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THE NEW BIRTH

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THE NEW BIRTH DEFINED

William Plumer (1802-1880)

FROM first to last, salvation is all of grace. Paul says: “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 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” (Ti 3:3-6). So it is clearly by the grace and mediation¹ of our Lord Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit is sent down to renew our natures and to accomplish in us the new birth. *Pardon* saves a sinner from the curse of the Law and the lake of fire; *acceptance* through Christ gives him a title to heaven; but in *regeneration* the dominion of sin begins to be destroyed and the soul begins to be fitted for the Master's use.

¹ **mediation** – the redeeming work of Jesus Christ for sinners, as Prophet, Priest, and King.

The new birth is a great mystery, yet it is much insisted on in Scripture. “The washing of regeneration” is as necessary as washing in the blood of Christ. “The renewing of the Holy Ghost” is as essential as the “justification of life.” Within the space of four verses, our Lord thrice declares how necessary it is to salvation. Hear Him: “Ver-ily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God...Except a man be born of water and of the Spir-it, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God...Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (Joh 3:3, 5, 7). The fallow² ground must be broken up or the good seed will not take root in our hearts. The wild olive must undergo the operation of engrafting with the good olive, or it will remain worthless. All the Scriptures teach as much. Christ regarded it as by no means marvelous³ that a vile sinner must undergo a great spiritual change before he could be fit for the service of God.

Perhaps there is not a more driveling⁴ error than that which teaches that baptism with water is the regeneration that Jesus Christ and His Apostles insist upon. When men can confound the “washing of regeneration” with the washing with water, they are fully prepared to follow, in fact they are *already* following, in the footsteps of those who confounded “that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh” with that circumcision, which is “of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom 2:29). Perhaps, too, no error is more mischievous than this. It is monstrous that such error and folly should be taught in lands where God’s Word is in general use.

To baptism, some add an outward reformation and insist that this should be admitted as sufficient. Supposing this to be the meaning of Christ and His Apostles, it is impossible to defend them from the charge of using very mysterious language to convey so simple an idea. But such a belief is never entertained by those who have a becoming⁵ respect for God’s Word. It will therefore claim no more attention at this time.

Sound divines have very remarkably agreed in telling us what regeneration is. Dr. Witherspoon says, “A new birth implies an universal change. It must be of the whole man, not in some particular, but in all without exception.”⁶ And he shows at length that it is not partial, external, imperfect, but that it is universal, inward, essential, complete, and supernatural.

Charnock says, “Regeneration is a mighty and powerful change, wrought in the soul by the efficacious working of the Holy Spirit, wherein a vital principle, a new habit, the Law of God, and a divine nature are put into and framed in the heart, enabling it to act holily and pleasingly to God, and to grow up therein to eternal glory.”⁷

Dr. Thomas Scott⁸ quotes with approbation⁹ another definition, but does not give his author. He says, “Regeneration may be defined [as] a change wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit in the understanding, will, and affections of a sinner, which is the commencement of a new kind of life, and which gives another direction to his judgment, desires, pursuits, and conduct.”

Although this change is called by various names, yet the doctrine of Scripture respecting it is uniform. Sometimes it is called a holy calling, a creation, a new creation, a translation, a circumcision of the heart, a resurrection. But whatever be the name, the thing signified is everywhere spoken of in very solemn terms and as a rich fruit of God’s grace. Thus says Paul, “It pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me” (Gal 1:15-16). Again: “[God] hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2Ti 1:9). Again, Peter says that “the God of all grace...hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus” (1Pe 5:10).

Nor have the purest churches ever doubted the necessity of this change. They also remarkably agree concerning its nature. The Westminster Assembly¹⁰ teaches that “[God] is pleased, in His appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by His Word and Spir-it, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their

² **fallow** – land left unplowed and unseeded during growing season; uncultivated.

³ **no means marvelous** – not surprising; not astonishing.

⁴ **driveling** – senseless; nonsensical.

⁵ **becoming** – befitting; suitable.

⁶ **John Witherspoon** (1723-1794) – Presbyterian leader, signatory of the Declaration of Independence, 6th President of the College in New Jersey in Princeton; from *Treatises on Justification and Regeneration* (Amherst: J. S. & C. Adams, 1830), 94.

⁷ **Stephen Charnock** (1628-1680) – English Presbyterian Puritan; from “A Discourse of the Nature of Regeneration” in *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock* Vol. III, (Carlisle, Penn.: The Banner of Truth Trust), 87.

⁸ **Thomas Scott** (1747-1821) – Anglican author of *A Commentary on the Whole Bible*.

⁹ **approbation** – approval.

¹⁰ **Westminster Assembly of Divines 1643** – an assembly of 121 theologians appointed by the “Puritan” Long Parliament with making proposals for reforming the Church of England; it produced the Westminster Confession, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Directory for Public Worship, and the Form of Church Government.

heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by His almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace.”¹¹

The Latter Confession of Helvetia¹² says, “In regeneration the understanding is illuminated by the Holy Ghost, that it may understand both the mysteries and will of God. And the will itself is not only changed by the Spirit, but is also endued with faculties, that, of its own accord, it may will and do good,”¹³ and quotes in proof Romans 8:4; Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 36:27; John 8:36; Philippians 1:6, 29; and 2:13.

The Synod of Dort¹⁴ says, “This regenerating grace of God worketh not upon men as if they were stocks and stones, nor doth it abolish the will and properties of their will, or violently constrain it, but doth spiritually revive it, heal it, rectify it, and powerfully yet gently bend it: so that where formerly the rebellion of the flesh, and stubbornness did domineer without control, now a willing and sincere obedience to the Spirit begins to reign; in which change the true and spiritual rescue and freedom of our will doth consist...”¹⁵

The truth is that if we give up regeneration, the last hope that a sinner may ever again be either holy or happy is gone forever. The Church of Ireland¹⁶ holds that “All God’s elect are in their time inseparably united unto Christ, by the effectual and vital influence of the Holy Ghost, derived from him, as from the head, unto every true member of his mystical body. And being thus made one with Christ they are truly regenerated, and made partakers of him and all his benefits.”¹⁷ Indeed, nothing could more distress one, who rightly considered his lost estate, than to have the hope that springs from the doctrine of regeneration destroyed or seriously shaken...Every man, who has ever had his eyes opened to see his own wretchedness and vileness, will agree to the saying of Usher: “It is not a little reforming will save the man, no, nor all the morality of the world, nor all the common graces of God’s Spirit, nor the outward change of the life: they will not do, unless we are quickened and have a new life wrought in us.”¹⁸

In his old age, when he could no longer see to read, John Newton¹⁹ heard someone repeat this text, “By the grace of God I am what I am” (1Co 15:10). He remained silent a short time and then, as if speaking to himself, he said, “I am not what I ought to be. Ah! How imperfect and deficient! I am not what I wish to be. I abhor that which is evil, and I would cleave to that which is good. I am not what I hope to be. Soon, soon I shall put off mortality and with mortality all sin and imperfection. Though I am not what I ought to be, what I wish to be, and what I hope to be, yet I can truly say, I am not what I once was, a slave to sin and Satan; I can heartily join with the apostle and acknowledge, ‘By the grace of God, I am what I am.’ ”

...Our second birth brings us into a state of grace. It is one of the richest of God’s covenanted mercies. When one is born anew, a fatal blow is given to Satan’s kingdom in the heart; for “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (Joh 3:6). *This is a work of amazing energy!* It was for good cause that the Synod of Dort taught, “God, in regenerating a man, doth employ that omnipotent strength, whereby he may powerfully and infallibly bow and bend his will unto faith and conversion.”²⁰ Paul uses all the strong words he is master of to teach us that we are renewed by power, by amazing energy. He prayed that his Ephesians might know “what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead” (Eph 1:19-20). We know of no greater power than that which accomplished the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet the same power converts the soul...Dr. Nevins says, “Some think and represent it as easy to save a soul—to bend a will—to change a heart. Easy? It is God’s greatest work...God, in saving a soul, putteth forth a mightier energy than in making many worlds.”²¹ In his *Views in Theology*, Dr. Beecher admits, “The power of God in regeneration is represented as among the greatest displays of his omnipotence ever made, or to be made in the his-

¹¹ Westminster Confession of Faith 10.1.

¹² **Latter Confession of Helvetia** – a.k.a the Second Confession of Helvetica; a confession of the Swiss Reformation, authored by Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575).

¹³ Latter Confession of Helvetia 9.6.

¹⁴ **Synod of Dort or Dordt** – a council convened to settle the serious controversy in the Dutch churches initiated by the rise of *Arminianism*. Arminians were the followers of Jacob Arminius, a theological professor at Leiden University, who questioned the teaching of Calvin on a number of important points. After Arminius’s death, his followers presented their views on five of these points in the Remonstrance of 1610. The Canons of the Synod of Dort rejected the Arminians’ views and set forth the doctrines of unconditional election, definite atonement, radical depravity, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of saints.

¹⁵ The Articles of the Dort 3.16.

¹⁶ **The Irish Articles** – one hundred and four theological points adopted by the Irish Epis-copal Church (1615) and written by James Usher (see note 18 below). These articles were a major influence on the Westminster Confession of Faith.

¹⁷ Irish Articles of Religion 33.

¹⁸ **James Usher or Ussher** (1581-1656) – Anglican Archbishop of Armagh, Ireland, and professor of divinity at Dublin; from *Eighteen Sermons Preached in Oxford 1640* (London: S. Griffin for John Rothwell at the Fountain in Cheapside, 1660), 57.

¹⁹ **John Newton** (1725-1807) – Anglican minister, author of the hymn *Amazing Grace*.

²⁰ Canons of the Synod of Dort: Rejection of Errors on the third and fourth chapters, in nine articles.

²¹ William Nevins (1797-1835), *Select Remains* (New York: J. S. Taylor, 1836), 291.

tory of the universe. When the fair creation rose fresh in beauty from the hand of God, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy; but sweeter songs will celebrate and louder shouts will attend the consummation of redemption by the power of God's Spirit..."²²

From *The Grace of Christ*, reprinted by Sprinkle Publications.

William S. Plumer (1802-1880): American Presbyterian minister; author of *Vital Godliness*, *The Law of God*, and many others. Born in Greensburg, Pennsylvania.



THE SPIRIT THAT BREATHES LIFE

Octavius Winslow (1808-1878)

"It is the spirit that quickeneth."—John 6:6

IT will be perceived that, in unfolding His work, we commence with the Spirit's first gracious and Divine act—the breathing of spiritual life in the soul. This must be regarded as an operation preceding all others. The Spirit's work as a Quickener must ever precede His work as a Sanctifier and a Comforter. If we look for Him in any of His offices before we have received Him as the Author of Divine life in the soul, we reverse His own order and cover ourselves with disappointment. We enter upon the discussion of this subject the more readily and, we trust, prayerfully, from the conviction that the modern views of the doctrine of regeneration, as held and preached by many, are not only widely different from the old standards of doctrinal truth, but, which is more serious and deeply to be deplored, are such as the Word of God clearly and distinctly disowns, and upon which there rests the darkness of its frown.

Regeneration, as taught by many in the present day, differs widely from the doctrine as preached in the days of the Apostles and Reform-ers. In their writings and discourses, the basis was deeply and broadly laid in the original and total depravity of man. This doctrine is now by many greatly modified, if not absolutely denied. In the days of primitive Christianity, the utter helplessness of the creature and the absolute and indispensable necessity of the Holy Spirit's influences in the regeneration of the soul were distinctly and rigidly enforced. Sentiments the reverse of these, subversive of the Scripture doctrine of regeneration and destructive of the best interests of the soul, are now zealously and widely promulgated. Surely this is a cause of deep humiliation before God. May He restore to His ministers and people a pure language, and graciously revive the precious, soul-humbling, Christ-honoring truths once the safeguard and the glory of our land.

We propose...a simple and Scriptural delineation²³ of the doctrine of regeneration, the office of the Holy Spirit in its production, and some of the holy effects as traced in the life of a believer. May there descend on the reader the anointing of the Holy One, and may the truth empty, sanctify, and comfort the heart.

