



THE
NEW BIRTH.

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THE NEW BIRTH.

“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”
(John iii. 3—7).

HOWEVER busy Satan may be in many parts of this world in leading man on in idolatry, or infidelity, or open blasphemy, I believe it is becoming more manifest every day, that in this country at least, his power is most successfully wielded under the garb of religion ; for he cares not how much religion man has, so long as he can blind his eyes to the necessity of the new birth, and so shut Christ out of the sinner’s heart.

I ask your attention then, dear reader, while I put before you such Scriptures as prove the *need* of the new birth, and that shew the *nature* of it, the *power* by which it is wrought, and some of the *fruits* which flow out of it.

First, then, the *need* of it. If you look at man as under trial in the varied ways in which it has pleased God to try him since the fall, you find but the one solemn fact, that man is, by nature, God’s enemy : “The carnal mind is enmity against God,” so that, ere God and man can dwell together in eternal rest and joy, a change *must* take place somewhere.

If man fancies the case with him is not quite so bad as represented, the answer is, “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.*”
“There is NO DIFFERENCE, ALL have sinned.”

This does not mean there is no difference in the dispositions and social qualities of men, for there is great difference. I have found some men and women in the world, whose natural amiability is surpassing in excellence the natural temperament of some believers. But the truth here taught us by God is, that all men *by nature*—whether Jews or Gentiles—whether morally reformed or morally depraved—all stand on the same ground in God's sight, and that is on the ground of being at "enmity against him," "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart."

Man may be upright in his dealings with his fellow-men. He may be truthful. He may even be so religious as to attend to all the ordinances of the *so-called church*—baptism, confirmation, prayers, confessions, the Lord's supper, and all the rest—and yet be alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart. Nay, more! the more religious a man is, apart from being born again, the more difficult is he to be dealt with.

Religion without Christ in the heart—religion which a man adopts without being born again—is a powerful machine, in Satan's hands, in this country, in the present day. No doubt the garb will soon be laid aside for open infidelity, and things seem to be fast drawing on that way; but that which calls itself by Christ's name, while He, however, is shut out Himself, is the bait which is so very successful.

Has God no voice in the matter? He has, and

I will tell you what He says, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that EVERY *imagination of the thoughts of his heart, were ONLY EVIL CONTINUALLY.* The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was FILLED with violence; and God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt, for *all flesh* had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, *The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence through them.*"

"Ah!" perhaps you say, "that is all very true, but then, that was man before the flood."

True, it is man before the flood, and man after the flood is just the same.

The tower of Babel was after the flood, but what is the language of God with regard to man there? "And now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down and there confound their language that they may not understand one another's speech."

Alas! what a creature man is. "But," you probably say, "all that was man before God gave the fuller unfoldings of Himself as He afterwards did to the Jews."

So it was, but surely you are not quite ignorant of the sin of idolatry among the Jews, of the sin of their prophets, of their priests, and of their kings. Yea, such was man, that when God sent His dear Son, both Jews and Gentiles could work together for once, and that, too, in manifesting the wickedness of the human heart by killing Him. And yet you will still plead for man by saying that

light—the light of science and civilisation—has so illumined man's mind, that he is better *now* than *then*. No, reader, not a bit better. God tried man for thousands of years in various ways, and it ended in man killing the Son of God. God is now no longer trying man, for he has been tried, and found guilty before God; but in longsuffering He waits on these condemned rebels, preaching forgiveness through the blood they shed; and this, man, as such, despises.

Man better? His foolish heart may tell him so, but God says *that* “is deceitful above all things.” Man must be born again! How positively Christ spoke to Nicodemus on the necessity of being born again: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” “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 we have just seen that God says, all flesh have corrupted their ways, and that the end of all flesh is come before Him) “and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”

In the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans the Spirit of God brings before us the condition of the Gentiles, who had light—the light of nature—and also a conscience. But “when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful;” they “changed the glory of God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things;” they “changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.”

