inevitably lead to collapse of that which has been built. This accounts for many defections and tragedies afflicting the churches nowadays.

At this point we make the assumption that we have been born from above, born again. That is to say, that life from above had entered into the inner man of the heart, the hidden spiritual man and thereby an infusion of morality has come, life from ABOVE, i.e. from the moral realm of God. Not from beneath, or alongside, but from 'above'. From the regions of purest light, from God Himself, His nature sent into our hearts. Herein lies the possibility of a whole new life, total reformation based upon true regeneration. Without this we cannot develop an inward life in Christ, and if a growing inward life is absent there will be no real outward testimony. The pale moon reflects the burning light of the sun; cold is the moon both in its inner core and outer shell, but not so the sun! Blessed are they who have the light shining in their inward parts, in whose hearts the fire of God's own nature burns.

The word 'esoteric' has been increasingly in use in these decades. It means 'inner', 'secret', 'mysterious', referring to that which is unseen. It links with the word 'occult' - belonging to the hidden realms. In certain quarters people are now speaking much of their hidden self, of entering into fellowship with great invisible spirits, of the communication of wisdom from such beings, wisdom to steer this world of ours through the turbulent times of the twentieth century. Yes, there is wisdom, but let a man ask GOD for it, the wisdom God gives has a moral basis and content, whilst the wisdom of this world does not possess such moral quality (James 3:15). The wisdom God gives comes from above. There it is again, this word 'above', denoting the superiority of moral quality, not altitude! 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom' (Proverbs 9:10). The man who does not fear God has not even begun to be wise! This wisdom from above is meek, not arrogant and presumptuous. The person beginning to possess something of this wisdom is one who is not asserting himself against God, but is learning to yield to Him in all things.

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### SUBMITTING

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Perhaps we could make this the first point in respect of the growth of the inward life with God in Christ. He who would grow in the knowledge of God must be deeply subject to Him. Peter the apostle captures this truth in a charming way. 'The ornament of a quiet and meek spirit'. 'The hidden man of the heart'. It seems that Peter took quite a time to really come to that basic state of inward life - quietness and meekness of spirit; the inner states of mind which reverence God as sovereign. 'Servants, be subject ...' says Peter. 'Likewise ye wives ...' he continues. 'Submit yourselves', 'Younger submit to the elders', 'Yea, all of you, be subject one to the other', 'Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God'. Spiritual growth is impossible unless there is present in the heart that humble submissiveness to God in all things.

The basic state of the inner man as it grows in God is meekness. Intransigence stunts spiritual growth. Self-assertiveness coupled with stubbornness will surely mean little spiritual development taking place in the life. The meek and quiet states of heart are they that wait upon God expectantly looking for His word and workings. We must become reconciled to God in all things, abandonment to His methods and ways is essential. The tendency to be unyielding with Him must be eradicated. Peter writes of Abraham and Sarah when he speaks of a meek and quiet spirit. It is noteworthy that Sarah was the first person to call another 'lord'. She was ninety years old at the time. She meekly yielded to God and her husband and became fruitful. Faith enabled her to yield (Heb. 11:11) and in her yielded state faith grew and thereby she was strengthened to do the impossible! Is it by chance that the submissive attitude of Sarah led to her fruitfulness? She abandoned to God's apparently foolish, untimely ways and co-operated without

question 'and was delivered of a child when she was past age', because 'she judged Him faithful who had promised'. The inward motives of a man's heart are forever judging God, either one way or the other. To the stubborn He is reckoned unfaithful, to the submissive He is known as faithful and true. The submissive heart dwells under friendly skies and the cordial goodness of God is a constant underlying fact. A man judges God first in his inward attitudes, not in his reasoning processes. The regenerate heart is bathed in the Spirit, which brings the possibility of becoming fundamentally and gladly submissive to God in all things.

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### SEEING

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The attention of our age is gripped by the things which are seen. The tendency towards entertainment in the churches speaks volumes as to the want of an inward life. If numbers attending churches have risen in these latter years, what attracts them? Is it the Christian 'show' which is interestingly presented, whilst the inner man abides bankrupt, its needs unmet? 'Thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable and poor and blind and naked', goes the devastating analysis in Revelation chapter three. Generally speaking an increasing tendency to include instrumentalists, soloists, drama and the paraphernalia of modern entertainment methods in church life is an indicator of a diminishing quality of inward spiritual virility. It can be stated fairly decisively that entertainment methods pander to the outward man, whilst true meetings of the saints are a means by which God is able to nourish the inward life of His people.

We must honestly face these facts. Paul gives a key to inward spiritual renewal in 2 Corinthians chapter four. He tells us that a fixed gaze upon things unseen will encourage constant renewing of the life of the inward man. The context in which he writes is one of much terrible external pressure being brought to bear upon the outward man. Persecutions, afflictions and various kindred troubles weigh in upon him. Whilst he does not ignore these things, the set gaze of his inward faculties is not upon them but upon God and His things which are invisible. Here again we discover the inevitable paradox which exists in the spiritual soul, 'looking at the things which are not seen'. Inward renewal takes place 'while we look ...' We must be people of the fixed gaze. As Jesus approached Calvary it is written of Him that 'I foresaw the Lord always before my face, He is on my right hand that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice ...' Here is the Christ of the fixed look.

There remains for those born of God the necessity of cultivating a life of inward communion with Him. Within us there lie great deeps upon the face of which God makes the 'light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' to shine. Communion implies the concentrating of the powers upon God and His things. It is not something learned overnight.

It is not the reading of a daily portion of scripture for five minutes and the praying down a prayer list for a quarter of an hour. It is the breathing of the atmosphere of God's presence. 'Aquaint thyself with God and be at peace' (Job 22:21). The art of practising the presence of God is little known in these days of rush and bustle; it takes time. There is a state of sublime stillness where the real man of the heart reposes in God and is nourished by His nearness. It is a condition of heart to which no strain is attached. Questions are non-existent and in the mystery of His presence the inner man is renewed and made glorious by the Spirit of the Lord. It is more than meditation, meditation is a step on the way. It is a mingling of spirit with God. We were born of Him unto this, it is union with the infinite. It is suspension in God, where all is silent and yet filled with perfect sound. God draws a soul unto Himself for this, 'the Father seeketh such to worship Him' (John 4:23). The outer considerations fade and fall away, somehow being put into perspective without a word being said. It is a conditioning of our spirit wrought by God so that 'the things of earth do grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace'. No man can gatecrash into this realm. He can desire it though, and God will draw him in and on, and the invisible shall become the great reality to him.