Regeneration is a work standing alone and distinct from all the other operations of the Divine Spirit. It is to be carefully distinguished from conversion,²⁴ adoption,²⁵ justification,²⁶ and sanctification,²⁷ and yet must be regarded

²² Lyman Beecher (1775-1863), *Views in Theology* (Cincinnati: Truman and Smith, 1836), 202-203.

²³ **delineation** – portraying or depicting in words; describing.

²⁴ **conversion** – the act of turning from sin and self to God by faith in Jesus Christ, often as the result of some form of Christian proclamation of Holy Scripture.

²⁵ **adoption** – Q. 33. What is adoption? A: Adoption is an act of God's free grace (1Jo 3:1) whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God (Joh 1:12; Rom 8:17).—*C. H. Spurgeon's Catechism*

²⁶ **justification** – Q. 32. What is justification? A: Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardons all our sins (Rom 3:24; Eph 1:7), and accepts us as righteous in his sight (2Co 5:21) only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us (Rom 5:19), and received by faith alone (Gal 2:16; Phi 3:9).—*C. H. Spurgeon's Catechism*

²⁷ **sanctification** – Q. 34. What is sanctification? A: Sanctification is the work of God's Spirit (2Th 2:13) whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God (Eph 4:24) and are enabled more and more to die to sin, and live to righteousness (Rom 6:11).—*C. H. Spurgeon's Catechism*, reprinted and available from Chapel Library.

as forming the basis and the springhead of them all. For instance, there can be no conversion without a principle of life in the soul, for conversion is the exercise of a spiritual power implanted in man. There can be no sense of adoption apart from a renewed nature, for adoption confers the privilege only, not the nature, of sons. There can be no comforting sense of acceptance in the Beloved until the mind has passed from death unto life, nor can there be the smallest advance in a conformity of the will and of the affections to the image of God while there is wanting in the soul the very root of holiness. Faith is a purifying grace, but faith is only found in the heart created anew in Christ Jesus. There must necessarily be the spiritual renewal of the whole man before the soul can pass into an adopted, justified, and sanctified state. Reader, ponder seriously this solemn truth.

From *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, reprinted by The Banner of Truth Trust.

Octavius Winslow (1808-1878): Nonconformist pastor, ordained in 1833 in New York, but later moved to England, where he became one of the most valued ministers of the nineteenth century. Preached at the opening of C. H. Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle in 1861; author of more than forty books, in which he promoted an experimental knowledge of the precious truths of God. Buried in Abbey Cemetery, Bath, England.



THE NECESSITY OF THE NEW BIRTH

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

TWO chief obstacles lie in the way of the salvation of any of Adam's fallen descendants: bondage to the guilt and penalty of sin, bondage to the power and presence of sin; or, in other words, their being bound for hell and their being unfit for heaven. These obstacles are, so far as man is concerned, entirely insurmountable.²⁸ This fact was unequivocally²⁹ established by Christ, when in answer to His disciples' question, "Who then can be saved?" He answered, "With men this is impossible." A lost sinner might more easily create a world than save his own soul. But—forever be His name praised—the Lord Jesus went on to say, "With God all things are possible" (Mat 19:25-26). Yes, problems that completely baffle human wisdom are solvable by Omniscience. Tasks that defy the utmost efforts of man are easily accomplished by Omnipotence. Nowhere is this fact more strikingly exemplified than in God's saving of the sinner.

As intimated above, two things are absolutely essential in order to salvation: deliverance from the guilt and penalty of sin, deliverance from the power and presence of sin. The one is secured by the mediatorial work³⁰ of Christ; the other is accomplished by the effectual operations of the Holy Spirit. The one is the blessed result of what the Lord Jesus did *for* God's people; the other is the glorious consequence of what the Holy Spirit does *in* God's people...

Now a vital and saving knowledge of these Divine truths cannot be acquired by a mere study of them. No amount of pouring over the Scriptures, no painstaking examination of the soundest doctrinal treatises, no exercise of the intellect is able to secure the slightest spiritual insight into them. True, the diligent seeker may attain a natural knowledge, an intellectual apprehension of them, just as one born blind may obtain a notional knowledge of the colorings of the flowers or of the beauties of a sunset. But the natural man can no more arrive at a spiritual knowledge of spiritual things than a blind man can a true knowledge of natural things, yea, than a man in his grave can know what is going on in the world he has left. Nor can anything short of Divine power bring the proud heart to a felt realization of this humbling fact: only as God supernaturally enlightens is any soul made conscious of the awful spiritual darkness in which it naturally dwells.

²⁸ **insurmountable** – impossible to overcome.

²⁹ **unequivocally** – exhibiting a single, clearly defined meaning.

³⁰ **mediatorial work** – It pleased God in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus His only begotten Son, according to the Covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and man; the Prophet, Priest and King; Head and Saviour of His Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: Unto whom He did from all Eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.—The 1677/89 London Baptist Confession of Faith 8.1.

The truth of what has just been said is established by the plain and solemn declaration of 1 Corinthians 2:14: “But the natural man receiv-eth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”...An external knowledge of Divine truth, as revealed in Scripture, may charm the mind and form ground for speculation and conversation, but unless there is a Divine application of them to the conscience and heart, such knowledge will be of no more avail in the hour of death than the pleasing images of our dreams are of any satisfaction when we awake. How awful to think that multitudes of professing Christians will awaken in Hell to discover that their knowledge of Divine truth was no more substantial than a dream!

While it be true that no man by searching can find out God (Job 11:7), and that the mysteries of His kingdom are sealed secrets until He deigns³¹ to reveal them to the soul (Mat 13:11), nevertheless, it is also true that God is pleased to use means in the conveyance of heav-enly light to our sin-darkened understandings. It is for this reason that He commissions His servants to preach the Word, and, by voice and pen, expound the Scriptures. Nevertheless, their labors will produce no eternal fruits unless He condescends to bless the seed they sow and give it an increase. Thus, no matter how faithfully, simply, helpfully a sermon be preached or an article written, unless the Spirit applies it to the heart, the hearer or reader is no spiritual gainer. Then will you not humbly entreat God to open your heart to receive whatever is according to His holy Word in this booklet?

...**Regeneration is no mere outward reformation, no mere turning over a new leaf and endeavoring to live a better life.** The new birth is very much more than going forward and taking the preacher’s hand: it is a supernatural operation of God upon man’s spirit, a transcendent wonder. All of God’s works are wonderful. The world in which we live is filled with things that amaze us. Physical birth is a marvel; but from several standpoints, the new birth is more remarkable. It is a marvel of Divine grace, Divine wisdom, Divine power, and Divine beauty. It is a miracle performed upon and within ourselves, of which we may be personally cognizant.³² It will prove an eternal marvel.

Because regeneration is the work of God, it is a mysterious thing. All God’s works are shrouded in impenetrable mystery. Life, natural life, in its origin, in its nature, its processes, baffles the most careful investigator. Much more is this the case with spiritual life. The Existence and Being of God transcends the finite grasp. How then can we expect to understand the process by which we become His children? Our Lord Himself declared that the new birth is a thing of mystery: “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound there-of, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (Joh 3:8)...

Regeneration is an intensely solemn thing. The new birth is the dividing line between Heaven and Hell. In God’s sight there are but two classes of people on this earth: those who are dead in sins and those who are walking in newness of life. In the physical realm there is no such thing as being between life and death. A man is either dead or alive. The vital spark may be very dim, but while it exists, life is present. Let that spark go out altogether, and, though you may dress the body in beautiful clothes, nevertheless, it is nothing more than a corpse. So it is in the spiritual realm. We are either saints or sinners, spiritually alive or spiritually dead, children of God or children of the Devil. In view of this solemn fact, how momentous is the question, “Have I been born again?” If not, and you die in your present state, you will wish you had never been born at all.

1. THE NEED FOR REGENERATION LIES IN OUR NATURAL DEGENERATION. In consequence of the fall of our first parents, all of us were born alienated from the Divine life and holiness, despoiled of all those perfections wherewith man’s nature was at first endowed. Ezekiel 16:4-5 gives a graphic picture of our terrible spiritual plight at our entrance into this world: cast out to the loathing of our persons, rolling ourselves in our own filth, impotent to help ourselves. That “likeness” of God (Gen 1:26), which was at first stamped on man’s soul, has been effaced,³³ aversion from God and an inordinate love of the creature having displaced it. The very fountain of our beings is polluted, continually sending forth bitter springs, and though those streams take several courses and wander in various channels, yet are they all brackish.³⁴ Therefore is the “sacrifice” of the wicked an abomination to the Lord (Pro 15:8) and his very plowing “sin” (Pro 21:4).

There are but two states, and all men are included therein: the one a state of spiritual life, the other a state of spiritual death; the one a state of righteousness, the other a state of sin; the one saving, the other damning; the one a state of enmity, wherein men have their inclinations contrary to God, the other a state of friendship and fellowship, wherein men walk obediently unto God, and would not willingly have an inward notion opposed to His will. The one state is called *darkness*, the other *light*: “For ye were (in your unregenerate days, not only in the dark, but) sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord” (Eph 5:8). There is no medium between these conditions: all are in one of them. Each man and woman now on earth is either an object of God’s delight or of His abomination. The most be-

³¹ **deigns** – descends to the level of one considered inferior, i.e., lowers Himself.

³² **cognizant** – aware.

³³ **effaced** – rubbed or wiped out.

³⁴ **brackish** – spoiled by mixture, as of sea-water with fresh.

nevolent and imposing works of the flesh cannot please Him. But the faintest sparks proceeding from that which grace hath kindled are acceptable in His sight.

By the Fall, man contracted an *unfitness* to that which is good. Shap-en in iniquity and conceived in sin (Psa 51:5), man is a “transgressor from the womb” (Isa 48:8). “They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies” (Psa 58:3), and, “The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Gen 8:21). He may be civilized, educated, refined, and even religious; but at heart he is deceptively wicked (Jer 17:9), and all that he does is vile in the sight of God. For nothing is done from love to Him and with a view to His glory. “A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit” (Mat 7:18). Until they are born again, all men are “unto every good work reprobate” (Ti 1:16).

By the Fall, man contracted an *unwillingness* to that which is good. All motions of the will in its fallen estate, through defect of a right principle from whence they flow and a right end to which they tend, are only evil and sinful. Leave man to himself, remove from him all the restraints that law and order impose, and he will swiftly degenerate to a lower level than the beasts, as almost any missionary will testify. And is human nature any better in civilized lands? Not a whit. Wash off the artificial veneer, and it will be found that “as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man” (Pro 27:19). The world over, it remains solemnly true that “the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7). Christ will prefer the same charge in a coming day as when He was here on earth: “Men loved darkness rather than light” (Joh 3:19). Men will not come to Him that they might have “life.”

By the Fall, man contracted an *inability* to that which is good. He is not only unfitted and unwilling, but unable to do that which is good. Where is the man that can truthfully say he has measured up to his own ideals? All have to acknowledge there is a strange force within, dragging them downward, inclining them to evil, which, notwithstanding their utmost endeavors against it, in some form or other, more or less, conquers them. Despite the kindly exhortations of friends, the faithful warnings of God’s servants, the solemn examples of suffering and sorrow, disease and death on every side, and the vote of their own conscience, yet they yield. “They that are in the flesh (in their natural condition) cannot please God” (Rom 8:18).

Thus, it is evident that the *need* is imperative for a radical and revolutionary change to be wrought in fallen man before he can have any fellowship with the thrice-holy God...[Man] must be grafted upon another stock,³⁵ united to Christ, partake of the power of His resurrection: without this he may bring forth fruit, but not “unto God.” How can anyone turn to God without a principle of spiritual motion? How can he live to God who has no spiritual life? How can he be fit for the Kingdom of God who is of a brutish and diabolical nature?