Such is man without law, or the written Word ; but what is he with it? Surely not better, for the more the light given, the more the deformity appears, so that the Spirit shews us, in the 24th verse of the 2nd chapter of this epistle, that through them the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles. In the 3rd chapter we get all classed together, as it were, by the Spirit, and the whole of mankind thus described by Him, "There is *none* righteous, *no, not one* ;" "They are all gone out of the way ;" "There is none that doeth good, **NO, NOT ONE** ;" "There is *no difference*, for *all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Dear reader, believe me, nay rather, believe God, there is no possibility of mending the old broken, ruined, good-for-nothing thing. It has had a fair trial, and a long one, and I tell you, it shewed its true character in murdering God's dear Son. Yes, here we get man, even in his most religious aspect, who, when Jesus Christ was walking this earth, laid schemes to put Him to death. This was not man in his unrefined state, but men even in their religious dress, who were the movers in murdering God's dear Son, though they had truly to seek the help of the Gentile powers, in effecting and carrying out their murderous deed. And once more let me remind you of the solemn fact, that man, as such, shews himself the same incurable creature to this very moment, by despising God's grace, and going about to set up and establish a goodness of his own. "*Without strength* ;" "*ungodly*," "*sinner*," "*enemies*," describe man's condition by nature,

“Marvel not that I said unto thee, “YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN!”

I may not longer dwell on the *need*, but will now, as the Lord enables me, direct your thoughts to the *Nature*, or *Character*, of this *New Birth*.

This is set forth, sometimes, by man as a mysterious something, and then a carnal mode of reasoning is adopted, to shew what it is, and the mind of the enquirer is left in greater confusion than it was before. But if I read the New Testament aright, it is not left as an unexplained mystery, but is made so plain there that none need go outside its sacred pages to learn what it is. Nay, if men set aside God’s Word, and prefer to try and learn it from human streams, they must not be surprised if they discover that they have made the same fatal mistake as Israel of old did, when God said of them, in Jer. ii. 13, “They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”

One need not go outside the third chapter of John, to find the nature or character of the new birth as plainly set forth, as the *need* of it is forcibly declared. Nicodemus came to our Lord, and owned Him as a “teacher,” but he came not the right way, and so, as another has said, “he had to begin afresh.” He had not come, as the same one says, as a “lost sinner to a Saviour,” but he “came as a pupil,” and before Christ left him, He told him where he must begin. He spoke to him of the brazen serpent. And Nicodemus must take his place as a lost sinner, *religious* as he was, at the foot of the cross, as the

serpent-bitten Israelite took his place as a dead man, at the foot of the pole, as it were, with the brazen serpent on it. This no doubt he did. And whenever there is sincerity in the heart, whatever mistakes the honest enquirer makes, "if he wills to do the will of God, he shall know." Christ says so.

For the instruction of honest enquirers, and for the help of those who are honestly trying to help such, we will hear what the Word says about it. And may the Holy Ghost please to use it to such as are making a fatal mistake with regard to this solemn matter.

The serpent-bitten Israelite had death in him. We may say he was a dead man. He felt it. He knew how the matter stood with him. His case, so far as he was concerned, was hopeless. But God provided a remedy in the brazen serpent. He accepted the terms of life. He looked and lived.

Is not this what Christ preached to Nicodemus, about the cross, and Himself on it, as the antitype of the serpent on the pole? Surely it is. Has God told us we must be born again, and then left the fact of what it is to be born again, or the character of it, as a mystery not to be unravelled? No, blessed be God! for it was explained to Nicodemus, and there it stands on the divine page for you and for me, and for all who desire to receive the testimony of Him who came from the bosom of the Father, to lay bare that bosom to us poor fallen men.

Nothing can be plainer. Christ on the cross is as much God's remedy for our ruin, as the serpent on the pole was God's remedy for the serpent-

bitten Israelite of old. God's remedy *then* was co-extensive with the ruin; and Christ on the cross God's remedy *now*, is co-extensive with the ruin of the sinner. "It came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived." "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." "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." Need we, I again ask, go outside the 3rd chapter of John to learn what Christ meant by being born again?

What was the condition of the serpent-bitten Israelite? Dead. How did he get life? By accepting God's remedy—by looking to the serpent on the pole.