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## SOWING

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A third key to the fostering of inward, spiritual growth is connected with our use of things. Galatians chapter six captures the truth succinctly. Apparently we are to avoid deception in the matter of our use of time, money, possessions and the like. Just because we are sons of God it does not mean that we can do as we please. All our hours and all our days, all our things are being 'sown'. They can be sown to the Spirit, or to the flesh. The effects of this matter can be either constructive and profitable to the inward man or destructive and unhelpful. The inward life is a plant that needs particular climatic conditions in which to remain healthy and flourish abundantly. New Birth means, among other things, a deep change of the appetites of the inward man; affinities are altered drastically, a man loves what he formerly hated and hates what he loved. The senses of the inner man become newly attuned; the wise man will heed these inner promptings by which God acquaints the heart with what is profitable and what is detrimental. There are many things which in themselves are neither good nor evil but only become either the one or the other in the hand of the user. No one can instruct another in these most personal of matters save the Spirit of God within. Spiritual growth can be stunted simply by not paying heed to the absence of sanction from God's Spirit as regards a certain act, or use of time or money. A person goes ahead with that act feeling that they have a perfect right to do so and it is really self-indulgence and therefore harmful to the inward life. Conversely, obey the inward promptings and sow to the Spirit and life of eternal quality will be reaped in due season.

God has not given to us a code of do's and don'ts. Rather, He has given us of His Spirit, by His grace the inward man is reconditioned unto other uses rather than the gratification of self. Many things will be found to be lawful to me but not expedient, either for my own spiritual increase, nor the good of others. Here lies the secret concerning music of various forms, use of money, what I do with my time in respect of sport, television and the like. In some things the issue is so utterly plain, I should have nothing to do with them. In other things, as a man walks with God he is made to know that this is no longer for him, the commitment of time and self to such things are now rendered unhelpful to his spiritual increase. It is true to say that as a person goes on with God their life becomes regulated not by any code but by the finely tuned reception of an understanding from God as to that which is unto life and that which is unto death. Let he or she who is walking on with the Lord expect a tightening up on things allowed in early days, but at the same time, an inward increase that wonderfully fills the soul so making other things once so central to the living of the life of no account anymore.

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## STRENGTHENED

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Is a congregation a reflection of its spiritual leadership? Is there a connection between the depth of prayer and its content, and the answers which come from God in the lives of those prayed for? Do those who have gone deeper with God pray from that depth of understanding for others, and does God answer according to their asking? The answer to all these questions is certainly, 'Yes'. Blessed is the person upheld before God by another who knows those things which make up the real issues of spiritual life. When Paul writes to the Ephesian church he gives an insight as to the burden of his praying for them. He goes to the heart of the matter before the throne of God. The whole content of his praying both in chapter one and chapter three revolves around the inward life of the flock. He knows, that if the inward eyes have been opened to see the things that really matter, then the outward life of victory will be assured. He calls upon God for the people, that they 'be strengthened with might by God's Spirit in the inner man'. He lays hold upon God for spiritual activity to be wrought in the heart, that the dealings of God will be felt and known within so that Christ may dwell in the heart by faith. Deficiencies in the outward testimony invariably spring from a lack in the inward life. Christ dwelling in the heart in reality will surely correct the inward states, either balancing things wrongly held or bringing an understanding as to things that have not been present and which should have been.

It is worth questioning ourselves as to whether there should be some revision of and possible alteration to the content of our intercessions. Is our preoccupation in prayer more with the outward than the inward? Here in Western Australia we have pomegranates and various citrus trees in the garden.

Apparently these bushes and trees can bear fruit which is dry and bitter. This state of affairs can be remedied, not by pruning but by increasing the amount of water the tree has to drink and adding plant food of the appropriate kind. The bitter, dry fruit is the result of deficient inward life! Isn't it amazing the way nature teaches? The quality of the fruit depends upon the quality and quantity of those things which nourish the tree's life. Let the understanding heart give itself afresh to seeking God's face that He may pour forth His grace in proper proportions upon the hearts of men and women in the churches. Any new move of God will begin there, not with innovation but with intercession which rises from the hearts of those who know the real issues of spiritual life.

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## SECRETED

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Charles Wesley wrote, (no doubt about himself), 'an inward life in Christ I live ...' Moses is reputed to have been the man who wrote, 'he that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty' (Psalms 91). Where is the place of meeting with God? Is it a building or is it anywhere at all when the spirit of man is at one with God and consciously turns to Him? Considering the processes of the life of the evangelical church in this past one hundred years there are some amazing things which become evident. Action and reaction, the see-saw of emphasis and counter emphasis is plain to be seen. Extreme pentecostalism which laid emphasis so strongly upon things 'I feel', impressions made 'upon my spirit', and so on, led to a counter emphasis upon the more objective elements of truth. Then in time, in various circles anything involving the emotions became frowned upon and suppressed. In such a setting formal prayers and Bible reading by rote takes the place of true spiritual meeting with God. Buildings and 'celebration' meetings become the place where God is met with. The necessity of various choruses and singing to induce 'His presence' is fallen back on. Things do seem so muddled nowadays, don't they? How easy it is to adopt a formal pattern of behaviour to live by in place of that which is truly walking in the Spirit. Let none make the mistake of thinking that their particular group is exempt from the slide into some of these things.

How vital it is that we have frequent 'meetings' with God. Where did such meetings take place in the Old Testament days? The tent (tabernacle) of meeting, as it was called. In what part of that tent? In the innermost sanctuary called 'the holiest of all'. It was the secret place alright; hid from the prying eyes of the casual observer or the merely inquisitive. Moses went in there though, he met with God frequently. We all know that our bodies are a tent, and that there is a sanctuary place in the innermost of our hearts. There is no doubt that God's place of meeting with us is right there, He seeks entrance and enthronement there in that central citadel of the personality, in the inward man of our hearts.

The mention of Moses brings to mind that word of God which came to him so wonderfully, 'come up to me on the mount and BE THERE' (Exodus 24:12). He obeyed, turning his back on the flock he climbed into the thick darkness where God was, into the cloud mingled with lightnings and thunderings and there he met God, was given commandments and a pattern was shown him. In Moses' life, the initial, surprising meeting with God included a promise, 'you shall serve God upon this mountain' (Exodus 3:12). That happened, even as God had said, and Moses met God again on the mount and then the God of the mount came down into the tabernacle and was in the midst. Moses developed in communion with God, he drew near to God according to His call and God drew nearer and nearer to him until we find him living here in that place with God. He spoke with God face to face, he and Joshua with him, 'departed not out of the tabernacle' (Exodus 33:11).

The development of a hidden life of communion with God happens something like this nowadays. An inexplicable thirst and sense of destiny quietly but persistently whispers in the heart. Sometimes attempts at fulfilling the calling are made and fail, Moses did that. Then the soul, wandering in the vast wilderness of dissatisfaction with the world and self, is met with by God. It is a surprise in one way, but not in another. Such moments are holy ground. It all happened to Moses on the backside of the mount, in the ordinary run of things. Who can say how long the moments of meeting with God last? God makes Himself known, swamps the weak excuses of his servant by the wonder of His being. Little is uttered but everything of God is in the little. A man walks in the strength of that calling, that appearing, that grandeur and wonder of God. He does exploits, rejoices in them, is glad in God's works but longs to be back on that mount with God. However, he cannot barge in there, he must await the invitation, the coming of God which draws him up and in again. How many days did Moses' spend on the mount bathed in God? The drawing came again, the Lord gathered His servant into His bosom and enfolded him afresh. Moses' heart was flooded full and his face glowed. He had been with God. Ah, blessed intimacy, God his friend, better far this, than all else, and 'he wist not that his face did shine'.