2. THE NEED FOR REGENERATION LIES IN MAN’S TOTAL DEPRAVITY. Every member of Adam’s race is a fallen creature, and every part of his complex being has been corrupted by sin. Man’s heart is “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9). His mind is blinded by Satan (2Co 4:4) and darkened by sin (Eph 4:18), so that his thoughts are only evil continually (Gen 6:5). His affections are prostituted, so that he loves what God hates and hates what God loves. His will is enslaved from good (Rom 6:20) and opposed to God (Rom 8:7). He is without righteousness (Rom 3:10), under the curse of the Law (Gal 3:10), and is the captive of the Devil. His condition is truly deplorable and his case *desperate*. He cannot better himself, for he is “without strength” (Rom 5:6). He cannot work out his salvation, for there dwelleth no good thing in him (Rom 7:18). He needs, then, to be born of God, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature” (Gal 6:15).

Man is a fallen creature. It is not that a few leaves have faded, but that the entire tree has become rotten, root and branch. There is in every one that which is radically wrong. The word *radical* comes from a Latin one which means “the root,” so that when we say a man is *radically* wrong, we mean that there is in him, in the very foundation and fiber of his being, that which is intrinsically³⁶ corrupt and essentially evil. Sins are merely the fruit: there must of necessity be a root from which they spring. It follows, then, as an inevitable consequence that man needs the aid of a Higher Power to effect a radical change in him. There is only One who can effect that change: God created man, and God alone can recreate him. Hence, the imperative demand, “Ye must be born again” (Joh 3:7). Man is spiritually dead and naught but almighty power can make him alive...[Therefore], the more clearly we are enabled to discern the imperative *need* of regeneration and the various reasons why it is absolutely essential in order to a fallen creature being fitted for the presence of the thrice-holy God, the less difficulty are we likely to encounter when we endeavor to arrive at an understanding of the *nature* of regeneration...

³⁵ **grafted...stock** – inserted into the trunk of a living tree; metaphor for union with Christ.

³⁶ **intrinsically** – in the nature of a thing; in and of itself.

Jesus Christ came into this world to glorify God and to glorify Himself by redeeming a people unto Himself. But what glory can we conceive that God has, and what glory would accrue³⁷ to Christ, if there be not a vital and fundamental difference between His people and the world? And what difference can there be between those two companies but in a change of heart, out of which are the issues of life (Pro 4:23), a change of nature or disposition, as the fountain from which all other differences must proceed—sheep and goats differ in nature. The whole mediatorial work of Christ has this one end in view. His priestly office is to reconcile and bring His people unto God; His prophetic, to teach them the way; His kingly, to work in them those qualifications and bestow upon them that comeliness which is necessary to fit them for the holy converse³⁸ and communion with the thrice holy God. Thus does He “purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works” (Ti 2:14).

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived” (1Co 6:9). But multitudes *are* deceived, deceived at this very point and on this most momentous matter. God has warned men that “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9), but few will believe that this is true of them. Instead, tens of thousands of professing Christians are filled with a vain and presumptuous confidence that all is well with them. They delude themselves with hopes of mercy while continuing to live in a course of self-will and self-pleasing. They fancy they are fitted for Heaven, while every day that passes finds them the more prepared for Hell. It is written of the Lord Jesus, “He shall save His people from their sins” (Mat 1:21), and not in their sins. [He will] save them not only from the *penalty*, but also from the *power* and *pollution* of sin.

To how many in Christendom do these solemn words apply, “For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful” (Psa 36:2)? The principal device of Satan is to deceive people into imagining that they can successfully combine the world with God, allow the flesh while pretending to the Spirit, and thus “make the best of both worlds.” But Christ has *emphatically* declared that “no man can serve two masters” (Mat 6:24)...

3. THE NEED FOR REGENERATION LIES IN MAN’S UNSUITEDNESS TO GOD. When Nicodemus, a respectable and religious Pharisee, yea, a “master in Israel,” came to Christ, He told him plainly that “except a man be born again” he could neither see nor enter the “kingdom of God” (Joh 3:3, 5), either the Gospel-state on earth or the Glory-state in Heaven. None can enter the spiritual realm unless he has a spiritual nature, which alone gives him an appetite for and capacity to enjoy the things pertaining to it. This, the natural man has not. So far from it, he cannot so much as “discern” them (1Co 2:14). He has no love for them nor desire after them (Joh 3:19). Nor can he desire them, for his will is enslaved by the lusts of the flesh (Eph 2:2-3). Therefore, before a man can enter the spiritual kingdom, his understanding must be supernaturally enlightened, his heart renewed, and his will emancipated.

From *Regeneration*, reprinted by and available as a small booklet from Chapel Library.

A.W. Pink (1886-1952): Pastor, itinerate Bible teacher, author of *Studies in the Scriptures* and many books, including his well-known *The Sovereignty of God*. Born in Nottingham, England, immigrated to the U.S., and later returned to his home-land in 1934.



³⁷ **accrue** – increase.

³⁸ **converse** – spiritual communication.

BIBLICAL TERMS FOR THE NEW BIRTH

John Gill (1697-1771)

REGENERATION may be considered either more *largely*, and then it includes with it effectual calling,³⁹ conversion, and sanctification; or more *strictly*, and then it designs the first principle of grace infused⁴⁰ into the soul. [This] makes it a fit object of effectual vocation,⁴¹ a proper subject of conversion, and is the source and spring of that holiness which is gradually carried on in sanctification and perfected in heaven. Concerning regeneration, the following things may be enquired into: What regeneration is or what is...the nature of it, which is so mysterious, unknown, and unaccountable to a natural man, as it was to Nicodemus, though a master⁴² in Israel. Now it may be the better understood by observing the phrases and terms by which it is expressed:

1. It is expressed by being *born again*, which regeneration properly signifies (see Joh 3:3, 7; 1Pe 1:3, 23). This supposes a prior birth, a first birth, to which regeneration is the second. [We] may receive some light by observing the contrast between the two births, they being the reverse of each other: the first birth is of sinful parents and in *their* image; the second birth is of God and in *His* image. The first birth is of corruptible, the second birth of incorruptible seed. The first birth is in sin, the second birth is in holiness and righteousness. By the first birth, men are polluted and unclean; by the second birth, they become holy and commence [to be] saints. The first birth is of the flesh and is carnal; the second birth is of the Spirit and is spiritual and makes men spiritual men. By the first birth, men are foolish and unwise, being born like a wild ass's colt; by the second birth, they become knowing and wise unto salvation. By the first birth, they are slaves to sin and the lusts of the flesh and are home-born slaves; by the second birth, they become Christ's free men. From their first birth, they are transgressors and go on in a course of sin until stopped by grace; in the second birth, they cease to commit sin, [i.e.] to go on in a course of sinning, but live a life of holiness. Yea, he that is born of God *cannot* sin. By the first birth, men are children of wrath and under tokens of divine displeasure; at the second birth, they appear to be the objects of the love of God, regeneration being the fruit and effect of it...

2. It is called being *born from above*: For so the phrase in John 3:3, 7 may be rendered. The Apostle James says in general, that every good and every perfect gift is from above; and regeneration being such a gift, must be from above...for it follows, of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth (Jam 1:17-18). The author of this birth is from above; those that are born again are born of God their Father who is in heaven; the grace given in regeneration is from above (Joh 3:27). Truth in the inward part, wisdom in the hidden part, or the grace of God in the heart produced in regeneration is that wisdom that is from above (Jam 3:17). Such that are born again, as they are of high and noble birth, are partakers of the heavenly and high calling of God in Christ Jesus and shall most certainly possess it (1Pe 1:3-4; Heb 3:1; Phi 3:14).

3. It is commonly called the *new birth*: and with great propriety, since the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost are joined together as meaning the same thing. What is produced in regeneration is called the *new creature* and the *new man*, and those who are born again are said to be *newborn babes* (Ti 3:5; 2Co 5:17; Eph 4:24; 1Pe 2:2). It is a new man in distinction from the old man, or the principle of corrupt nature, which is as old as a man is. But the principle of grace infused in regeneration is quite new. It is something *de novo*,⁴³ anew implanted in the heart, which never was before in human nature, no, not in Adam in his state of innocence. It is neither a working upon the old principles of nature nor a working them up to a higher pitch. It is not an improvement of them nor a repairing of the broken, ruined image of God in man. But it is altogether a *new* work. It is called a creature, being a work of almighty power, a new creature and a new man consisting of various parts and these all new. There are in it a new heart, a new spirit, a new understanding to know and understand things never known nor understood before—a new heart to know God, not as the God of nature and providence, but as the God of Grace, God in Christ, God in a Mediator, the love of God in Him, the covenant of grace, and the blessings of it made with Him. [It is a new heart to know] Christ and the fullness of grace in Him, pardon of sin through His blood, justification by His righteousness, atonement by His sacrifice, acceptance with God through Him, and complete salvation by Him—things which Adam knew nothing of in Paradise.

³⁹ **effectual calling** – Q. 30. What is effectual calling? A: Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit (2Ti 1:9) whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery (Act 2:37), enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ (Act 26:18), and renewing our wills (Eze 36:26), he does persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel (Joh 6:44-45). —C. H. Spurgeon's *Catechism*

⁴⁰ **infused** – to put *into* as if by pouring.

⁴¹ **vocation** – calling.

⁴² **master** – teacher.

⁴³ **de novo** – from the beginning.

In this new heart are new desires after these objects, to know more of them, new affections that are placed upon them, new delights in them, and new joys that arise from them (Eze 36:26; 1Jo 5:20; 1Co 2:9). In this new man are new *eyes* to see with. To some God does not give eyes to see divine and spiritual things, but to regenerated ones He does. They have a seeing eye made by the Lord (Deu 29:4; Pro 20:12) by which they see their lost state and condition by nature, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, their own inability to make atonement by anything that can be done by them. [They see] the insufficiency of their own righteousness, their impotence to every good work, and want of strength to help themselves out of the state and condition in which they are. [They see their need] of the blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ, and of salvation by Him. They have the eye of faith by which they behold the glories of Christ's Person, the fullness of His grace, the excellency of His righteousness, the virtue of His blood and sacrifice, and the suitableness and completeness of His salvation. Regeneration, in this view of it, is no other than spiritual light in the understanding.

Moreover, in the new man are new *ears* to hear with. All have not ears to hear; some have, and they have them from the Lord, and blessed are they! (Rev 2:11; Deu 29:4; Pro 20:12; Mat 13:16-17). They hear the Word in a manner they never heard before. They bear it so as to understand it and receive the love of it; [they] distinguish the voice of Christ in it from the voice of a stranger, so as to feel it work effectually in them and become the power of God unto salvation to them. They know the joyful sound and rejoice to hear it! The new man has also new *hands*, to handle and to work with: the hand of faith to receive Christ as the Savior and Redeemer, to lay hold on Him for life and salvation, to embrace Him, hold Him fast and not let Him go. [They have hands] to handle Him, the Word of life, and receive from Him grace for grace. And they have hands to work with and do work from better principles and to better purposes than before. And they have new *feet* to walk with to flee to Christ, the City of refuge; to walk by faith in Him; and to walk on in Him, as they have received Him; to run with cheerfulness the ways of His commandments; to follow hard after Him, and to follow on to know Him; even to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint.

4. Regeneration is expressed by being quickened. As there is a quickening time in natural generation, so there is in regeneration. "You hath he quickened" (Eph 2:1). Previous to regeneration, men are dead whilst they live: though corporally⁴⁴ alive, [they] are morally dead, dead in a moral sense to spiritual things in all the powers and faculties of their souls. They have no more knowledge of them, affection for them, will to them, or power to perform them than a dead man has with respect to things natural. But in regeneration, a principle of spiritual life is infused; that is a time of life when the Lord speaks life *into* them and produces it *in* them. Christ is the resurrection and life unto them. [He] raises them from a death of sin to a life of grace. The spirit of life from Christ enters into them.

Regeneration is a passing from death to life. It is a principle of spir-itual life implanted in the heart, in consequence of which a man breathes in a spiritual sense. Where there is breath, there is life. God breathed into Adam the breath of life, and he became a living soul, a living person, and breathed again. So the Spirit of God breathes on dry bones, and they live and breathe again. Prayer is the spiritual breath of a regenerate man. "Behold, he prayeth!" (Act 9:11) is observed of Saul when regenerated, who just before had been breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of Christ. A regenerate man breathes in prayer to God and pants after Him, after more knowledge of Him in Christ, after communion with Him, after the discoveries of His love, particularly after pardoning grace and mercy. Sometimes these breathings and desires are only expressed in sighs and groans, yet these are a sign of life. If a man groans, it is plain he is alive.

