

Dateline for A N Groves

- 1795 Born in Newtown Valence, Hampshire, England. Only boy in family of six children. Following his local elementary education, Norris was enrolled at a quality school at Fulham, paid for by his father, where he lodged with his uncle, Mr Thompson, the local dentist, under whose tutelage he later studies dentistry. Attended church while at school, with a novel secreted inside his prayer book! He heard a preacher speak in church about missions, and thought how good it would be if he could go to India, and even bring one soul out of paganism and idolatry; in his memoirs he admits that at the same time himself, was being defiant toward God. His friendship with his cousin Mary Thompson grew, and they often had spiritual conversations. He bought her a Bible. He trained as a dentist, and set up practice in Plymouth, where his first annual wage was £400. So encouraged by this he wrote to ask Mary for permission to ask her father for her hand in marriage. Her father refused in the grounds of their being first cousins.
- 1816 As an Anglican, Groves had professed to be a 'Disciple of Christ.' He had already expressed an interest in missionary activity. Married his cousin, Mary Bethia Thompson. Encountered brethren people at Exeter, where he was living, and after conversations with Miss E Paget of Barnstable, and others gained 'a fuller assurance of faith' - it would seem that his earlier profession of faith had been a shallow matter. In his autobiographical account of his conversion, Groves admits that his initial response to the gospel had been Arminian in substance, asking what he could do for God. Under Miss Paget's influence, he came to realise that his salvation does not depend on what he could do, but on what Christ has already done for him. He now regarded his call to the mission field as a joyful response to Christ's finished work.
- 1825 Wrote and published booklet 'CHRISTIAN DEVOTEDNESS'. The booklet was the basis of his later missiology, encouraging Christians to live humbly and depend upon the Lord for their needs. The booklet expounds the teachings of Jesus on Christian Stewardship of material possessions, and exhorts all Christians to trust God to supply their needs. The underlying philosophy of this book may have been influenced by his father, who believed and practised that money was for USING not for ACCUMULATING. His father had underwritten a number of ventures, seldom with success, and had supported worthy causes. The booklet had a profound impact on George Muller, who also practised a simple, faith based life, and through him on Hudson Taylor. In the preface, Groves writes: *"The purpose of this little book is to show that the dedication demonstrated by the early disciples, is without exception, enforced by the commands of our Saviour. And not only that, but it is illustrated by the conduct of the apostles and early Christians. The author therefore asks that all sincere disciples of Christ carefully weigh what is written here in the balance of the Sanctuary, not the balance of the world."* *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* Matthew 6.
- 1826 Enrolled as a divinity student at Trinity College Dublin, studying part time, which involved travelling to Dublin for a short time every three weeks. During these visits to Dublin he found fellowship with those who were meeting at Powerscourt to study prophecy, and met J N Darby. His aim was to gain Anglican ordination, and work for CMS, the Anglican missionary society. In the same year he began meeting in trans-denominational meeting with other Christian believers at Exeter,
- 1827 Embraced the principles of Brethrenism, and began meeting with other believers, observing the Lord's Supper without a minister present, weekly communion, etc. Withdrew from his course at TCD.
- 1828 Groves severed his link with CMS
- 1829 Travelled to Baghdad as an unsupported missionary, believing that the Lord would provide all his needs, - he did NOT ask anyone for support. His wife and two sons and Mr John Kitto travelled with him. The journey took 6 months. Groves became the first Protestant missionary to the Moslem world.
- 1830-31 At Babylon, enduring dreadful conditions, civil war, floods, plague, heat etc. He began a school, teaching an elementary education and using the Bible as the basic reading text for the children, both boys and girls. His wife became ill of the plague and later died.
- 1831 Groves was joined by some of the Brethren from Dublin, including Parnell, Newman and Edward Cronin. They opened a medical clinic.

- 1833 The Bagdad mission was abandoned. At the invitation of the East India Company, Groves is invited to travel to India, where he see the great need there. He travels around various parts of the subcontinent, visiting mission stations of many denominations, and takes opportunity, with mixed results, to a speak of his dispensationalist eschatology.
- 1835 Gives remarries to Harriet Baynes, and they travel out to India again, this time to Madras, where Groves begins a missionary work. By this time his distinctive dispensationalist views had reduced his speaking and support base at home, and a number of social improvement efforts had failed, including a farm project, leaving him impoverished and disappointed. One of his disciples, a native Indian Mr J C Amlappan continued his work, and established local groups of believers throughout the region, which later became part of the brethren movement.
- 1852 Groves became ill and returned to England, staying with his brother-in-law George Muller at Bristol. His wife and family remained in India, and upon hearing news of his pending death set sail for England, but arrived too late.
- 1853 Discouraged and disappointed with what he thought was the failure of his life's work, Groves died at the home of Mr and Mrs Muller at Bristol.