Down from the mount now he comes. The ears attuned to the tones of God, hear an alien sound. The flock, impatient at the waiting have hewn out for themselves alternatives to this bliss. An instant god for a carnal people. Fashioned by the skills of the flesh, hard and empty; it does not speak, the gaudy toy made by hearts bereft of the knowledge of God. But this folly does not shift God from His purpose and up again His man must go. A second time God will work; this time He will have success. Moses becomes the mediator through whom God comes down. The tabernacle is built, all according to the pattern and God descends with man to dwell. Moses needs to climb no mount, he needs not to await an invitation. God is there in the midst, Moses is able to walk in and 'be there' with God. Now there is immediacy of the presence of God for the man of God. Instead of a mount

wrapped in solitude, far from the clamouring cries of the multitude, now Moses finds God in the midst of the camp. He goes into the closet, shuts the door, and is in the presence of God in a step. Here is the blessed progression to the place of being able to enter the tent of meeting in the inward man and be with God there, whilst in the midst of the processes of life and the pressures of this world. Such states are possible.

It seems that no one learns this overnight. This is not for the hasty. Could this be why it is so little known nowadays? Or, is it due to the 'instant' methods so popularly advocated in some current Christian literature? One thing is certain, there is no alternative to the growth and development of the inward life with God, save terrible destruction of the edifices now being raised to promote the gospel. May the Lord arrest the madness of the prophets and bring us back to the first principles of spiritual life.

BH

#### THE SECRET!

A few years after the death of the saintly and youthful Robert Murray McCheyne, a visitor called at St Peter's Church, Dundee. He was eager to see the place and to learn the secret of McCheyne's amazing influence. The sexton took the enquirer into the vestry and pointed to some of McCheyne's books still lying there. "Sit down there", as he pointed to a chair. "Now put your elbows on the table." The young man obeyed. "Now put your face in your hands." He did so. "Now let the tears flow! That was the way McCheyne used to do!" The sexton then led the visitor into the pulpit. After going over the same words and actions he then said, "That was the secret of McCheyne's power." Alas, it is the day of the dry eye.

## EDITOR

### REPENTANCE

'Do you presume upon the riches of His goodness and forbearance and patience ... Do you know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?'

(Rom.2:4)

After Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost, the people said 'Brethren, what shall we do?', and Peter said to them (Acts 2:28) 'REPENT and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost'.

REPENTANCE, according to Dr. W.E. Vine, in his study book 'Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words', when dealing with the noun says 'the word repentance seems to mean not simply a change of mind, but such a change as would reverse the effects of his own previous state of mind'.

'Godly sorrow worketh repentance' (2 Cor.7:10). Genuine, spiritual mourning for sin is the work of the Spirit of God. It is a choice experience too precious to abide only in natural ability. Only by Divine grace can a person comprehend the relationship of God to a human heart in conjunction with His hatred of sin. In an old Wesleyan hymn in my possession, printed in 1877 in the section entitled 'Praying for Repentance' (set to the tune Brentford) which shows that repentance comes from a distinct purpose in us to look directly to the Lord Jesus Christ for help.

O that I could repent!  
With all my idols part,  
And to Thy gracious eye present  
A humble, contrite heart;  
A heart with grief oppressed  
For having grieved my God,  
A troubled heart that cannot rest  
Till sprinkled with Thy blood.

Jesus, on me bestow  
The penitent desire;  
With true sincerity of woe  
My aching breast inspire;  
With softening pity look  
And melt my hardness down,  
Strike with Thy love's resistless  
stroke,  
And break this heart of stone.

True sorrow for sin is very practical. No man may say he hates sin and continue to live in it. Repentance makes us see the evil of sin, not just as a theory, but experimentally, as though we had an awful shock, such as a child who has burnt his finger dreads the living flame. Sincere repentance is a continual experience. Many experiences we have are intermittent and temporary but this blessing of God abides in the heart for ever. And if for any particular reason, even in the believer's life, our failure causes us to seek again for this Grace - it must yield in our being the blessed experience of continuation to its related knowledge of the matter concerned.

It was John the Baptist who received the prophetic call to repentance, making it the condition to escape from the Judgement of God (Matt. 3:1f). Jesus makes 'repent and believe' the keynote of his Galilean preaching (Matt. 1:15) showing to us the integral connection between repentance and saving faith. Zachaeus' encounter with Jesus in Luke 19:1-10 illustrates how both these things are produced in men's hearts when they hear the Gospel of Christ, both of them are God's gift and not men's achievements (Acts 5:31, 11:18, 2Tim 2:25). To awaken to repentance is a proper part of the awakening to faith. Jesus' supreme teaching on this matter is found in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15) and the adjacent

parable of the lost sheep and the lost coin stress the 'joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth'. So the apostolic and present ministry of the Church is its kerugma (preaching) always includes the call for repentance, since without it faith is impossible.

I will hearken what the Lord  
 Will say concerning me:  
 Hast thou not a gracious word  
 For one who waits on Thee?  
 Speak it to my soul, that I  
 May in Thee have peace and power  
 Nearer now my Saviour fly  
 And never grieve there more.

ED.

## WESLEY'S ADVICE TO HIS PREACHERS



JOHN WESLEY 1703-1791

Wesley called his preachers by the name of helpers.  
 (Southey's Life of John Wesley - page 251)

The Rules of a Helper are strikingly characteristic of Wesley, both in their manner and their spirit:-

1. Be diligent. Never be unemployed a moment: never be triflingly employed. Never while away time; neither spend any more time at any place than is strictly necessary.
2. Be serious. Let your motto be, Holiness to the Lord. Avoid all lightness, jesting, and foolish talking.
3. Converse sparingly and cautiously with women; particularly with young women in private.
4. Take no step towards marriage without first acquainting us with your design.

5. Believe evil of no one; unless you see it done, take heed how you credit it. Put the best construction on everything: you know the judge is always supposed to be on the prisoner's side.
6. Speak evil of no one; else YOUR words, especially, would eat as doth a canker. Keep your thoughts within your own breast, till you come to the person concerned.
7. Tell every one what you think wrong in him, and that plainly, and as soon as may be, else it will fester in your heart. Make all haste to cast the fire out of your bosom.
8. Do not affect the gentleman. You have no more to do with this character than with that of a dancing-master. A preacher of the gospel is the servant of all.
9. Be ashamed of nothing but sin; not of fetching wood (if time permit) or of drawing water; not of cleaning your own shoes, or your neighbour's.
10. Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time: and, in general, do not MEND our rules, but KEEP them; not for wrath, but for conscience's sake.
11. You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those who want you, but to those who want you most.
12. Act in all things, not according to your own will, but as a son in the gospel. As such, it is your part to employ your time in the manner which we direct; partly in preaching and visiting the flock from house to house; partly in reading, meditation, and prayer. Above all, if you labour with us in our Lord's vineyard, it is needful that you should do THAT PART of the work which we advise, at THOSE times and places which we judge most for His glory.

It is good for us that ever Christ took the cumber of us; it is our Heaven to lay many weights and burdens upon Christ, and to make Him all we have, root and top, beginning and ending of our salvation.

# THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY

GEORGE W. NORTH

It has long been a fundamental dogma of the Christian faith that, with the exception of Christ, every person born on this earth has been conceived and born in sin. There could hardly be found a verse in scripture which more forcibly implies the truth of this claim than the fifth verse of Psalm 51. There are those who do not believe that men are born sinners, but that opinion is generally held to be a heretical belief, though many great men have held it. Debatable as the point may be in man's opinions, let us not concern ourselves with these, but with the scripture itself, for this owes nothing to men's opinions. To the open mind David's statement is not proof that all men are born sinners, for he did not say that, his statement is entirely personal. Nevertheless his self-classification is claimed to be his personal recognition of a fact universally accepted. But, if David did not believe that all men are born sinners, what did he mean by the statement? Did he intend it to become a theological dogma or was it the confession of a man who had discovered the source of his sin?

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## 'I WAS SHAPEN IN INIQUITY'

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We can be absolutely sure of some things relevant to the point. One of them is that by it David did not intend us to believe he was conceived out of wedlock; that could not possibly have occurred, for he was the youngest of the family. Had he been the eldest of Jesse's sons we might have inferred, with a minimal possibility of being correct, that David was conceived out of wedlock. But Jesse, being the man he was, and living according to the law of God, it is almost certain that all his children were conceived and born as ordained by the Lord within the bonds of marriage. For the same reason, this also rules out any possibility that David was born as the result of an illicit adulterous relationship between his mother and some unnamed man. As nearly as it is possible to be sure, it is certain that there was nothing irregular about the matter and manner of his birth.

This intensely personal note seems to lend support to the idea that he is speaking of himself and his own family rather than of the whole human family. Yet, in so many things, David is a specimen man. In fundamental matters he represents all of us, to a relatively few of us he exemplifies more advanced truth, and in fewer instances still, in type, he represents Jesus Christ. In this case of course he was not speaking as Christ, for He was sinless, and David on his own confession was very human and sinful, and could quite easily be the spokesman for us all.

Yet what he was saying is not at first glance as clear as at some other times - as when, for instance, he said, 'the Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want'. Nobody reading his 23rd psalm would think for one minute that he was speaking of an experience which could be his exclusively and no one else's. He was enjoying being the Lord's sheep to the full, but not as being the only sheep in the world; he was expressing God's delightful provisions for him, in the knowledge that they were the same for all His children; David's experience is possible to us all. But, unlike the delightful possibilities of Psalm 23, if what David said in the later psalm about the source of his sin is not just a personal thing, then all of us, whether or not we think so, are more deeply affected by it than we have imagined.

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## MARRIAGE - SINFUL OR HONOURABLE?

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This becomes the more clear when we take into consideration Paul's comments to the Corinthians about marriage and child-bearing. These, taken in conjunction with what the writer to the Hebrews says, namely that marriage is honourable above all, assure us that marriage in God's will is a blessed and not a sinful state. This being so, children born to men and women living in that state are not conceived and born in sin as of that state; this should be a great assurance to all concerned souls. Along this line Paul even goes as far as to imply that children born to believers are doubly holy, for he plainly says that, as long as one partner to the marriage is a believer, the children of that marriage are holy. This is a blessed state to be in, and privileged is the family where it is so. But the acknowledgement of these truths does not answer all the questions they provoke, nor does it solve the basic problem. Salvation, we know, is not by first birth; it does not lie in that realm at all, neither does holiness; both are by faith. Grace and salvation do not run in the blood of human beings, neither can they be imparted by the processes of procreation. The holiness referred to by Paul here is that degree of sanctification attributed by God to the children of believers whose marriage has been a sacred covenant made before God, and kept with each other as unto Him. It would appear that this blessing is part of a special providential mercy which operates in the lives of believers in much the same way as the universally recognized providence of God works in the world. The difference between them is that, although all men, irrespective of merit or demerit, are favoured with the latter order of blessings, only believers are favoured with the former.

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## THE HUMAN SOURCE OF SIN

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It is therefore proper to believe that when David was born he was in this same sense holy within the marriage to the same degree as his brothers. He was thankful to God that he did not, as others (to use his own words) go astray from his mother's womb, but although this was so, it did not prevent him from saying that he was 'conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity'. Such a statement begs the questions 'How?' and 'Why?' If it is true that a baby born to believers is holy unto those parents and, to that degree, holy unto God also, how can the man he becomes cry out that he was 'shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin'? That it is true cannot be denied, because David said so, but why should it be so? Was it because of his own acknowledged adultery with Bathsheba and all the resultant and concurrent iniquities associated with it and developing from it? No, obviously not, for great as those were he was not referring to his own sins but to his mother's, as though to place part blame for his own sin on her. He knew very well that his mother's, that is, Jesse's wife's, personal sin did not cause his sin; he was not trying to blame anything upon his mother or on his father; their son's sin was not their fault, it was entirely his own. If this be so, then what was going on in the man? What was he saying? David's statement was an ejaculation from a heart that had made a great discovery. By his great sin he had discovered himself, and discovering himself he had also discovered the human source of sin. Equally surprising, perhaps more so, he also realized that the source of his sin was his mother, which is not the same thing as saying that his mother was the source of his sin; indeed far from it.

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## HIS OWN HEART - THE SOURCE OF SIN

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There is another consideration bearing on this and best taken at this point, namely that, when David spoke of being shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin, he might have been referring to the mystery of iniquity and the terribleness of sin in his own heart. He certainly saw and acknowledged that the iniquitous thoughts to destroy an innocent man had been shaped within himself. His own sinful heart had conceived the plan and his own mind had worked out the strategy he would use to murder Uriah, that he might 'lawfully' have Bathsheba for his wife. How alarmingly easily he had 'mothered' the whole thing into existence; it was his own dreadful child. An analysis of the events reveals that, from the moment he set eyes on the woman he conceived the seed, from which, within a short space of time, he gave birth to himself - the guilty sinner. His own heart was the source of his sin; no one and nothing else was. He certainly could not blame the mother of his flesh for what he did and for what he had become, and he fully realized that what he had become was worse than what he had done. David saw that he had made himself; Uriah had not done it, Bathsheba had not done it, neither had Nathan the prophet, nor Joel his chief captain, nor the devil,

nor God; he had (to use Paul's words) 'made himself' - and he was a transgressor. Peter joins with Paul to declare man's God-given power to form himself in these words, 'as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance'. Peter's injunction is stated negatively: positively he is saying, 'as obedient children we must fashion (form, shape) ourselves with understanding according to our new desires for holiness'. No God-given powers are bestowed on anyone for the purpose of sin or of producing a sinner, it is tragic when this happens in a man's life. All the God-given powers within a man are bestowed for the purpose of reproduction in the image of God. We each have to discover that image and learn to use our powers aright; sadly David's powers were put to wrong use. This introduces yet another factor, best considered at this point; namely temptation.

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## TEMPTATION - WHAT IS IT ?