There are, in a regenerated man, cravings after spiritual food, which show that he is made alive: as soon as an infant is born, it shows motions for its mother's milk after the breast. So newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that they may grow thereby. They have their spiritual senses exercised about spiritual objects. They have what answer to the senses in animal life: their seeing and hearing, as before observed, and their feeling. They feel the burden of sin on their consciences, the workings of the Spirit of God in their hearts, [and they trust in] Christ the Word of life, which makes it a plain case that they are alive: a dead man feels nothing. They have a spiritual taste, a gust for spiritual things: the Word of Christ is sweet-er to their taste than honey or the honeycomb... They taste that the Lord is gracious and invite others to taste and see also how good He is. They savor the things [that are] of God and not of men. Christ and His grace are savory to them... These spiritual senses and the exercise of them... show them to be alive or born again. Such persons live a life of faith; they live by faith—not upon *it*, but on Christ, the object of it. They grow up into Him their Head, from Whom they receive nourishment and so increase with the increase of God, which is an evidence of life. In a word, they live a new and another life than they did before, not to themselves, nor to the lusts of men, but to God and to Christ, Who died for them and rose again. They walk in newness of life.

5. Regeneration is signified by *Christ being formed in the heart* (Gal 4:19). His image is enstamped in regeneration, not the image of the first Adam, but of the *second* Adam. For the new man is after the image of Him who has anew

⁴⁴ corporally – bodily.

created it, which is the image of Christ; to be conformed to which God's elect are predestinated and which takes place in regeneration (Rom 8:29; Col 3:10). The graces of Christ—faith, hope, and love—are wrought in the hearts of regenerate persons and soon appear there. Yea, Christ Himself lives in them. “Not I,” says the Apostle, “but Christ lives in me. He dwells by faith there.” Christ and the believer mutually dwell in each other.

6. Regeneration is said to be a *partaking of the divine nature* (2Pe 1:4). [This is] not of the nature of God essentially considered: a creature cannot partake of the divine essence or have that communicated to it. This would be to deify men. The divine *perfections*, many of them, are utterly incommunicable, as eternity, immensity, etc. [Nor do men partake] of the divine *nature* in such sense as Christ is a partaker of it by the personal or hypostatical union⁴⁵ of the two natures in Him, so that the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Him. But in regeneration there is that wrought in the soul that bears a resemblance to the divine nature in spirituality, holiness, goodness, kindness, etc., and therefore is so called.

From *A Complete Body of Doctrinal Divinity Deduced from Sacred Scripture*,
reprinted by The Baptist Standard Bearer.

John Gill (1697-1771): Baptist minister and theologian; author of *The Cause of God and Truth, Expositions of the Old and New Testaments* and many others; born in Kettering, Northamptonshire, England.

NEW BIRTH, REPENTANCE, AND FAITH

James Buchanan (1804–1870)

CONVERSION properly consists in a sinner being brought actually, intelligently, and cordially⁴⁶ to close and comply with God's revealed will on the subject of his salvation.

Some conviction of sin being wrought in the conscience and some knowledge of God's truth imparted to the understanding, the sinner is, at the time of his conversion, brought to the point: he comes to a final decision, a decision which implies at once a firm assent of the understanding in an act of faith and a full consent of the will in an act of deliberate choice. *He surrenders himself to the power of God's truth.* He submits to God's revealed will in the matter of his salvation. Convinced that he is a great sinner and that Christ is a great Savior, a Savior appointed by God Himself, qualified alike by the dignity of His divine nature, the tenderness of His human sympathies, and the efficacy of His meritorious work to save unto the very uttermost all that come unto God by Him, a Savior exhibited...to every sinner in the general doctrine of the Gospel, and declaring His own free and unutterable love in its universal calls...The sinner, taking that Gospel as his warrant, comes to Christ, closes with Him, embraces Him in all the fullness of His offices, and surrenders himself without reserve into the Savior's hands to be washed, justified, and sanctified according to the terms of the everlasting covenant. *This* is conversion. *This* will secure the salvation of the sinner, and nothing short of this can.

There must be a decisive closing⁴⁷ with the Gospel call, a final determination, first on the part of the understanding, and secondly on the part of the will...believing it to be infallibly certain that Jesus is the Christ, the only but all-sufficient Savior, we must close with Him as He is revealed to us in the Gospel and [believe] Him as all our salvation and all our desire (2Sa 23:5). It is not enough that we are visited with occasional convictions of sin: so was Cain, so was Herod, and so was Judas. Nor is it enough that we acquire some speculative knowledge⁴⁸ of divine truth: so did Agrippa, who was almost persuaded to be a Christian, and so also did Simon Magus, who made such a profession as was sufficient for his baptism, and who yet remained “in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity” (Act 8:23). Conversion implies much more: it implies an actual, deliberate, and cordial closing with Christ in His revealed character and a surrender of our souls into His hands. It is a radical heart-change by which the sinner is brought to close

⁴⁵ **hypostatical union** – from *hypostasis*, which means person; hypostatical union refers to the union of the divine and human natures in the one person of Christ Jesus.

⁴⁶ **cordially** – with all one's heart.

⁴⁷ **closing** – coming to terms; agreement.

⁴⁸ **speculative knowledge** – based on theory, not on positive knowledge.

in right earnest with the Savior. He may have been troubled in his conscience before and moved in his affections and, to a certain extent, instructed in the truths of God. But until now, he hesitated, delayed, and doubted. The bargain was not struck, the covenant was not subscribed, the decisive act was not done. But now he is brought to a point: the business, long in negotiation, is about to be finally settled. He sees the magnitude of impending ruin, the fearful hazard of an hour's delay; and hearing that Christ and Christ only can save him, he believes, and he comes to Christ deliberately and solemnly to commit his soul into His hands and to embrace Him as his own Savior.

This decisive act of closing with Christ and complying with God's revealed will in the matter of our salvation, although it may at first sight appear a very simple and easy process, includes in it, I apprehend, everything that is essential to saving conversion or that is declared in Scripture to accompany or flow from it. Let the sinner close with Christ in His scriptural character, in other words, let him have a correct apprehension of Christ as He is revealed in the Gospel and cordially believe on Him...as his own Savior, in all the fullness of His offices, and he is really from that time a converted man, however defective his knowledge and his experience in many other respects may be. He has already experienced all that is essentially involved in that great change, and every other consequence that properly flows from conversion will ensue.

This decisive act implies [the following]: 1. That he believes Jesus to be the Christ. In other words, he believes the same Jesus Who was crucified on the hill of Calvary to be the Son of God, manifested in human nature as the Savior of sinners and, as such, executing the will of God, acting by His authority, bearing His commission. [He was] anointed with the Holy Ghost as a Prophet to declare God's infallible truth, as a Priest to satisfy God's inflexible justice, and as a King to subject the world to God's rule. [He was] a Christ once crucified, but now exalted, invested with almighty power, and able to save unto the very uttermost all that come unto God by Him.

2. This decisive act of closing with Christ in His revealed character implies that the man feels himself to be a sinner. As such, [he is] condemned by God's Law, exposed to God's threatenings, and in imminent danger of eternal ruin, while he has no means and no power to save himself, but must be indebted to a Savior.

3. It implies that he is willing or rather that he has been made willing to receive, own, and submit to Christ as God's Anointed One, and in respect to every one of His offices as the Redeemer of God's people. He willingly submits his understanding to Christ's teaching, receiving the truth from His lips, and on His authority, as the infallible truth of God. He willingly acquiesces⁴⁹ in the method of being justified, not by his own righteousness but by the righteousness of Christ, seeking to be pardoned only through the merit of His blood, shed on the cross and accepted only through the efficacy of His meritorious obedience. He willingly subjects his heart and life to Christ's royal authority, that his heart may be renewed and sanctified by Christ's Spirit, and that his life may be governed and regulated by Christ's law. In a word, he is willing to receive and embrace a whole Christ and a whole salvation; to surrender himself unreservedly—soul, body, and spirit—into Christ's hands; to be saved and sanctified, governed and dealt with, now and eternally, according to the terms of the everlasting covenant.

Here we have a real, thorough conversion, which consists mainly and essentially in repentance and faith, two gifts of the Spirit that are often used together or even separately to denote the whole of this great change: repentance indicating what the sinner turns *from*, faith, what he turns *unto*. Conversion is the turning point at which he turns out of the broad way that leads to destruction and into the strait,⁵⁰ the narrow way that leads unto life. He then flees from the wrath to come and flees to Christ as his refuge. He forsakes the service of sin and follows Christ as his Master. He shuns perdition⁵¹ and seeks salvation in Christ as his Savior. Now repentance describes his conversion with reference chiefly to what he turns *from*, and faith describes his conversion with reference chiefly to what he turns *to*. Each implies the other, there being no true repentance where there is no faith, and no true faith where there is no repentance. Both are wrought in the soul at the time of its conversion by the power of the Holy Ghost applying the truth as it is in Jesus. From this radical change of heart, there flows an outward change of life, reformation of life proceeding from a renewed mind. First, the tree is made good; and the fruit becomes good also (Mat 12:33). The fountain is purified, and the stream that flows from it is also pure.

The production of true faith is often spoken of in Scripture as amounting to the whole work of regeneration: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1Jo 5:1). And again, "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" (Joh 1:12-13). Here, every one who really believes is said to be born of God; and as every true believer is a converted man, it follows that the production of saving faith is equivalent to the work of regeneration.

⁴⁹ **acquiesces** – consents without protest.

⁵⁰ **strait** – so narrow as to make passage difficult.

⁵¹ **perdition** – the condition of final spiritual ruin or damnation; hell.

But then it must be a real scriptural faith, such as is required in the Gospel: not the faith which the Apostle James declares to be dead, but that living faith that is described in Scripture as a well-grounded belief resting on the sure testimony of God. [It must be] a positive belief, not a mere negation or absence of disbelief, nor a doubtful and wavering opinion, but a thorough conviction of mind. [It must be] an intelligent belief, such as is inconsistent with blind ignorance and implies a perception of the meaning of God's truth, a full and comprehensive belief, embracing all that is essential to be known in regard to the method of salvation. This belief impl[ies] scriptural apprehensions of God in His true character, of Christ in His person as Immanuel,⁵² in the fullness of His offices as Mediator, His great design and His finished work, and of ourselves as guilty, depraved, and exposed to a sentence of righteous condemnation. This belief, thus founded on God's testimony and implying spiritual apprehensions of His truth, is a vital, active, and operative principle, bending the will to a compliance with God's call, awakening suitable emotions of reverence, fear, complacency,⁵³ delight, love, and joy, renewing, transforming, purifying the soul, and effecting a complete change on all our practical habits.

The production of this real, living, and sanctifying faith is the great work of the Spirit in conversion, a work which implies or produces a universal change on all the faculties of our nature, so that as soon as this faith is implanted in his soul, the sinner becomes a new man, the truth of God received by faith renewing his understanding, his conscience, his will, his desires, his affections: "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2Co 5:17).

Every believer then, in the Gospel sense of that term, is born again. In other words, no one is a believer who is not regenerated...The production of saving faith is that wherein regeneration properly consists. But then it must be such a faith as the Gospel requires and describes. That faith, although it may have its seat in the understanding, implies a change in our whole moral nature, and especially a renewal of the will. The understanding is, in the order of nature, the leading and governing faculty of the soul, and it is by means of truth cordially believed that the great change is accomplished.

But the truth is either not duly⁵⁴ understood or not really believed, where it works no change on the heart and habits of the sinner. He may read, speak, and speculate about it; he may even embrace some fragments of it and hold them tenaciously...but the substantial truth of Christ's Gospel cannot be really understood and believed by any man who remains unconverted...It is true that many an unregenerate man may suppose that he believes: he may never have questioned the general truth of God's Word; he may even have ranged⁵⁵ himself on the side of the Gospel; and by a public profession or in private conversation, he may have often defended and maintained it. Nay, he may have had many thoughts passing through his mind, many convictions awakened in his conscience that show that he is not altogether ignorant or unimpressed...Yet I apprehend that nothing can be plainer from the Word of God than that these transient impressions may often be experienced by an unconverted man, and that the man who is not regenerated and transformed by his faith has no true faith at all.

