

Demonstration of Errors in the New Teaching—(Continued).

2. AS FOR NEW BIRTH.

not being anything communicated but only an effect produced, listen :—

I cannot tell you what new birth is. It is not that I am singular in my ignorance, you can no more tell me than I can tell you, but I can tell you two effects of new birth. I do not think that new birth is exactly the communication of anything, but an effect produced. I believe the first effect is an utter collapse of the man There is another effect of new birth, there is a cry, a very feeble cry, the cry of a babe There is as yet no link formed with God, but there is a cry. (Weston Notes, p. 259, 261).

A great many Christians have thought that in new birth a new nature was given. (Sonship, p. 8).

How would you meet the idea that in new birth something is imparted? The teaching of scripture is that *I* am born again, whatever may be the extent of it, it is myself, the individuality. That is how scripture speaks of divine birth. Except a *man* be born again. It is a human idea that something is imparted, but scripture says I am born again. Then the Lord puts it more abstractly. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, for it would go too far to say he which is born of the spirit is spirit, it would make me spirit and nothing else. (Sonship, p. 9)

The explicit denial that anything is communicated or imparted in new birth is so plain in these verbatim citations that he who runs may read, and for everyone who has eyes, is a most decided departure from scripture no less than from what was previously held and taught on the subject. It is not easy to realise how one who was conscious that he was born of God could ever say "I cannot tell you what new birth is," deny that it is the "communication of anything," and be able to give no more account of it than "two" of its "effects." Especially when these two effects—the "collapse of the man" and the "cry of a babe"—upset the whole contention, since they prove the very thing sought to be contradicted and explained away, namely, that there is now something more than the "man," which was never there before, not only a "cry," but a "babe." For it is absolutely certain there can be no *birth* without a "babe" any more than there can be a babe's "cry" until the babe is actually there. In the face of this self-evident fact, why persist in maintaining that "new birth is not the communication of anything?" It is a deliberate going back to that from which there was professed deliverance, and a building again of the things that were supposed to be destroyed.

When full blown, the root of error on this question in a great part of the Christian profession around us, is that Christ united Himself to sinful men when the Word became flesh and was born of a woman, while all those in the other sections, who are not prepared to go that length, contend for the modification taught in these quotations, which denies that anything new is communicated, and affirms merely an effect on man as he is; thus, that man was in a good state in innocence, that he got into a bad state by the fall, and that new birth restores him to a good state again. What, may we ask, does the narrowing down of new birth to an "effect produced" mean? An "effect" on whom? On the first man, on the "man" as he is. This is the manifest giving up of the great fundamental truth, by those who

used to stand up for and insist on it, that new birth is the begetting of a new spiritual something within the man called "spirit" born of the Spirit, a new life verily implanted, not an operation merely on what is there, but a gift of something never previously there, nothing short of which could be scripturally designated a birth of the Spirit. There is really no good indulging in high sounding phrases respecting the first man being set aside and superseded by the Second, while there is the refusal to admit that a totally new life is given where there was only the life of Adam before. In that case you could not speak of a *new birth* at all, as it is not possible for there to be *any*, if nothing *new* is given or communicated in contrast with the "old."

It is alleged "A great many Christians have thought that in new birth a new nature was given," as if this were not so. Surely every Christian taught of God, has not only "thought," but *known*, that a new nature is inseparable from a new birth of the Spirit. The truth is there never was a birth apart from a *nature*. Our first parents were *created*, not born. They fell from their first estate of innocence, and all their posterity have been *born*. But there never yet has been a living *natural* birth in the human family without the life and nature of the fallen parents. So there never was a new *spiritual* birth of the Holy Ghost, without a new divine life and a new holy nature after the likeness of that of which it was born.

Then we have the erroneous statement that "It is a human idea that something is imparted;" whereas, it is the denial of this, which is the human *idea*, and the divine *fact* is, that there never was, or could be, a birth of the Spirit, without something given, communicated, imparted, or implanted, no matter what word is used, provided it conveys the bringing into the "man" of that Spirit-born reality, which answers to the "babe," viz., a new life and a new nature. When asked "How would you meet the idea that in new birth something is imparted?" It was really no "meeting" of the case at all to reply. Scripture says, "I am born again," as if that precluded the inward communication of something *new* any more than it was to quote "Except a *man* be born again," as if that settled it, taking for granted scripture says nothing more as to it even in that very passage. It is a fallacy to deduce from "I am born again" the non-communication of anything. Certainly it is just the "I," the individual who is "born again." The "again" applies to him and to him only. But how is this brought to pass? In what, according to the Lord's teaching, does the being born again consist? Without doubt neither in the "collapse," nor the "cry," which are confessedly only "effects," but in that which is the spiritual equivalent of the "babe." Observe the "babe" is not born twice, though the "man" is. Our Lord further distinctly shows there is a "that which" (where "I" or "man" could not be used), a *something* brought forth, "that which is born;" not "again" this time, but *once* and for ever, viz., "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," that is to say, a divine spiritual entity called "spirit," a something which "cannot sin," and that you could not say of the man, for he is not turned into "spirit." This much had to be admitted, yet the untenable position was not abandoned, nor the utter falseness of the conclusion sought to be drawn even perceived. Granted that it is just the "man" that is born a second time and that