What is the sinner's condition? "Dead in trespasses and sins." How does he get life? By accepting God's remedy—Christ on the cross. Oh! I do believe this is profoundly simple, where the will is subdued and the heart subject to God. Set an honest enquirer down to the 3rd of John, and if his mind have not the veil of human traditions wrapped round it, he will there in God's presence learn the nature of the new birth which Christ spoke to Nicodemus about. He might then be told, he gets it in water baptism. But his answer would be, "No such thing, for Christ on the cross is God's remedy for my ruin." He might be told that it is brought about by turning over a new leaf, by keeping the commandments, by submitting to all the ordinances of the "church," and by strictly obeying the ministers of it. His

answer would be, "I find nothing of the kind in the third of John, nor in any other part of the Word. Nay, more; I find this new way," he would answer, "directly opposed to the Word of God, and therefore it must be the work of God's enemy, and my enemy. It is the lie of the devil, and I will not listen to it."

That this new birth is inseparably connected with receiving Christ, as God's remedy for man's ruin, I will now give a few Scriptures to prove. "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life" (John iii. 36); "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from *death* unto *life*" (John v. 24); "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John vi. 29); "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe, are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts xiii. 38, 39); "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi. 31); "To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 26); "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30); "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. xv. 3); "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all

things are become new" (2 Cor. v. 17); "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 26); "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. i. 15).

More Scriptures might be given, but these are sufficient to show that the same precious truth that we get in the third of John, that Christ is God's remedy for man, is found running all through the blessed book. Before we leave this division of our subject, I will just direct your attention to a Scripture or two, which shew us the very *seed*, as it were, of this new birth. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, BUT OF GOD" (John i. 12, 13).

"Of his own will begat he us, with the WORD OF TRUTH" (James i. 18).

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of INCORRUPTIBLE, by the WORD OF GOD, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter i. 23).

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus iii. 5, 6). Believers' water baptism doubtless sets forth the fact, figuratively, that the believer is dead with Christ, buried with Christ, and that he possesses resurrection life in Christ. But however men should be so blind as to *assert*, and get their tens of thousands to *believe*, that they get this new

birth in connection with, and not apart from, water baptism, can surely be only accounted for on the ground that the god of this world hath blinded their eyes.

How it is possible for men to assert, and thousands, nay, hundreds of thousands, to believe, that this new birth is the result of their good works, I can only account for by the same rule, since the Word of God is so very plain with regard to this all-important matter to the sinner.

I shall now dwell only for a very little on the *power* by which this new birth is effected. In a word, it is by the power of the Holy Ghost. Any apparent spiritual change brought about apart from the operation of the Spirit of God, is a spurious thing, and the subject of it will, in all probability, return, like the sow that was washed, to wallow in the mire. But whether they do or not, nothing can stand before God, but *His own work!* I feel led to urge this on the reader's very serious consideration, for it is a solemn matter. We live in days when the church, being divided as it is, very, very suspicious and unscriptural expedients are had recourse to, to swell the number of communicants of a certain faith and order. I can also tell you that there is awful danger in these days, now that men of worldly influence are the leading men in the churches, of being dreadfully deluded into making a profession, until they may, poor things, become satisfied with a name only, while many more may be frightfully self-deceived, and pursue their fatal career till it is too late.

Male and female servants can get better situ-

ations by identifying themselves with some denomination than if they remained outside it all. Men of business and shopkeepers are in danger, for there is great temptation in the present day to make a religious profession, and unite themselves to the denomination that is most influential, for a little worldly gain; and this is done. Working men are in danger of the same fearful evil. They may be led to identify themselves with certain denominations to please their masters.

If all this sort of restraint, if all this horrid garb were to be plucked off, what a spectacle would present itself in an hour, to men, and angels, and devils.

Ministers who can now report their places well filled, and large numbers on the church books, might then weep over empty pews, and a great falling off in "church members." Alas! things are not always what they seem to be.

I am not penning these lines to wound a child of God, but truth is truth, and any one professing to be born again, apart from the operation of the Holy Ghost, is either deluded or is a deceiver. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and it is not in the power of man to control it. So is every one that is born of the Spirit. It is not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord.

I have sometimes heard persons spoken to as if the work of the new birth was the result of assenting to certain truths, and that if they did that, whether they believed them or not, they were born again. No, the second birth is a reality, and is the work of God's Spirit. Truly this is all brought about by Him in leading the sinner to know his

lost condition, and to accept, in the power of the Holy Ghost, the truth of God concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. This is all true, but I am speaking of that flippant thing you sometimes hear put before sinners. Men may believe in God the Father: they may believe that He sent His Son Jesus Christ into the world to be a Saviour—that He died on the cross—that He rose again the third day—that He sitteth on the right hand of God—and that He will come again to judge the quick and the dead: a man may believe all this, and yet not in his heart have accepted Christ as God's remedy for his ruin. It is one thing to assent to a thing, and another thing to "believe in the heart." I cannot explain it, but resting there myself, I feel the power of it in my own soul, and know that I have accepted Him as my Saviour.