From *The Office and Work of the Holy Spirit*, reprinted by
The Banner of Truth Trust.

James Buchanan (1804-1870): Church of Scotland minister and theologian; a prolific and popular writer; best known for *The Office and Work of the Holy Spirit* and *The Doctrine of Justification*. Born in Paisley, Renfrewshire, Scotland.



"Ah, sirs, where the true heaven-given life is found, there is something to show for it...If the love of Christ within does not make us better than the best of worldly men, we give no evidence of having experienced the renewing work of God the Holy Ghost."—*Charles H. Spurgeon*

⁵² **Immanuel** – God with us.

⁵³ **complacency** – being pleased with a person or thing.

⁵⁴ **duly** – properly.

⁵⁵ **ranged** – sided; aligned.

NEW BIRTH, NEW CREATURE

Octavius Winslow (1808-1878)

“It is the spirit that quickeneth.”—John 6:63

THE Holy Ghost testifies, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2Co 5:17). This testimony is true. For **FIRST, HE LOVES AND WORSHIPS A NEW GOD.** The natural man is a god to himself, and he has many other gods as well. Whether it be self-righteousness, self-gratification, the world, wealth, family, in whatever form it appears, “other lords have dominion over him” to the exclusion of the one true and living God. The nature of the human mind is such that it must love and worship some object supremely. In his state of innocence, Jehovah was the one and supreme object of the creature’s love and adoration. Seduced from that state of simple and supreme affection by the tempter’s promise that if they ate of the fruit of the tree forbidden of God, they should be as gods (Gen 3:5), in one moment they threw off their allegiance to Jehovah, renounced Him as the object of their supreme love, the center of their holiest affections, and became gods to themselves. The temple was ruined, the altar was thrown down, the pure flame was extinguished, God departed, and “other lords” entered and took possession of the soul.

But what a change does grace produce! It repairs the temple, rebuilds the altar, rekindles the flame, and brings God back to man! God in Christ is now the supreme object of his love, his adoration, and his worship. The idol *self* has been cast down, self-righteousness renounced, self-exaltation crucified. The “strong man armed” has entered, cast out the usurper, and, “creating all things new,” has resumed His rightful supremacy. The affections, released from their false deity and renewed by the Spirit, now turn to and take up their rest in God. God in Christ! How glorious does He now appear! Truly it is a new God the soul is brought to know and love. Never did it see in Him such beauty, such excellence, such blessedness as it now sees. All other glory fades and dies before the surpassing glory of His character, His attributes, His government, and His Law. God in Christ is viewed as reconciled now: enmity ceases; hatred has passed away; opposition grounds its weapons; hard thoughts of His Law and rebellious thoughts of His government subside; love kindles in the soul, and, in one precious Christ the one Mediator, God and the sinner meet, embrace, and blend. Truly, they become *one*. God says, “Thou art mine.” The soul responds, “Thou art my God—other lords have had dominion over me, but henceforth, Thee only will I serve, Thee only will I love. ‘My soul followeth hard after thee; thy right hand upholdeth me’ (Psa 63:8). ‘One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple’ (Psa 27:4).”

God in Christ is his Father now. “I will arise, and go unto my Father” (Luk 15:18) is the first motion of a renewed soul. “Father, I have sinned against...Thee” is the first confession rising from the broken heart. The Father hastens to meet and embrace His child, and clasping him to His bosom exclaims, “This my son was dead, and is alive again” (Luk 15:24). Reconciled, he now looks up to Him truly as his Father. “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal 4:6). “Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me” (Jer 3:19). Does God speak? It is the voice of a Father he hears. Does God chasten and rebuke? It is from his Father, he feels. Are his hopes disappointed, his plans crossed, his cisterns broken, his gourds withered? “My Father has done it all,” he exclaims. Blessed Spirit of adoption! Sweet pledge and evidence art Thou of the new creature.

God in Christ is now the object of confidence and trust. Trust in a reconciled God and Father was no mark and portion of his unrenewed state. It was then trust in *self*, in its imagined wisdom, strength, and goodness. It was then trust in the arm of flesh, in second causes. Now the soul trusts in God: trusts Him at all times and under all circumstances, trusts Him in the darkest hour, under the gloomiest dispensation, trusts Him when His providences look dark and lowering, and God seems to hide Himself. It even trusts Him “though He slay me” (Job 13:15)...Oh, how safe he feels in God’s hands and under His government now! His soul, his body, his family, his business, and his cares are completely surrendered, and God is all in all. Reader, this is to be born again.

SECOND, THE REGENERATE SOUL POSSESSES AND ACKNOWLEDGES A NEW SAVIOR. How glorious, suitable, and precious is Jesus to him now! Not so formerly. Then he had his saviors, his “refuges of lies” (Isa 28:17), his many fatal confidences. Jesus was to him as “a root out of a dry ground: he [had] no form nor comeliness” (Isa 53:2). It may be that he denied His deity, rejected His atonement, scorned His grace, and slighted His pardon and His love. Christ is all to him now. He adores Him as the “mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace” (Isa 9:6), as “over all, God blessed for ever” (Rom 9:5); as “God...manifest in the flesh” (1Ti 3:16); as stooping to the nature of man, becoming bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; as offering Himself up as the “propitiation for our sins” (1Jo 2:2); as dy-

ing, “the just for the unjust” (1Pe 3:18). His righteousness is glorious as justifying from all things (Act 13:39); His blood is precious as cleansing from all sin (1Jo 1:7). His fullness of grace is valued as supplying all need. Oh, how surpassingly glorious, inimitably lovely, and unutterably precious is Jesus to a renewed soul!

Truly a new Savior! “Other lords” he has renounced; “refuges of lies” he has turned his back upon; “false Christs” he no longer follows. He has found another and a better Savior—Jesus, the mighty God, the Redeemer of sinners, “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom 10:4). All is new to his recovered sight; a new world of glory has floated before his mind. Jesus the Lamb is the light and glory thereof. Never did he suppose there was such beauty in His person, such love in His heart, such perfection in His work, such power and such willingness to save. That blood which was trampled underfoot is now precious. That righteousness which was scorned is now glorious. That name which was reviled is now as music to the soul, even a “name that is above every name” (Phi 2:9).

Jesus is his *only* Savior. Not an allowed confidence has he out of Christ. The covenant of “dead works” he has renounced. The Spirit, having brought him out of and away from it, has led him into the covenant of grace, the substance and stability and glory of which is Jesus. On the broad basis of Immanuel’s finished, atoning work he rests his whole soul; and the more he presses the foundation, the more he leans upon the cornerstone, the stronger and the more able to sustain him does he find it. True, he feels a self-righteous principle closely adhering to him all his journey through the wilderness. When he prays, it is there; when he speaks, it is there; when he labors, it is there; when he reflects, it is there. He detects it when suspicion of its existence would be most at rest. But in the sober moments of his judgment, when prostrate beneath the cross and looking up to God through Jesus, this principle is searched out, abhorred, confessed, and mourned over; and with the eye of faith upon a suffering Savior, the language of his expanding heart is, “Other refuge have I none, Hangs my helpless soul on Thee.”

THIRD, NEW AND ENLARGED VIEWS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT MARK A REGENERATE MIND. Having received the Holy Ghost as a Quickener, he feels the need of Him now as a Teacher, a Sanctifier, a Comforter, and a Sealer. As a *Teacher*: discovering to him more of the hidden evil of the heart, more knowledge of God, of His Word and of His Son. As a *Sanctifier*: carrying forward the work of grace in the soul, impressing more deeply on the heart the Divine image and bringing every thought and feeling and word into sweet, holy, and filial obedience to the law of Jesus. As a *Comforter*: leading him in the hour of his deep trial to Christ; comforting, by unfolding the sympathy and tenderness of Jesus, and the exceeding preciousness and peculiar fitness of the many promises with which the Word of truth abounds for the consolation of the Lord’s afflicted. As a *Sealer*: impressing upon his heart the sense of pardon, acceptance, and adoption; and Himself entering, as the “earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession” (Eph 1:14). Oh, what exalted views does he now have of the blessed and eternal Spirit—of His personal glory, His work, His offices, His influences, His love, tenderness, and faithfulness! The ear is open to the softest whisper of His voice; the heart expands to the gentlest impression of His sealing, sanctifying influence. Remembering that he is “a temple of the Holy Ghost” (1Co 6:19), he desires so to walk—humbly, softly, watchfully, and prayerfully. Avoiding everything that would grieve the Spirit, resigning every known sin that would dishonor and cause Him to withdraw, the one single aim of his life is to walk so as to please God, “that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1Pe 4:11).

[Next], it would be an imperfect enumeration of some of the strong features of the new creature did we omit to notice the growing nature and tendency of the vital principle of grace thus implanted in the heart of the regenerate. Nothing more strikingly and truly proves the reality, we would say the *divinity*, of the work within than the growing energy and holy tendency that ever accompany it. It is the property of that which has life in itself to increase, to multiply itself. The seed cast into the earth will germinate. Presently will appear the tender sprout; this will advance to the young sapling, and this in time to the gigantic tree with its overshadowing branches and richly laden with fruit. Obeying the law of its nature, it aspires to that perfection which belongs to it. It must grow. Nothing can prevent it but such a wound as will injure the vital principle or the cutting of it down entirely. The life of God in the soul of man contains the principle of growth. He that is not advancing—adding grace to grace, strength to strength; fruitful in every good word and work; increasing in the knowledge of God, of his own heart, of the preciousness, fullness, and all-sufficiency of Jesus; and in Divine conformity growing up into Christ in all things (Eph 4:15)—has great reason to suspect the absence of the Divine life in his soul...But the spirit we are now considering is that of a man truly “born again.” “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark...” (Phi 3:12-14). O holy resolve of a regenerate man! Here is the springing up of the well of living water in the heart. Here is the turning of the soul to God. See how the fountain rises! See how the flame ascends! It is the mighty energy of God the Holy Ghost drawing the soul upward, heavenward, God-ward!

Let not the Christian reader close this chapter with a burdened heart. Let no dear child of God write hard and bitter things against himself as he reads this last sentence. Let him not come to any hasty, unbelieving, doubting, and God-dishonoring conclusions. What are *you* to yourself—worthless, vile, empty? What is *Jesus* to you—precious, lovely, all your salvation, and all your desire? What is *sin* to you—the most hateful thing in the world? And what is *holiness*—the most lovely, the most longed for? What is the *throne of grace* to you—the most attractive spot? And the *cross*—the sweetest resting-place in the uni-verse? What is *God* to you—your God and Father, the spring of all your joys, the fountainhead of all your bliss, the center where your affections meet? Is it so? Then you are born again; then you are a child of God; then you shall never die eternally. Cheer up, precious soul! The day of your redemption draws near. Those low views of yourself—that brokenness, that inward mourning, that secret confession, that longing for more spirituality, more grace, more devotedness, and more love does but prove the existence, reality, and growth of God's work within you. God the Holy Spirit is there...Look up then, reader, and let the thought cheer you: that soul never perished that felt itself to be vile and Jesus to be precious.

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“What then is the new birth, but the forming and fashioning the image of Christ in us?”—*Thomas Goodwin*

THE MARKS OF THE NEW BIRTH

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

MANY there are who take it for granted they have been born again—they do not exactly know why, but it is a sort of thing they never doubted. Others there are who despise all such sifting inquiry—they are sure they are in the right way, they are confident they shall be saved. As for marks, it is low and legal to talk about them; it is bringing men into bondage. But, beloved, whatever men may say, you may be certain Christ's people are a peculiar people, not only peculiar in their talk but peculiar in their life and conduct. They may be distinguished from the unconverted around them; you may be certain there are stamps and marks and characters about God's handiwork by which it may always be known; and he who has no evidences to show may well suspect that he is not in the right way.