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Why did David do this thing? What made him do it? Temptation is a mystery. There is no record that satan tempted David to do this thing; he seemed to do it entirely of himself, yet there can be no doubt that satan did tempt him. In a parallel, though dissimilar, instance later in David's life, satan 'stood up to tempt David'. Again there is no record as to how he did it; he never actually spoke to David, nor did he even suggest to him that he should number Israel. How did he do it? What IS temptation? The first great temptation in Eden was a direct solicitation to evil: satan levelled it at Eve. It was a word spoken from the mouth of the serpent, but no such thing happened with David, he did not see a serpent, nor did he hear it speak; all was within himself. Things have changed entirely since that original temptation. This world was perfect then; satan had not penetrated it. Sin was neither in man nor in the world; neither had the curse been pronounced by God; all nature was innocent and unsophisticated. But this is not so today, neither was it in David's day. Sin is in the world; it did not only come into man, it came into the world also.

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## TEMPTATION IS ALL AROUND US

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Sin is in the very substance and fibre of things, and death by sin is all around us; change and decay and corruption are in and upon and around everyone, everything, everywhere, and with sin and death, temptation. Since that original occasion, temptation has become more like an atmosphere than a direct solicitation to evil. Temptation is all around us, sometimes unfelt and unnoticed, more indirect than direct and definite or definitive. To God's children temptation is most often wordless, a subtle suggestion, an influence or a pressure rather than a direct word; it is an atmosphere to which they succumb, sometimes a sudden overpowering urge, sometimes cumulative pressure; temptation is into the world and of the world. This is exactly how it was with David. No one said anything to him; Bathsheba did not speak to him. He saw her, that is all, and

that is how it all began. The temptation began by the seeing of his eyes; it did not enter through his eyes, it began by his response to what he saw; the state or atmosphere of temptation was within himself.

Of itself this condition is not evil. It is there within each one of us; it is a vital part of man's make-up; without it human life could not exist. To it both God and Satan and good and evil make their appeal. Except it were there, man could not respond to God. It is an awareness, an ability to be attracted, a vivid perception, an openness to life and possibilities enabling us to respond to appeal, or be drawn either correctly or incorrectly to something or someone for good or ill. It cannot fully be described, for it is an abstract power, alike in us all, yet varying in individuals to a remarkable degree. It is neither exclusively physical or mental or spiritual, but, in mankind, is a derivative of all three. Temptation arises from and partakes of the powers of desire and imagination and love and affection, the aesthetic sense the unnamed and unnamable movings and emotions of the soul. It is always 'there', as air is always 'there'; it is opportunity, possibility; that is why timing is such a powerful element in temptation, and the spirit of man always rises to it or falls to it.

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### **THE WOMB OF THE SOUL**

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When God tempted Abraham he rose to it; when Satan tempted Eve she fell to it. James is right when he says, 'every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust'. At this point he was speaking of solicitation to evil. Previously he was speaking of 'counting it all joy when we fall into divers temptations'. This time he is speaking about falling on hard times or into difficult or trying circumstances, not of being enticed into evil, but now he is unfolding the way of entry into sin. A man's own lusts (that is, human over-desire, basic in any realm of his being) if not checked, will draw him away from high spiritual desire. Lust is the womb of the soul, the 'mother' or conceptive faculty within everyone; unknowingly it conceives either good or evil, and will bring forth, or give birth to, sin or righteousness within the life of everyone who responds to the word or object of temptation. If the exercise be of God it will bring forth life, if it be of Satan it will bring forth death. David was a man of God, but, as a result of his own folly, he laid himself open to temptation to sin; he responded to it, and the holy man of God became a sinner. So may we all, just by conceiving and putting into practice (whether in the physical, emotional, aesthetic, imaginative or spiritual realm), suggestions, ideas, thoughts generated from our own strong natural basic urges.

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### **EVERYONE IS THEIR OWN MOTHER**

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No one can give consideration to the fact that every person is his or her own 'mother', without being sobered and solemnized by the gravity of the truth. Yet every serious-minded person must fearlessly do

this, for scripture fully bears out this premise. To demonstrate this we need turn no further than to the opening verses of the New Testament. 'Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise:' says Matthew. 'When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost'. Luke takes this further by recording the annunciation of the birth to Mary by the archangel. Doing so, he introduces the very word which connects it with David's statement: 'thou shalt CONCEIVE in thy womb'. Matthew takes this still further with the words of the same archangel to Joseph about Mary, 'that which is CONCEIVED in her is of the Holy Ghost'. Seeking truth yet further, and reading in the book of Ecclesiastes, we find him saying, 'thou knowest not how the bones grow within the womb of her that is with child'. There is an order of truth here: first the word of suggestion from God, putting the idea into Mary's mind, then the conception, followed by the formation or shaping of the child in the womb, followed in due course by birth. We thank God that this was for our salvation; it was all done on Mary's part in virgin purity, and without premeditation. It had a physical outcome, indeed this was the purpose of it, but it was first of all a spiritual transaction. Before she conceived physically she had to conceive the truth spiritually. It may be said of the Lord and her what was said of the Lord and Abraham, of whom she was a true spiritual daughter as well as a lineal descendant - 'she believed God and it was imputed to her for righteousness' - 'the Lord did tempt (test) Mary'.

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### **'MOTHERHOOD' IS WITHIN EVERYONE**

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Glory to God and blessings upon Mary, she came through the test unalteringly. She conceived in righteousness. It was wholly an inward act, she received nothing in her flesh from without; the miracle of holiness begun in her carried on to completion. In the imagination of her heart, upon God's word, she 'shaped' a son in perfect justification; in her warm mind she lovingly conceived a babe without sin - she was mother of Him there before she was mother of Him in the stable. These things we all must learn. Read her magnificat and sense the fire of her, listen to her exultation, throb with her joy, take flight with her spirit, soar with her soul, learn of her motherliness while she was yet waiting to become a mother, and discover motherhood within you. Even if you are a male you will discover it if you look, for was not the female taken from the male? And are they not both one? What mother cannot find it within her to 'father' her own child and, if need should arise, be a 'father' to her offspring? Or what father is he who would not find it within himself to be a 'mother' to his children if necessity forced it upon him? In order to do this, neither wife nor husband would need to change roles physically, even if they could, neither are they expected to do so; outwardly we must all remain male or female as the case may be, but inwardly we can become all things; as Paul says in an entirely different context, 'I am made all things ...'

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## THE 'FATHER' WITHIN

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So David became his own 'mother', and his own father also, and brought forth sin (so can we all, though God forbid) for there can be no conception and no child without a father. David was his own child as well; he made himself. But can this thing be? Can a person be the father and mother and child of himself? Yes. To point this fact Paul makes very clear to the Corinthians that he was their father - 'I begat you', and to the Galatians that he was their mother - 'I travail in birth again ...' The object of the travail was 'until Christ be formed in you'; the object of the begetting, indeed Paul's achievement by it, was 'my beloved sons' (actually 'my little children' in Gal. 4:19). See then the spiritual potential of every one of us. It is Paul who speaks of 'our old man', and he speaks out of a soul that had been badly bruised by him. It took a long time to discover him because naturally he was so totally identified with him. It was the old man of sin in him that took God's highly spiritual law and slew him with it. The old man was living in him, working in him, perverting him, driving him to sin; he was his slave. He was the old man of law defying God's law, using Moses' law, working by human law and confusing poor Saul beyond understanding and endurance. He died a thousand deaths before he discovered what perhaps, in fact, dear David of the Old Covenant never did discover - that he had a 'father' within him who, at the slightest opportunity, would cohabit with his 'mother' and bring forth a 'child'.