Take this illustration. I have rebelled against the queen, I am sentenced to be executed, and shut up in prison. The queen finds a substitute for me, and she is satisfied, so satisfied, that she sends word to me that my cell door is to be thrown open, and that I may go free. The messenger of this good news unlocks my door, and tells me all. I hear it. He says, "Do you believe it?" I answer, "Yes!" but there I remain. Perhaps I am daring enough to say, "She must take me by the hand, and pull me out." This would indeed shew what an awful character I was. But there I remain. I might believe all, and even speak of my own inability to do anything, and at last be executed, because I would not accept the queen's terms. My fellow-prisoner, in the next cell, hears

the same message, receives, and acts upon it, and is free.

God has accepted the payment made by Christ, and He sends the good news to the prisoner. The prisoner says he believes it, and yet remains in prison, and perhaps excuses himself on the very ground of man's helplessness and God's sovereignty. This is daring indeed, and such an one is still further sinning against God by despising His grace, and refusing to accept His remedy. Another hears, believes, walks out of his cell, and is free. Devils believe and tremble, but are not saved. Either you must accept God's terms, and be saved; or despise them, and be lost. And this second birth, being by the power of the Holy Ghost, is an everlasting thing, and pure in principle as God is, for it is of divine origin: "*That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*" Oh, the everlasting security of all who are really born from above, and oh, the awfulness of resting in a spurious thing.

Now a word on the *fruit* of this heavenly birth. This we may look at in a two-fold sense. First, in its bearing towards the individual himself who is the subject of it; and secondly, in its bearing towards others.

First, in its bearing towards the individual himself, who is the subject of it. Who that has tried, before being born again, to alter his course, has not found it impossible to do what he has resolved to do, to try and please God?

But being born again, he has a new principle within, and by the power of this, in the energy of the Spirit of God, the old thing is kept under.

There is power now, where before there was weakness. "He that is born of God sinneth not." That is the new-born life. "Sin shall not have dominion over you." He may still find he has to carry about the old incurable thing, but that is not now to "reign."

Then, too, there is *peace*, where before there was nothing of the sort. Joy in the Holy Ghost; and the blessed hope of being eternally with the Lord. When death comes to the unpardoned sinner, it separates him from all he loved. If death should come to one who is born again, it will in a moment separate him from everything that burdens him down in this sinful world, and let him fly to his native air; and so, death is his! How precious.

Then, too, there will be fruit of this new birth, as seen in the holy walk. I don't say the world will *approve*, but it will *see*. There will be the walking in practical separation from it, or *should* be, and as much as possible, living peaceably with all men.

Dear reader, are you born again? You ought to know, for without this change Christ says, a man can neither see nor enter into the kingdom of God. This hour, the little slender thread that keeps you here, may be in a moment snapped, and you gone to eternity, and yet this matter not settled!

You may settle the question, this moment, I believe, as to whether you are born again. Have you, in your heart, as a poor lost sinner, accepted, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, as God's remedy for your complete ruin? and are

you resting there, in Him, and in Him *only*? If not, if you are “doing your best to please God, and trust in His mercy through Jesus Christ for the rest,” you are at present an entire stranger to this new birth. But to this hour God is still pointing to Christ, as the remedy. The day of grace is not yet closed. *God is still waiting in long-suffering on a guilty world.* But the day *will* close, *may* close, while *your eyes are resting on this page.* There is no time to lose. Parley not with so momentous a matter. Eternity hangs on it. Eternal rest, or eternal misery, in your case, must be decided by the *true* answer given to the question: “Are you born again?”

I do not say a man is lost, if he cannot say, “I am born again:” far be the thought from me. I should condemn many a poor doubting saint, if I did; but I say it with all boldness, there are marks by which both saved and unsaved may *know* whether they are born again,

Again I ask, are you, as a consciously ruined sinner, resting *alone* on the work of the cross?

J. C.



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