Now, about these marks, I can of course only speak very shortly and very generally, for time will not allow me to do more. But I would first say one word by way of caution: Remember, then, I would not have you suppose that all children of God do feel alike or that these marks should be equally strong and plain in every case. The work of grace on man's heart is gradual: first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. It is like leaven: the whole lump is not leavened at once. It is as in the birth of an infant into the world: first, it feels, then moves and cries, and sees and hears and knows, and thinks and loves, and walks and talks and acts for itself. Each of these things comes gradually and in order. But we do not wait for all before we say this is a living soul. And just so is every one that is born of the Spirit. He may not, at first, find in himself all the marks of God, but he has the seed of them all about him. Some he knows by experience, and all in the course of time shall be known distinctly. But this at least you may be sure of: wherever there is no fruit of the Spirit, there is no work of the Spirit. And if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.

O that this question might stir up every one of you to search and try his ways! God is not a man that He should lie. He would not have given you the Bible if you could be saved without it, and here is a doctrine on which eternal life depends: “No salvation without the new birth.”

1. First then and foremost: I would have you write down in your memories a mark which St. John mentions in his first epistle: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin” (1Jo 3:9); “Whosoever is born of God sinneth not” (1Jo 5:18); “Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him” (1Jo 3:6). Observe, I would not for one minute have you suppose that God's children are perfect and without spot or stain or defilement in themselves. Do not go away and say I told you they were pure as angels and never made a slip or stum-

ble. The same St. John in the same epistle declares, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us...If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1Jo 1:8, 10).

But I do say that in the matter of breaking God's commandments, every one that is born again is quite a new man. He no longer takes a light and cool and easy view of sin. He no longer judges of it with the world's judgment. He no longer thinks a little swearing, or a little Sabbath-breaking, or a little fornication, or a little drinking, or a little covetousness, small and trifling matters. But he looks on every sort of sin against God or man as exceeding abominable and damnable in the Lord's sight; and as far as in him lies, he hates it and abhors it, and desires to be quit of it root and branch with his whole heart and mind and soul and strength.

He that is born again has had the eyes of his understanding opened, and the Ten Commandments appear to him in an entirely new light. He feels amazed that he can have lived so long careless and indifferent about transgressions, and he looks back on the days gone by with shame and sorrow and grief. As for his daily conduct, he allows himself in no known sin. He makes no compromise with his old habits and his old principles. He gives them up unsparingly, though it cost him pain, though the world think him over-precise and a fool; but he is a new man, and will have nothing more to do with the accursed thing. I do not say but that he comes short and finds his old nature continually opposing him—and this, too, when no eye can see it but his own; but then he mourns and repents bitterly over his own weakness. And this at least he has about him: he is at war, in reality, with the devil and all his works and strives constantly to be free.

And do you call that no change? Look abroad on this world, this evildoing world: mark how little men generally think about sin and how seldom they judge of it as the Bible does; how easy they suppose the way to heaven—and judge ye whether this mark be not exceeding rare. But for all this, God will not be mocked. Men may rest assured that until they are convinced of the awful guilt and the awful power and the awful consequences of sin, and, being convinced, flee from it and give it up, they are most certainly not born again.

2. The second mark I would have you note is *faith in Christ*. Here again I speak in the words of St. John in his first epistle: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1Jo 5:1). I do not mean by this a general, vague sort of belief that Jesus Christ once lived on earth and died—a sort of faith which the very devils possess. I mean rather that [conviction] which comes over a man when he is really convinced of his own guilt and unworthiness and sees that Christ alone can be his Savior. He becomes convinced he is in a way to be lost and must have some righteousness better than his own and joyfully embraces that righteousness that Jesus holds out to all who will believe. He that has this faith discovers a fitness and suitableness and comfort in the doctrine of Christ crucified for sinners, which once he never knew. He is no longer ashamed to confess himself by nature poor and blind and naked and to [believe] Christ for his only hope of salvation.

Before a man is born of the Spirit, there seems no particular form nor comeliness⁵⁶ about the Redeemer. But after that blessed change has taken place, He appears the very chiefest in ten thousand: no honor so great but Jesus is worthy of it; no love so strong but on Jesus it is well be-stowed; no spiritual necessity so great but Jesus can relieve it; no sin so black but Jesus' blood can wash it away. Before the new birth, a man can bow at Christ's name and sometimes wonder at Christ's miracles, but that is all: once born again, a man sees a fullness and a completeness and a sufficiency in Christ of things necessary to salvation, so that he feels as if he could never think upon Him enough. To cast the burden of sin on Jesus; to glory in the cross on which He died; to keep continually in sight His blood, His righteousness, His intercession, His mediation; to go continually to Him for peace and forgiveness; to rest entirely on Him for full and free salvation; to make Jesus, in short, all in all in their hopes of heaven—this is the most notable mark of all true children of God. They live by faith in Christ: in Christ their happiness is bound up.

It is the spiritual Law of God that brings them to this: Time was when they were ready to think well of themselves. The Law strips off their miserable garments of self-righteousness, exposes their exceeding guilt and rottenness, cuts down to the ground their fancied notions of justification by their own works, and so leads them to Christ as their only wisdom and redemption. Then, when they have laid hold on Christ and taken Him for their Savior, they begin to find that rest which before they had sought in vain.

Such are two first marks of the Spirit's work—a deep conviction of sin and forsaking of it and a lively faith in Christ crucified as the only hope of forgiveness. [These are] marks which the world perhaps may not see, but marks without which no man or woman was ever yet made a new creature. These are the two foundations of the Christian's character, the pillars, as it were, of the Kingdom of God. They are hidden roots that others can only judge by the fruit; but they who have them do generally know it and can feel the witness in themselves.

⁵⁶ **comeliness** – beauty; loveliness.

3. The third mark of the new birth is holiness. What says the Apostle John again? “Every one that doeth righteousness is born of him” (1Jo 2:29); “He that is begotten of God keepeth himself” (1Jo 5:18). The true children of God delight in making the Law their rule of life. It dwells in their minds and is written upon their hearts, and it is their meat and drink to do their Father’s will. They know nothing of that spirit of bondage that false Christians complain of. It is their pleasure to glorify God with their bodies and souls that are His. They hunger and thirst after tempers and dispositions like their Lord’s. They do not rest content with sleepy wishing and hoping, but they strive to be holy in all manner of conversation—in thought, in word, and in deed. It is their daily heart’s prayer, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Act 9:6). And it is their daily grief and lamentation that they come so short and are such unprofitable servants. Beloved, remember where there is no holiness of life, there cannot be much work of the Holy Ghost.

4. The fourth mark of the new birth is spiritual-mindedness. We learn this from St. Paul’s words to the Colossians: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above...set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col 3:1-2). He that is born again thinks first about the things that are eternal. He no longer gives up the best of his heart to this perishable world’s concerns. He looks on earth as a place of pilgrimage; he looks on heaven as his home. And even as a child remembers with delight its absent parents and hopes to be one day with them, so does the Christian think of his God and long for that day when he shall stand in His presence and go no more out. He cares not for the pleasures and amusements of the world around him. He minds not the things of the flesh, but the things of the Spirit. He feels that he has a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, and he earnestly desires to be there. “Lord,” he says, “whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (Psa 73:25).

5. The fifth mark of the new birth is victory over the world. Hear what St. John says: “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1Jo 5:4). What is the natural man? A wretched slave to the opinion of this world. What the world says is right, he follows and approves; what the world says is wrong, he renounces and condemns. How shall I do what my neighbors do not do? What will men say of me if I become more strict than they? This is the natural man’s argument. But from all this, he that is born again is free. He no longer is led by the praise or the blame, the laughter or the frown of children of Adam like himself. He no longer thinks that the sort of religion that everybody about him professes must necessarily be right. He no longer considers “What will the world say?” but “What does God command?” Oh, it is a glorious change when a man thinks nothing of the difficulty of confessing Christ before men in the hope that Christ will confess him and own him before the holy angels! That fear of the world is a terrible snare: with many thousands, it far outweighs the fear of God. There are men who would care more for the laughter of a company of friends than they would for the testimony of half the Bible. From all this the spiritual man is free. He is no longer like a dead fish floating with the stream of earthly opinion; he is ever pressing upwards, looking unto Jesus in spite of all opposition. He has overcome the world.

6. The sixth mark of the new birth is meekness. This is what David meant when he said in Psalm 131, “My soul is even as a weaned child” (Psa 131:2). This is what our Lord has in view when He tells us we must “be converted and become as little children” (Mat 18:3). Pride is the besetting sin of all natural men, and it comes out in a hundred different fashions. It was pride by which the angels fell and became devils. It is pride that brings many a sinner to the pit: he knows he is in the wrong about religion, but he is too proud to bend his neck and act up to what he knows. It is pride which may always be seen about false professors: they are always saying, “We are the men, and we are alone in the right, and ours is the sure way to heaven.” By and by, they fall and go to their own place and are heard no more of. But he that is born again is clothed with humility. He has a very childlike and contrite and broken spirit. He has a deep sense of his own weakness and sinfulness and great fear of a fall. You never hear him professing confidence in himself and boasting of his own attainments—he is far more ready to doubt about his own salvation altogether and call himself “chief of sinners.” He has no time to find fault with others or be a busybody about his neighbors. [It is] enough for him to keep up the conflict with his own deceitful [flesh]...No enemy [is] so bitter to him as his own inbred corruption. Whenever I see a man passing his time in picking holes in other churches and talking about everyone’s soul except his own, I always feel in my own mind, “There is no work of the Spirit there.” And it is just this humility and sense of weakness which makes God’s children men of prayer. They feel their own wants and their danger, and they are constrained to go continually with supplication to Him Who has given them the Spirit of adoption, crying, “Abba Father, help us and deliver us from evil.”

7. The seventh mark of the new birth is a great delight in all means of grace. This is what St. Peter speaks of in his first epistle: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1Pe 2:2). This was the mind of David when he said, “For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness” (Psa 84:10). And oh, what a difference there is be-

tween nature and grace in this matter! The natural man has often a form of godliness: he does not neglect the ordinances of religion, but somehow or other the weather, or his health, or the distance contrives to be a great hindrance to him; and far too often, it happens that the hours he spends in church or over his Bible are the dullest in his life.

But when a man is born again, he begins to find a reality about means which once he did not feel: the Sabbath no longer seems a dull, wearisome day, in which he knows not how to spend his time decently. He now calls it a delight and a privilege, holy of the Lord and honorable. The difficulties that once kept him from God's house now seem to have vanished away: dinner and weather and the like never detain him at home, and he is no longer glad of an excuse not to go. Sermons appear a thousand times more interesting than they used to do; and he would no more be inattentive or willingly go to sleep under them than a prisoner would upon his trial. And, above all, the Bible looks to him like a new book. Time was when it was very dry reading to his mind. Perhaps it lay in a corner, dusty and seldom read, but now it is searched and examined as the very bread of life. Many are the texts and passages which seem just written for his own case; and many are the days that he feels disposed to say with David, "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver" (Psa 119:72).

8. The eighth and last mark of the new birth is love towards others. "Every one," says St. John, "that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (1Jo 4:7-8). He that is born of the Spirit loves his neighbor as himself...He loves his neighbor's property as his own. He would not injure it nor stand by and see it injured. He loves his neighbor's person as his own, and he would count no trouble ill-bestowed if he could help or assist him. He loves his neighbor's character as his own, and you will not hear him speak a word against it or allow it to be blackened by falsehoods if he can defend it. And he loves his neighbor's soul as his own, and he will not suffer him to turn his back on God without endeavoring to stop him by saying, "Oh, do not so!" (Jdg 19:23-24). Oh, what a happy place would earth be if there was more love! Oh, that men would only believe that the Gospel secures the greatest comfort in the life that now is, as well as in the life to come!