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## THE 'MOTHER' AND 'FATHER' IDENTIFIED

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That 'father' is the direct lineal, spiritual 'descendant' of Adam, bred in everyone born of Adam since the fall. He (it) was never spoken of in the Old Testament. Much lay hidden in God then; much lay hidden in man also. Not until the last Adam came and died was the secret of old Adam's hidden existence and continuity in the race revealed. It was the unfolding of the fulness and comprehensiveness of Christ's death that brought it out; nothing else did, nothing else could. Perhaps that is the reason why David never spoke of his 'father'; he was very clear about his mother though, and was sure she had conceived him in sin. Paul was sure of the 'father' and named him - he was Adam. Although David could not name his mother in the same definitive way, he knew what state she was in when she conceived him - in sin. This being so, it is equally certain that his father was in sin also - they were both in sin, and they produced a child of sin. His father, being named, so also was his mother; she could only be one person - Eve, Adam's wife. God said in the beginning that Adam and Eve were one; He took her from him and gave her to him that they should cleave together and become doubly one, and they did - they still cleave to each other, and they are still one. Adam and Eve cannot possibly be separated; where one is there is the other also, there is no divorce. In the absolute sense it is impossible to separate

them; in spiritual effectiveness and power they, and their continual potentials, are inborn in every child coming into this world. As physically we all, according to our sex, are born in the likeness and shape of one or the other, so within each one of us, whether male or female, and irrespective of our sex, the powers of both combine. In us, their children, our parents are reproduced, the original creation of God cannot be erased, nor can the original principles of human design incorporated into us be eliminated from us. While mankind shall be, these too shall be, an ineradicable testimony that we were made by God.

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## THE TRINITARIAN PRINCIPLE

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God is an eternal being - THE Eternal Being; He is an eternal being because He is a self-sustaining being; He is three interdependent persons fully integrated into one being, needing or requiring no other person to sustain Him; He is absolute and complete in Himself. There is none like Him; besides Him there is none other; He is unique. Yet when He made man He made him in His own likeness and image; He wanted him to live for ever and, whatever the results of the fall, like God who made him, man can never go out of spiritual existence. Beyond that God also incorporated into Him power of self-perpetuation by self-reproduction: by this means the human race maintains and increases itself in its present trinitarian form - father, mother, child. This trinitarian pattern is also inevitably reproduced as a formulative principle in each individual of the race, as has been shown in the manner already discussed.

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## EVE - THE 'MOTHER' OF ALL LIVING

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It seems then that David's statement about his mother could have been entirely spiritual, and both racial and personal. If so, except by the slightest degree of association it certainly had nothing to do with his physical birth and his natural mother; he was not making reference to her. Through his own sin; David had come to a deep realization of original sin: the Spirit showed him, at least in part, how sin came into the world: it was through Eve. How rightly Adam called her the mother of all living. He had thought of it as he saw her standing in all her motherly beauty and innocence amid all earth's living things. Just how much he grasped and understood of the tremendous meaning and potential implicit in the name is impossible to judge. Perhaps later, looking round on a cursed earth, he looked on her and thought, 'she is the mother of all dying'; his Eve had brought sin into his life. Yet strangely enough it was only then that he put into words what first he thought - was it irony? It was he who brought sin into the world, says Paul, but she had first conceived it. The apostle makes this very clear by saying that sin came into the world AS by one man; he did not say BY one man, but AS by one man, which was perfectly true, for Adam and Eve were as one. Paul also says that Eve was deceived, nevertheless she was in the transgression, and the transgression was great, for in the transgression she

conceived sin in her heart from satan. She was the first human being to do so. The worst of it was that she immediately passed it on to her husband, who received the forbidden fruit from her hand, and in turn conceived sin in his own heart. On the part of both of them it was a spiritual act, and entirely voluntary; the only physical actions included in the transaction were the taking and the eating of the fruit.

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### **EVE - THE CONSEQUENCE OF HER SIN**

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It has been erroneously taught that there was actual physical relationship between satan and Eve, in other words that she committed adultery but that is only the suggestion of a sick mind. We may be sure that the Lord, who did not hesitate to expose adultery in others when necessary, would definitely have exposed Eve's if she had committed it. There is no reference to any kind of action or suggestion of a carnal nature, so we may therefore assume that no such thing took place, but she did deeply sin and transgress the commandment of the Lord. The transgression was great, very great indeed, greater than she or Adam knew; in the act she not only personally transgressed, she partook of Lucifer/satan's transgression too, she collaborated with the perpetrator and source of the original transgression.

Sin is everything that is wrong; it is not only the sum of everything that went wrong in heaven. The great transgression took place in heaven, where Lucifer dared rise up against God and incite other angelic beings to do so and join him in the rebellion, in an attempt to overthrow God and take the kingdom. It was an evil thing to do. In consequence of it and with His ultimate purpose in view, when creating the earth God felt He should plant in His garden a tree of knowledge of good and evil. He did so because He believed that man ought to be informed that evil existed and that He was aware of it; but He did not permit Adam and Eve to eat of the fruit of the tree, and warned them of the consequences if they did so. He did not tell them of the punishment He would inflict upon them if they dared disobey Him. He did not wish the relationship between Himself and His creatures to be maintained by what would perhaps appear to them to be ominous threats of reprisals if they did not do as He wished. How could love flourish under such conditions? Love cannot be founded upon fear, it cannot think evil, it believeth all things, hopeth all things; how then could God hope for a loving, fruitful relationship between Himself and Adam and Eve if He told them He entertained the thought of punishing them? Instead He warned them of the consequences of disobedience, and left it at that - they would be bad enough. Tragically and far worse than the punishment immediately inflicted on them and what the personal consequences of their act were, the effect of that moment's sin has been ruinous in the race. Eve of Eden was the mother of us all and she conceived us in sin; the seed was satan's, and by it he bruised the heel of God.

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### **JERUSALEM - THE MOTHER OF US ALL**

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God was hurt, He was wounded at heart, but not fatally. In heaven Lucifer had aimed at His head, in paradise the serpent had bruised His heel; in all satan had hurt Him to His heart, but He rose superior to His pain, and made the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. It was a bold statement, for, as David discovered many hundreds of years afterwards, the seed of the woman was sinful in conception and had conformed him to an iniquitous 'shape'. He had been mothered in Eden from a false seed, his heredity was a ruined paradise; a tree of good and evil was planted in it and in him. He was after all made of the same dust from which it grew, the dust in which the serpent slithered and twisted, and which it ate. Dust was his father and sorrow was his mother, she was also a vine in his blood and a womb in his soul; his father Adam, with whom his strongest desires were joined, was a weak minister to its demands. O how he longed to be free from it all. His heart went out to God, with his flesh it cried out to the living God. Jerusalem must be his mother and Zion his city; the situation of it was beautiful, better than the site of Eden; the Lord shined out of it, it was the lamp of the whole earth. It was the city of the great King; a river flowed into it from God's true Eden, watering it from above, making it glad, and parting thence it became four heads of living waters compassing the whole land in blessing. All his springs were in Jerusalem, she was his new mother, he was born there. O he was born in 'new' Jerusalem, he felt he was born anew there. New springs of thought and word and deed arose there, his inheritance was there, his heredity lay there; whether he looked forwards or backwards or all around him, he saw it, he loved it, he sang about it, he wrote about it, it was newness of revelation and life to him, the place of his salvation.