"born again" only does, or can, apply to the individual, it is surely seen that the very point here is, that he is born *twice* by the communication of that which is only born *once*, namely, "spirit" born of God, the Spirit. The man as to his body is not spiritualised, neither is the evil nature, he inherited at his natural birth, changed. Why, then, should there be the slightest hesitation in telling what new birth is, or any unnecessary haste in confessing to such singular ignorance regarding it? According to the plainest testimonies of scripture new birth is a divine spiritual generation wrought inside the individual issuing in a new life and nature that the "I" never had before, of which God is the *Author* or Begetter, the Spirit the *power*, the word the *means* (whatever the instrumentality employed), and Christ the *object*. The word, spoken or written, or in any other form God pleases, when applied to the soul by the Spirit, being a revelation of Christ, becomes the communication of life, in fact the reproduction as to its nature of Christ's life. Hence we find in scripture, "No more I but *sin*" (Rom. vii. 17), and "Not I but *Christ*" (Gal. ii. 20), respectively "dwelling" and "living" in the individual child of God. Alas! one error leads to another, and the inevitable consequence of holding no communication of anything in new birth is the denial of two natures in the Christian, as will be shown when that and other errors are noticed by-and-by in addition to those already enumerated. Of course if one is not content with the divine figure of a *birth* and runs away to a "lamp" instead, which, with a "wick," is used by the Lord to figure a "foolish virgin" or unreal professor, and with 'oil' besides, to figure a 'wise virgin' or real professor, is it possible he could escape going astray on the point? How could a lamp convey the truth about a birth? God's thought of new birth cannot be had from such an illustration, nor is it ever employed in scripture for that purpose. Nor can there be a birth without the birth *tie*, and that which is born of God is certainly *related* to God as Begetter. All is plain when scripture is adhered to, but total confusion when departed from.

3. THAT THE GOSPEL

is no longer good news for the perishing but for born again people the following will prove :

Not through human agency, but simply and purely by the power of God I can see in scripture that the work of the evangelist is to enlighten the new born soul. The soul of the man that is born of the Spirit has to be enlightened. I am assured that the evangelist's distinct work is to enlighten. (Weston Notes, p. 242).

The wick is now burning. It is the work of the evangelist to enlighten. I will stop for a moment to prove it. There was once in the world a great evangelist; the greatest that has ever been, and he was pleased to tell us the terms of his commission, the terms of his commission were these. he was to go to the Gentiles to "open their eyes,"-- he had no more to do as an evangelist. (Weston Notes, pp. 265-6).

Where is there a line of scripture to show that the "work of the evangelist is to enlighten the new born soul?" On the contrary, his commission is to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to *every* creature." Is that to new born souls? This comes of the unfounded notion that "human agency" is entirely excluded from the operation of God in new birth, and the evangelist, being a "human agent," must be made to come on the scene after new birth is an accomplished fact. Though God is the Author of new birth, He uses *means*. God begets,

but it is by the word. "Of His own will begat He us by the word of truth" (James i. 18). No doubt He may work in an *extraordinary* manner as He did in an exceptional case like Paul's where the Lord's voice was heard *directly*, and the Spirit gave reality in his soul to that which even his senses told him of; but the *ordinary* way is "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of *preaching* to save them that believe" (1 Cor. i. 21). Though God chose to dispense with any "human agency" in the case of Paul, yet in how many other cases did He use Paul himself as the "human agent?" To how many was Peter used as the human instrument at Pentecost? Three thousand. Philip was employed as the "human agent" in Samaria, and to the Eunuch. Peter puts it plainly enough, "Being born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible by the word of God that liveth and abideth for ever And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter i. 23-25). It was through the *word* which was by the *gospel* preached to them they were born again, not to enlighten them after they *were* born. The effectual work is in every case by the *power* of God, but that power is exercised, it may be, while the word is being preached, read or sung, or or in any other way God, who is sovereign, sees fit to apply or use His word in the effectuation of new birth, untrammelled by man's limitations.

Could there be a greater perversion of Scripture as to its plain obvious meaning than the attempt to "prove," that it is the "work of the evangelist to enlighten" *after* the "wick is now burning?" It is said Paul was to "go to the Gentiles to open their eyes," and "and had no more to do as an evangelist." Is opening the eyes of those who were in a state of heathen darkness, the same as enlightening wicks already burning? Of the Gentiles to whom Paul went he says, "At that time ye were without Christ having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. ii. 12). Were these new born souls? They were without Christ, without hope, and without God. For repentance, faith, new birth, and conversion, the power of God is equally indispensable, and the whole four are concerned in the soul's being brought to God, repentance being a question of the *mind*, faith of the *heart*, new birth of the *nature*, and conversion of the *attitude*; not one of which can be brought about except by the operation of the Holy Ghost, nevertheless the "human agent" or evangelist (if God so wills, for He could speak directly by His own voice if He chose) has a part in every one of them. It is indisputably the "work of the evangelist" (which this teaching falsifies) to say "Repent," "Believe," "Ye must be born again," and "Be converted," in order that those to whom he preaches may be led to repentance toward God, have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, new birth of the Spirit, and true conversion to God. That the denial of this can be tolerated is incredible!

4. AS TO SALVATION.

Would you say what you mean by salvation?

I think salvation is in the title to be free from everything that is adverse and refers especially to the present scene. (American Notes p. 30).

Was ever anything so poor? It is not even "free," but only "title to be free," and from what? Besides "free" does not apply to salvation, but to *redemption*.

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