And such, beloved, are the marks by which the new birth in a man's soul may generally be discovered. I have been obliged to speak of them very shortly, although each one of them deserves a sermon... "Have I ever truly repented? Have I really closed with Christ and taken Him for my only Savior and Lord?" Let these questions be uppermost in your mind if you would know whether you are born again or not. The six last marks—viz. holiness, spiritual-mindedness, victory over the world, meekness, delight in means, and love—have this peculiarity about them, that a man's family and neighbors do often see more clearly whether he has got them than he does himself. But they all flow out of the two first, and therefore I once more urge the two first on your especial notice.

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J. C. Ryle (1816-1900): Anglican Bishop; revered author of *Holiness, Knots Untied, Old Paths, Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, and many others; born at Macclesfield, Cheshire County, England.



THE ETERNAL AND EFFICIENT CAUSE OF THE NEW BIRTH

John Gill (1697-1771)

THE efficient cause of regeneration is God only. Hence, we so often read, "Which were born of God," and "who-soever" and "whatsoever is born of God" (Joh 1:13; 1Jo 3:9; 5:1, 4). This is true of God—Father, Son, and Spirit—Who have each a concern in regeneration.

1. God the Father, Who is the Father of Christ: He as such begets men again according to His abundant mercy (1Pe 1:3). And as the Father of lights, of His own sovereign will and pleasure, regenerates with the Word of truth. As light was one of the first things in the old creation, so in the new creation or regeneration, light is the first thing sprung in the heart by the Father and fountain of light (Jam 1:17-18). As the Father of men by adoption, He regenerates. It is of Him they are born again, Who is their covenant God and Father in Christ. He has chosen them unto ho-

liness, of which regeneration is the root, seed, and principle. He has predestinated them to be conformed to the image of His Son, which is done in regeneration. And it is by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He sheds abundantly through Christ the Savior, that He saves His elect ones (Ti 3:5-6).

2. God the Son has also a concern in regeneration, and so great a concern, that they who are born again are said to be born of Him, that is, Christ: for no other is spoken of in the context (1Jo 2:29). He is the resurrection and the life, the Author of the spiritual resurrection to a spiritual life, which is no other than regeneration. He quickens whom He will, as the Father does. And it is through His powerful voice in the Gospel that the dead in sin hear and live. It is His Spirit that is sent down into the hearts of His people, as to bear witness to their adoption, so to regenerate them. His grace is given to them, yea, He Himself is formed in them. His image is enstamped upon them, and it is by virtue of His resurrection that they are begotten to a lively hope of the heavenly inheritance (Joh 11:25; 5:21, 25; Gal 4:6, 19; 1Pe 1:3-4).

3. The Holy Spirit of God is the Author of regeneration, and to Him it is ascribed by our Lord: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit” (Joh 3:5). By water is not meant the ordinance of water-baptism: that is never expressed by water only without some other word with it in the text or context which determines the sense, nor is regeneration by it. Simon Magus was baptized, but not regenerated. Regeneration ought to precede baptism: faith and repentance, which are graces given in regeneration, are required previous to baptism. Nor is water-baptism absolutely necessary to salvation; [but] without regeneration no man can see or enter into the kingdom of heaven...The renewing of the Holy Ghost or the *new creature* is His workmanship: quickening grace is from Him. It is the Spirit that quickens and gives life and frees from the Law of sin and death (Ti 3:5; Joh 3:6; 6:63).

Secondly, the impulsive or moving cause is the free grace, love, and mercy of God. “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us” (Eph 2:4-5). Regeneration, as it is a time of life when men are quickened, is a time of love, of open love. It springs from love, which moves mercy to exert itself in this way. It is according to His abundant mercy God hath begotten us again unto a lively hope (1Pe 1:3). This [is] sovereign grace and mercy, not excited by any motives or conditions in men or by any preparatory works in them! What was there in the three thousand, some of whom had been concerned in the death of Christ, converted under Peter’s sermon? What was in the jailor, who had just before used the Apostles in a cruel manner? What was there in Saul, the blasphemer, persecutor, and injurious person...? No, it is not according to the will and works of men that they are regenerated, but God: “of His own will begat He us” (Jam 1:18), [of] His own sov-ereign will and pleasure. This grace and mercy is abundant: it is richly and plentifully displayed...and to this, as a moving cause, regeneration is owing.

Thirdly, the resurrection of Christ from the dead is the virtual or procuring cause of it. There is a power or virtue in Christ’s resurrection that has an influence on many things: on our justification, for which He rose again, so on our regeneration. For men are said to be begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead (1Pe 1:3), and which may be considered as the exemplary cause of it. For as there is a planting together in the likeness of His death, so in the likeness of His resurrection from the dead. As Christ’s resurrection was a declaration of His being the Son of God, so regeneration is an evidence of interest in the adoption of children; and as the resurrection of Christ was by the mighty power of God, so is the regeneration and quickening of a dead sinner; and as Christ’s resurrection was His first step to His glorification, so is regeneration to seeing and entering into the Kingdom of God.

Fourthly, the instrumental causes of regeneration, if it may be so called, are the Word of God and the ministers of it. Hence, regenerate persons are said to be born again “by the Word of God, which liveth and a-bideth forever” (1Pe 1:23). Again, “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth” (Jam 1:18), unless by the Word in these passages should be meant the Eternal Logos, or essential Word of God, Christ Jesus, since *logos* is used in both places. Ministers of the Gospel are not only represented as ministers and instruments by whom others believe, but as spiritual fathers: “For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ,” says the Apostle to the Corinthians, “yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel” (1Co 4:15)...Yet this instrumentality of the Word in regeneration seems not so agreeable to the principle of grace implanted in the soul in regeneration and to be understood with respect to that, since that is done by immediate infusion and is represented as a *creation*. Now as God made no use of any instrument in the first and old creation, so neither does it seem so agreeable that He should use any in the new creation. This is rather to be understood of the exertion of the principle of grace and the drawing it forth into act and exercise, which is excited and encouraged by the ministry of the Word, by which it appears that a man is born again. So the three thousand first converts and the jailor were first regenerated or had the principle of grace wrought in their souls by the Spirit of God. [They] then were directed and encouraged by the ministry of the Apostles to repent and believe in Christ, whereby it became manifest that they were born again...it seems plain that the ministry of the Word is the vehicle in which the Spirit of God conveys Himself and His grace into the hearts of

men, which is done when the Word comes not in Word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost. [It] works effectually and is the power of God unto salvation. *Then* faith comes by hearing, and ministers are instruments by whom, at least, men are encouraged to believe: “Received ye the Spirit,” says the Apostle, “by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” (Gal 3:2), that is, by the preaching of the Law or by the preaching of the Gospel? By the latter, no doubt.

From *A Complete Body of Doctrinal Divinity Deduced from Sacred Scripture*,
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THE NEW BIRTH AND THE PREACHER’S OBLIGATION

John Owen (1616-1683)

THE work of the Spirit of God in regenerating the souls of men is diligently to be inquired into by the preachers of the Gospel and all to whom the Word is dispensed.

For the former sort, there is a peculiar reason for their attendance unto this duty, for they are used and employed in the work itself by the Spirit of God and are by Him made instrumental for the effecting of this new birth and life. So the Apostle Paul styles himself the father of them who were converted to God or regenerated through the Word of his ministry: “For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel” (1Co 4:15). He was used in the ministry of the Word for their regeneration and therefore was their spiritual father and he only, though the work was afterward carried on by others. And if men are fathers in the Gospel to no more than are converted unto God by their personal ministry, it will be no advantage unto any one day to have assumed that title when it hath had no foundation in that work as to its effectual success. So, speaking of Onesimus, who was converted by him in prison, he calls him “his son, whom he had begotten in his bonds” (Phm 1:10). And this he declared to have been prescribed unto him as the principal end of his ministry in the commission he had for preaching the Gospel (Act 26:17-18). Christ said unto him, “I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God,” which is a description of the work under consideration. And this is the principal end of our ministry also.

Now, certainly it is the duty of ministers to understand the work about which they are employed, as far as they are able, that they may not work in the dark and fight uncertainly, as men beating the air. What the Scripture hath revealed concerning it, as to its nature and the manner of its operation, as to its causes, effects, fruits, evidences, they ought diligently to inquire into. To be spiritually skilled therein is one of the principal furnishings⁵⁷ of any for the work of the ministry, without which they will never be able to divide the Word aright, nor show themselves workmen that need not be ashamed. Yet it is scarcely imaginable with what rage and perversity of spirit, with what scornful expressions, this whole work is traduced⁵⁸ and exposed to contempt. Those who have labored herein are said “to prescribe long and tedious trains of conversion, to set down nice⁵⁹ and subtle processes of regeneration, to fill people’s heads with innumerable swarms of superstitious fears and scruples about the due degrees of godly sorrow, and the certain symptoms of a thorough humiliation.”⁶⁰ Could any mistake be charged on particular persons in these things, or the prescribing of rules about conversion to God and regeneration that are not warranted by the Word of truth, it were not amiss to reflect upon them and refute them; but the intention of these expressions is evident, and the reproach in them is cast upon the work of God itself: and I must profess that I believe the degeneracy from the truth and power of Christian religion, the ignorance of the principal doctrines of the Gospel, and that scorn which is cast, in these and the like expressions, on the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, by such as not only profess themselves to be ministers, but of a higher degree than ordinary, will be sadly ominous unto the whole state of the Reformed church amongst us, if not timely repressed and corrected. But what at present I affirm in this matter is,

⁵⁷ **furnishments** – munitions; war material, especially weapons and ammunition.

⁵⁸ **traduced** – badmouthed; misrepresented.

⁵⁹ **nice** – precise; strict.

⁶⁰ Samuel Parker, *Defense and Continuation of the Ecclesiastical Politie* (A. Clark for J. Martyn, 1671), 306-307.

1. **That it is a duty indispensably incumbent⁶¹ on all ministers of the Gospel to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the nature of this work, that they may be able to comply with the will of God and grace of the Spirit in the effecting and accomplishment of it upon the souls of them unto whom they dispense the Word.** Neither, without some competent knowledge hereof, can they discharge any one part of their duty and office in a right manner. If all that hear them are born dead in trespasses and sins, if they are appointed of God to be the instruments of their regeneration, it is a madness, which must one day be accounted for, to neglect a sedulous⁶² inquiry into the nature of this work, and the means whereby it is wrought. And the ignorance hereof or negligence herein, with the want of an experience of the power of this work in their own souls, is one great cause of that lifeless and unprofitable ministry which is among us.

2. **It is likewise the duty of all to whom the Word is preached to inquire also into it.** It is unto such to whom the Apostle speaks, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2Co 13:5). It is the concern of all individual Christians or professors of Christian religion to try and examine themselves what work of the Spirit of God there hath been upon their hearts. None will deter them from it but those who have a design to hoodwink⁶³ them to perdition. And,

(1) *The doctrine of it is revealed and taught us:* for “secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deu 29:29). And we speak not of curious inquiries into or after hidden things, or the secret, veiled actions of the Holy Spirit, but only of an upright endeavor to search into and comprehend the doctrine concerning this work to this very end: that we might understand it.

(2) *It is of such importance unto all our duties and all our comforts to have a due apprehension of the nature of this work and of our own concernment therein.* An inquiry into the one and the other cannot be neglected without the greatest folly and madness. Whereunto we may add,

(3) *The danger that there is of men being deceived in this matter, which is the hinge whereon their eternal state and condition doth absolutely turn and depend.* Certain it is that very many in the world do deceive themselves herein. For they evidently live under one of these pernicious⁶⁴ mistakes, namely, either a.) That men may go to heaven or “enter into the kingdom of God” and not be “born again” contrary to that of our Savior (Joh 3:5); or b.) That men may be “born again,” and yet live in sin contrary to 1 John 3:9.

From “A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit” in *The Works of John Owen*,
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John Owen (1616-1683): Congregational theologian and pastor; his written works filling twenty-four volumes represent among the best resources for theology in the English language. Born in the Oxfordshire, village of Stadham, England.



THE NECESSITY OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

“And I will put my spirit within you.”—Ezekiel 36:27

FROM the text that is before us...I draw, and I think very conclusively, the argument that if God in His covenant made with His people has promised to put His Spirit within them, it must be absolutely necessary that this promise should have been made. And it must be absolutely necessary also to our salvation that every one of us should receive the Spirit of God...We start then by laying down this proposition: the work of the Holy Spirit is

⁶¹ **incumbent** – obligatory; morally binding.