So it was to Paul and John of the new revelation; they wrote of it too, and with a far grander view from regeneration's height: 'Jerusalem which is above is the mother of us all', cried Paul; 'I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven', said the seer; 'Ye must be born from above', said Jesus to a man sitting in a room in Roman Jerusalem. 'We have no continuing city here', said the Hebrews writer, 'we seek one to come'. Abraham himself, (the original Hebrew) was looking for a city which had foundations too, he says. Not for these people an earthly city but an heavenly; they sought the heaven of heavens, the place of God's abode, Jerusalem from which God came upon and into the virgin woman of Nazareth from whence came no good thing it was said. The place was evil, there was no good thing in it, no good thing ever came out of it until Jesus came into it in Mary and out of it to Bethlehem, to be born the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head. He was conceived in righteousness and shaped in holiness to be the Son of Man by God.

## MARY - THE 'MOTHER' OF ALL LIVING

Mary has erroneously been called the mother of God; she was not. Joseph never called her that, he knew she was the mother of Man. Mary was truly the mother of all living, for all life was in Him in her, but she was not the mother of His Godhead, only of His manhood. The stable was no Eden, Nazareth was no paradise, Palestine was no heaven, and her name was not Eve. All was different, if not exactly opposite from the conditions of things in the beginning, but we were all born of her. If men could call Abraham their father, we all can certainly call Mary our mother, for as truly as Abraham believed God for the seed, so did Mary. When Jesus was born I was born; the way Jesus

was born I was born; when He died and the way Jesus died, I died; when He rose and the way He rose, I rose. Every generation, especially the Regeneration, shall call her blessed, and her Great Generation, Jesus Himself, a thousandfold more blessed. He is the Son of The Blessed. The only reason why Mary could be called blessed is that she was chosen by the Blessed to bare the one through whom the curse should be counteracted and removed: Like every one of us, she was a means to an end. Nevertheless, she is a type, the prototype, of us all, in that she was the one who conceived the word of God and yielded her flesh to the Holy Spirit, that from it, in her, He might make and shape the human form of God in sanctification and honour. She gave herself over, body and soul, to God for the birth of the Lord from heaven, the second man, and O how blessed she was in and for that act! GWN

'It is a good thing to sing praises unto Thy name, O most High'  
(Psalm 92:1)

The proper work of the sabbath is praising God. Every sabbath day must be a thanksgiving day. Believers, through Christ, enjoy the 'sabbath that remains for the people of God', the beginning of the everlasting sabbath.  
Matthew Henry



## STOP PRESS!

### New Covenant Sermons

Many of our readers have asked whether some of our articles could be produced in leaflet form, for use in personal ministry.

The following leaflets are now available at a standard charge of 5p each (Quantity orders - price on application):

The King is dying - G.W. North

Man of God - Norman Meeten

What a Price - Edgar Parkyns

The Kingdom Within Your Grasp - G.W. North

Other titles available soon.

# New Covenant Sermons

In the Old Testament

Hebrew Yom

1. DAY - literally, a day (Gen. 1:5) or light as opposed to darkness.
2. TIME - longer periods (Num. 13:20 and Neh. 9:32).
3. AGE - (Zech. 8:4) literally 'for the multitude of days'.
4. Most IMPORTANTLY, however, of the longed for Day of the Lord, when Yahweh would put down His enemies, and redress the fortunes of His Israel, and being in a time of prosperity and happiness for His people. The idea grows gradually in the Old Testament. This consummation of history is called the Day of the Lord. Also in that Day strict justice shall be given 'to the saints of the most high' (Dan.7:22) - that is to the Jews. From this time in Israel's history the belief in a great and universal judgement upon all men, both the living and the resurrected dead, grew more strong.

In the New Testament:

Greek Hemera

The word is used in the ordinary sense; Mk.4:35; Lk.17:4. In the sense of Times, Mt.2:1; Acts 5:37.

But we come to the important meaning of 'The DAY of the Lord', 1 Thess.5:2; 2 Pet.3:10 or 'of the DAY of Jesus Christ', Phil.1:6; 2 Thess.2:2. This again must be understood as a Day of Judgement, Mt.12:36, Mk.6:11, 2 Pet.2:9f.

Although Jesus came to preach a Gospel of Grace through His Church, His coming constitutes a judgement (Jn.9:39), men will be sorted as sheep or goats according to their response to Him. When mercy has made its appeal, men must finally face their God and His Christ to be judged according to their faith and works (Matt.11:20ff, 25:31ff). ED.

## BIBLE STUDY (1)

## THE DYNAMIC OF SERVICE

DERRICK HARRISON

THE DYNAMIC COMMISSION

Our thanks to Derrick Harrison for the preparation of this series of Bible Studies on the subject of Evangelism, which were originally ministered in the Fellowship in Birmingham. The studies are based on the book 'The Dynamic of Service' by A. Paget Wilkes. We acknowledge with gratitude the kind permission of the Japan Evangelistic Band to use the text of this book, which is now out of print. It has been a great blessing to so many Christians seeking to fulfil in their lives the commandment of Jesus to 'Go into all the world and to preach the Gospel'.

Editor

Acts 26:16,18

The great Apostle heard it from the lips of the Risen and Ascended Lord. That commission does not change; thousands have responded to it down through the ages, and have gone forth to tell and suffer and die. The terms of the commission set forth the work which has to be accomplished.

### 1. THE HONOUR OF THE MINISTRY

'I have appeared unto thee to make thee a minister' (v16).

### 2. THE CONDITION OF THE MINISTRY (v16)

To be a minister, one needs first to be a WITNESS - one who has seen, heard and known.

John Smith, a great man of God, in the early part of the last century said - 'No man feels the value of the soul of another who has not been made sensible of the worth of his own soul. No man discerns the malignity of sin in the world who has not yet felt its bitterness and terror in his own heart. No man is awake to the peril of the ungodly who has not trembled under the sense of personal danger. No man forms a correct estimate of the value of the Atonement who has not had the Blood of Christ sprinkled on his own conscience'.

Here is a deep secret, absolutely indispensable for the work of soul-winning. The one task that we are called upon to accomplish is to convict men of sin and then to convince them of the love of God in Christ.

### 3. THE TASK - THE AWAKENING OF THE SOUL

'To open their eyes' - Acts 26:18

When we use the expression 'conversion', we must know what it means. A true conversion means the renovation of the whole man - a new creation wherein all the faculties of man are transfigured and changed. This was exactly the task set before Paul. The DESIRES are to be awakened, the UNDERSTANDING enlightened, the WILL converted, the CONSCIENCE purified and the AFFECTIONS renewed.