⁶² **sedulous** – constant; diligent; persistent.

⁶³ **hoodwink** – to blindfold mentally; to prevent someone from seeing the truth or fact.

⁶⁴ **pernicious** – having the quality of destroying; destructive.

absolutely nec-essary to us, if we would be saved.

1. In endeavoring to prove this, I would first make the remark that this is very manifest if we remember *what man is by nature*. Some say that man may of himself attain unto salvation, that if he hear the Word, it is in his power to receive it, to believe it, and to have a saving change worked in him by it. To this we reply, you do not know what man is by nature, otherwise you would never have ventured upon such an assertion. Holy Scripture tells us that man by nature is dead in trespasses and sins. It does not say that he is sick, that he is faint, that he has grown callous, and hardened, and seared: it says he is absolutely *dead*...When the body is dead, it is powerless. It is unable to do anything for itself. And when the soul of man is dead, in a spiritual sense, it must be, if there is any meaning in the figure, utterly and entirely powerless and unable to do anything of itself or for itself. When ye shall see dead men raising themselves from their graves, when ye shall see them unwinding their own sheets, opening their own coffin lids, and walking down our streets alive and animate as the result of their own power, *then* perhaps ye may believe that souls that are dead in sin may turn to God, may recreate their own natures, and may make themselves heirs of heaven, though before they were heirs of wrath. But mark, not until then.

The drift of the Gospel is that man is dead in sin and that divine life is God's gift. You must go contrary to the whole of that drift before you can suppose a man is brought to know and love Christ apart from the work of the Holy Spirit...Scripture does not only tell us that man is dead in sin: it tells us something *worse* than this, namely, that he is utterly and entirely averse to everything that is good and right. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom 8:7).

Turn you all Scripture through, and you find continually the will of man described as being contrary to the things of God. What said Christ in that text so often quoted by the Arminian⁶⁵ to disprove the very doctrine that it clearly states? What did Christ say to those who imagined that men would come without divine influence? He said, first, "No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father" (Joh 6:65). But he said something more strong: "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (Joh 5:40). No man *will* come. Here lies the deadly mischief: not only that he is powerless to do good, but that he is powerful enough to do that which is wrong and that his will is desperately set against everything that is right.

Go, Arminian, and tell your hearers that they will come if they please, but know that your Redeemer looks you in the face and tells you that you are uttering a lie. Men will *not* come. They *never* will come of themselves. You cannot induce them to come. You cannot force them to come by all your thunders, nor can you entice them to come by all your invitations. They will not come unto Christ that they may have life. Until the Spirit draw them, come they neither will nor can. Hence, then, from the fact that man's nature is hostile to the divine Spirit, that he hates grace, that he despises the way in which grace is brought to him, that it is contrary to his own proud nature to stoop to receive salvation by the deeds of another—hence, it is *necessary* that the Spirit of God should operate to change the will, to correct the bias of the heart, to set man in a right track, and then give him strength to run in it.

Oh! If ye read man and understand him, ye cannot help being sound on the point of the necessity of the Holy Spirit's work! It has been well remarked by a great writer that he never knew a man who held any great theological error who did not also hold a doctrine which dimin-ished the depravity of man. The Arminian says man is fallen, it is true; but then he has power of will left, and that will is free: he can raise himself. He diminishes the desperate character of the fall of man...But once get the correct view—that man is utterly fallen, pow-erless, guilty, defiled, lost, condemned—and you must be sound on all points of the great Gospel of Jesus Christ. Once believe man to be what Scripture says he is, once believe his heart to be depraved, his affections perverted, his understanding darkened, his will perverse, and you must hold that if such a wretch as that be saved, it *must* be the work of the Spirit of God and of the Spirit of God *alone*.

2. I have another proof ready to hand: salvation must be the work of the Spirit in us because the means used in salvation are of themselves inadequate for the accomplishment of the work. And what are the means of salvation? Why, first and foremost stands the preaching of the Word of God. More men are brought to Christ by preaching than by anything else, for it is God's chief and first instrument. This is the sword of the Spirit, quick and powerful, to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow (Heb 4:12). "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1Co 1:21).

But what is there in preaching, by which souls are saved, that looks as if it would be the means of saving souls? I could point you to divers churches and chapels into which you might step and say, "Here is a learned minister, indeed, a man who would instruct and enlighten the intellect." You sit down and you say, "Well, if God means to work

⁶⁵ **Arminian** – a follower of Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), Dutch theologian, born in Oudewater, the Netherlands. He rejected the Reformers' understanding of predestination, teaching instead that God's predestination of individuals was based on His foreknowledge of their accepting or rejecting Christ by their own free will.

a great work, He will use a learned man like this.” But do you know any learned men that are made the means of bringing souls to Christ to any great degree? Go round your churches, if you please, and look at them, and *then* answer the question. Do you know any great men —men great in learning and wisdom—who have become spiritual fathers in our Israel? Is it not a fact that stares us in the face that our fashionable preachers, our eloquent preachers, our learned preachers are just the most useless men in creation for the winning of souls to Christ?

And where *are* souls born to God? Why, in the house around which the jeer and the scoff and the sneer of the world have long gathered. Sinners are converted under the man whose eloquence is rough and homely, and who has nothing to commend him to his fellows, who has daily to fall on his knees and confess his own folly. And when the world speaks worst of him, [he] feels that he deserves it all, since he is nothing but an earthen vessel in which God is pleased to put His heavenly treasure. I will dare to say that in every age of the world, the most despised ministry has been the most useful...Why, the Lord hath been pleased always to make it so: He will clothe with power the weak and the foolish, but He will not clothe with power those who, if good were done, might be led to ascribe the excellence of the power to their learning, their eloquence, or their position.

Like the Apostle Paul, it is every minister’s business to glory in his infirmities. The world says, “Pshaw! upon your oratory! It is rough, and rude, and eccentric.” Yes, ’tis even so! But we are content, *for God blesses it!* Then so much the better that it has infirmities in it. For now shall it be plainly seen that it is not of man or by man, but the work of God and of God alone...Let me just put it to you. Under the ministry dead souls are quickened, sinners are made to repent, the vilest of sinners are made holy, men who came determined *not* to believe are compelled to believe. Now, *who* does this? If you say the ministry does it, then I say farewell to your reason because there is nothing in the successful ministry that would tend thereunto. It must be that the Spirit worketh in man through the ministry or else such deeds would never be accomplished. You might as well expect to raise the dead by whispering in their ears, as hope to save souls by preaching to them, if it were not for the agency of the Spirit...

Other means, however, are made use of to bless men’s souls: For instance, the two ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. They are both made a rich means of grace. But let me ask you: Is there anything in baptism that can possibly bless anybody? Can immersion in water have the slightest tendency to be blessed to the soul? And then with regard to the eating of bread and the drinking of wine at the Lord’s Supper, can it by any means be conceived by any rational man that there is anything in the mere piece of bread that we eat or in the wine that we drink? Yet, doubtless, the grace of God does go with both ordinances for the confirming of the faith of those who receive them and even for the conversion of those who look upon the ceremony. There must be something then beyond the outward ceremony. There must, in fact, be the Spirit of God, witnessing through the water, witnessing through the wine, witnessing through the bread, or otherwise *none* of these things could be means of grace to our souls. They could not edify; they could not help us to commune with Christ; they could not tend to the conviction of sinners, or to the establishment of saints. There must, then, from these facts, be a higher, unseen, mysterious influence—the influence of the divine Spirit of God.

3. Let me again remind you in the third place that the absolute necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart may be clearly seen from this fact: all which has been done by God the Father, and all that has been done by God the Son must be ineffectual to us, unless the Spirit shall reveal these things to our souls. We believe, in the first place, that God the Father elects His people. From before all worlds, He chooses them to Himself; but let me ask you, “What effect does the doctrine of election have upon any man until the Spirit of God enters into him?” How do I know whether God has chosen me from before the foundation of the world? How can I *possibly* know? Can I climb to heaven and read the roll? Is it possible for me to force my way through the thick mists that hide eternity, and open the seven seals of the book, and read my name recorded there? Ah! No. Election is a dead letter both in my consciousness and in any effect that it can produce upon me, until the Spirit of God calls me out of darkness into marvelous light. And then, through my calling, I see my election...It is a precious thing—that doctrine of election—to a child of God. But what makes it precious? *Nothing but the influence of the Spirit.* Until the Spirit opens the eye to read, until the Spirit imparts the mystic secret, no heart can know its election. No angel ever revealed to any man that he was chosen of God, but the Spirit doth it. He by His divine workings bears an infallible witness with our spirits that we are born of God. *Then* we are enabled to “read our title clear to mansions in the skies.”

Look again at the covenant of grace. We know that there was a covenant made with the Lord Jesus Christ by His Father from before all worlds and that in this covenant the persons of all His people were given to Him and were secured. But of what use or of what avail is the covenant to us until the Holy Spirit brings the blessings of the covenant to us?...Bring hither any sinner and tell him there is a covenant of grace—what is he advantaged thereby? “Ah,” says he, “I may not be included in it. My name may not be recorded there. I may not be chosen in Christ.” But let the Spirit of God dwell in his heart, richly by faith and love which is in Christ Jesus, and that man sees the covenant, ordered in all things and sure! He cries with David, “This is all my salvation, and all my desire” (2Sa 23:5).

Take again the redemption of Christ. We know that Christ did stand in the room, place, and stead of all His people. All those who shall appear in heaven will appear there as an act of justice as well as of grace, seeing that Christ was punished in their room and stead. It would have been unjust if God punished them, seeing that He had punished Christ for them. We believe that Christ [has] paid all their debts, [and] they have a right to their freedom in Christ—that Christ [has] covered them with *His* righteousness, [and] they are entitled to eternal life as much as if they had themselves been perfectly holy.

But of what avail is this to me, unless the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to me? What is Christ's blood to any of you until you have received the Spirit of grace? You have heard the minister preach about the blood of Christ a thousand times, but you passed by. It was nothing to you that Jesus should die. You know that He did atone for sins that were not His own, but you only regarded it as a tale, perhaps even an idle tale. But when the Spirit of God led you to the cross and opened your eyes and enabled you to see Christ crucified, ah, *then* there was something in the blood indeed. When His hand dipped the hyssop⁶⁶ in the blood and when it applied that blood to your spirit, *then* there was a joy and peace in believing, such as you had never known before. But ah, my hearer, Christ's dying is *nothing* to thee unless thou hast a living Spirit within thee. Christ brings thee no advantage—saving, personal, and lasting—unless the Spirit of God hath baptized thee in the fountain filled with His blood and washed thee from head to foot therein...There hang the blessings on the nail—on the nail, Christ Jesus; but we are short of stature. We cannot reach them. The Spirit of God takes them down and gives them to us, and there they are; they are ours. It is like the manna in the skies, far out of mortal reach; but the Spirit of God opens the windows of heaven, brings down the bread, puts it to our lips, and enables us to eat. Christ's blood and righteousness are like wine stored in the wine vat, but we cannot get thereat. The Holy Spirit dips our vessel into this precious wine, and then we drink. But without the Spirit, we must die and perish just as much, though the Father elect and the Son redeem, as though the Father never had elected, and though the Son had never bought us with His blood! *The Spirit is absolutely necessary.* Without Him, neither the works of the Father nor of the Son are of any avail to us...If you have not the Spirit of Christ, you are none of His. May the Spirit lead you to your chamber now to weep, now to repent, and now to look to Christ. And may you now have a divine life implanted, which neither time nor eternity shall be able to destroy. God, hear this prayer, and send us away with a blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Delivered on Sabbath morning, May 8, 1859, at the Music Hall,
Royal Surrey Gardens

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Influential English Baptist; today, there is available more material written by Spurgeon than by any other Christian author, living or dead. Born at Kelvedon, Essex, England.



⁶⁶ **hyssop** – an aromatic shrub, generally considered to be the Syrian marjoram, used by the Jews for Passover rites, the purification of lepers, plague, and at the red heifer sacrifice.