Here is our first task - the awakening of the desires. The desires of the unregenerate man 'dead in

trespasses and sins' are depraved, and men are ignorant of the fact. They desire only carnal pleasures. The sticks and straws of a perishing world are the only things that appear to them of any worth. Our business is to open their eyes, and to cause them to desire the true. We must be deeply impressed in our minds of the need of man.

Almost all heresy and unscriptural teaching on the great themes of the Christian faith is to be found in erroneous views of the state, need and danger of man. If he is not a rebel, he needs no reconciliation; not a slave, then no rescription; not a sinner, then no forgiveness; not depraved, then no sanctification.

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#### 4. THE TASK - THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE UNDERSTANDING

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'to turn them from darkness to light' (Acts 26:18)

Many have been thoroughly awakened to their need and danger, but have sunk swiftly to sleep again because they have not been enlightened.

There is no knowledge of God, or sense of sin, hence the words 'forgiveness', 'pardon', 'justification' have no content or meaning.

Because of this state of things, it seems to make a long period of instruction, prior to the exercise of a living faith, absolutely imperative.

There must be a way, however, of so enlightening an awakened soul that he may at once enter in and be saved.

Content of truth must be put into the mind, as a lever to move the heart. A man can be awakened in a moment by the Spirit of God, and instructed to believe unto salvation; and be converted, pardoned and made a new creation in Christ.

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#### 5. THE TASK - THE CONVERSION OF THE WILL

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'To turn them ... from the power of Satan unto God (Acts 26:i8)

The third step in the salvation of the soul is REPENTANCE.

The first part is - TO TURN MEN FROM THE POWER OF SATAN. Behind the depraved desires, the darkened understanding, the seared conscience and the enslaved will, there stands Satan. It is with him we have to deal. This conviction concerning Satan is absolutely essential, driving us to prayer, making us cry 'Avenge us of our adversary'. We must meet the enemy on our knees. Men are 'taken captive by him at his will'.

The victory of Calvary and the efficacy of the Blood of the Son of God, believed and pleaded in prayer, are the only things that will make him give way and enable us to pluck the prey out of his hand.

Seeing that men are deceived and held captive, only God can save. He had appointed prayer on man's part as the way of deliverance, and that our co-operation in the conflict is necessary and provides weapons that are not carnal for the pulling down of strongholds of Satan in the hearts and minds of men.

The second part is - TO TURN THEM TO GOD 'repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ'.

Emphasize one point - repentance TOWARD God. Repentance is not necessarily repentance toward God. Our work is not to make man break off their sins, but to bring them to God. Satan cares not how earnestly men repent if only it is not 'toward God'.

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#### 6. THE TASK - THE CONSCIENCE PURIFIED

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'That they may receive forgiveness of sins' (Acts 26:18)

So far our commission has been negative, but we are also commissioned to cause men to receive forgiveness of sins.

It is not decision for Christ that we are commissioned to preach, but a FAITH THAT TAKES US TO HIM as poor, sinful, selfish rebels, to receive at His hand mercy, grace and pardon. The deeper the sense of it, the more refined the soul becomes - chastened and changed into His likeness.

Our work is not merely to preach and teach, but by FAITH and PRAYER, we are commissioned to cause men to RECEIVE.

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#### 7. THE TASK - THE AFFECTIONS RENEWED

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'That they may receive ... inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in Me' (Acts 26:18)

Here is the real and final objective - THE NEW BIRTH - a radical change divinely wrought. It is a change of heart, likes and dislikes, purpose, mind and will.

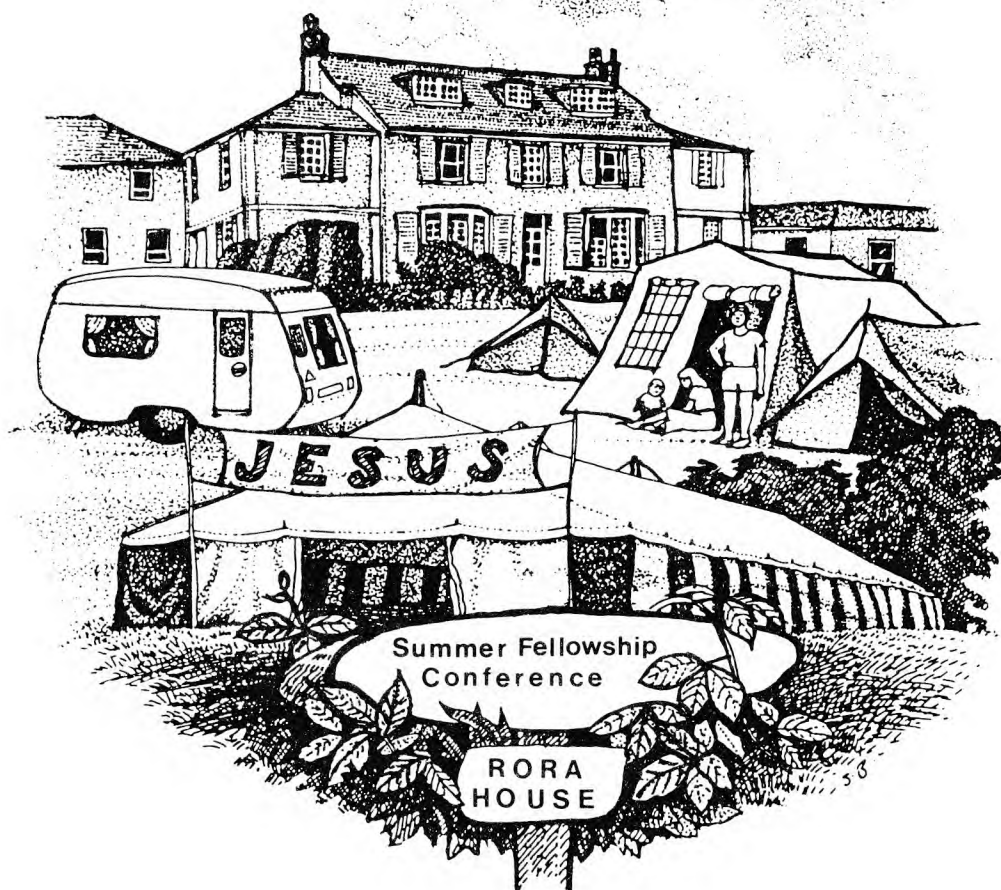
It is not only pardon of sins, but the bestowal of a gift, a miracle unwrought. The gift of God is eternal life. It is the receiving of a new heart. We cannot rest until we have secured this objective.

We are the instruments God uses to accomplish this task. DH

Our love should not be just words and talk, it must be true love, which shows itself in action.

1 John 3:18

# SUMMER FELLOWSHIP CONFERENCE



**30th. JULY – 6th. AUGUST  
1988**

The Summer Fellowship Conference takes place again next 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 NEW COVENANT PROSPERITY ... G.W.NORTH
- 6 NEW BIRTH ..... N.MEETEN
- 7 THE PRIORITY  
OF THE INWARD LIFE ..... B.HULL
- 13 THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY..... G.W.NORTH
- 19 BIBLE STUDY..... D.HARRISON