

# Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

## THE NEW BIRTH

G. H. P. Showalter

There are few religious subjects upon which more is said and in which more interest is centered than in the subject of the new birth. We hear in almost every sermon preached something said about being born again. Over and over the language of our Lord is quoted, "We must be born again." All religious teachers and leaders who accept the New Testament as a revelation from God stress the necessity of being born again. This necessity moreover can hardly be over-emphasized. There certainly should be no complaint against the stress that is placed upon it by the preachers in our land. Consider the language of our Lord to Nicodemus in John 3:3, "**Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" And again, "**Except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.**" Once again,

**He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them he gave power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on his name which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:11-13).**

Note that these believers had not become sons of God, but their faith gave them power to become sons of God. Faith alone cannot save. The necessity of the new birth is generally accepted and universally stressed and emphasized among the various religious groups. At this

time I will not remark on the necessity of being born again but rather on the question of how this new birth is effected or in what it consists.

If the birth itself is important, it is certainly important for all who would be saved to experience that birth, and in order to experience it, it is necessary to know what the Bible teaches in regard to it. Note then the following:

First, in the whole realm of procreation, seed is the first essential for life. This is according to the law of creation of God. For in the beginning, his law provided for exactly this course for the propagation and perpetuation of the animal and human species. It is true as well in the vegetable kingdom. We plant the seed in order to produce plants. Now that seed in the spiritual realm is plainly declared to be the word of God, and for anyone to be born of God, it is absolutely necessary first of all that he be taught the word of God. Our Savior said, "**And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me**" (John 6:45). This would lead us to the conclusion that no one can possibly come to God, become God's child, converted, saved—except he first be taught.. In his interpretation of the parable of the sower our Savior said: "**The seed is the word of God**" (Luke 8:11). Again, "**Of his own will beget he us with the word of truth**" (Jam. 1:18). Here we are given the definite information that so far as our being begotten of God is concerned, that it is through the word of truth, and hence impossible without this. Again, "**Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of**

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**Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder  
August 3, 1917–October 10, 2001**

## THE CRY, “BACK TO CHRIST!”

**John W. McGarvey**

Let no one be deceived by this cry when it comes from rationalistic sources. There is a meaning in it quite different from that which we are apt to attach to it. We are apt to suppose that it means back of all human creeds and rules of discipline to the teaching of the apostles and of Christ. But it does not stop there. It means, also, back of the apostles, so that their teaching is to be set aside when it does not seem to be supported by the personal teaching of Jesus. Neither does it stop at the four Gospels and their representation of what Christ taught. It discriminates between what they have incorrectly reported from the lips of Christ and what He actually said. By powers of discernment which none but an expert modern critic boasts of possessing, all of the reported sayings of Christ are sifted, the accretions and misconstructions of the Gospel writers, and the traditions which they followed, are cast aside, and the residue is the teaching of Christ. The cry is, back to that; and back to that is infidelity and religious anarchy.

Dr. James Stalker has well expressed the essential part of the sentiment in the opening paragraph of the leading article of the June *Expositor*. He says:

“Back to Christ!” is the watchword of theology at the present time; and there can be little doubt that the question, *What precisely was taught by Christ?*, will be the most burning theological topic of the first decade of the twentieth century. It seems an easy thing to discover what Christ taught for in the four Gospels all his words are contained in a very narrow compass. ... The question, however, has been raised: Are we sure that all the words attributed to our Lord in the Gospels are really his; or, as we read; do we require to exercise caution and criticism?

If we once cast aside the inspiration which Christ promised His apostles, if He did promise it, if those promises of it are not spurious additions to His words, and if we also cast aside their claim of an infallible inspiration, as has now become the fashion, what have we left to guarantee the certainty that anything quoted from Him in the Gospels actually came from His lips? Nothing, absolutely nothing, except the judgment of the modern critic, and that, in such a connection, is not worth a snap of my finger.

Back to Christ let us go; but let us not forget that when we reach the writings of His apostles, whom He authorized to speak in His name, and qualified to speak with absolute authority, we have gone back to Him.

—Deceased

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**incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever**" (1 Pet. 1:23). These statements assure us beyond all cavil that the word of God is the first essential thing in order to the new birth in Christ. Through the word of God, we are begotten. Without the word of God there cannot possibly be a new birth and this word of God must be heard and learned, in order to effect the spiritual relationship with Christ and with God, that is, in the Scriptures, called the new birth.

2. We consider some further statements now from God's truth defined in a little more detail. There are revealed to us certain qualifications and conditions that define in the clearest possible manner what is meant by being born of God. And, of these, first, one who is born of God means that he has become a believer. **"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God"** (John 5:1). Everyone who is born of God, then, has become a believer. No one can claim to be born of God who is not a believer. All of those who are born of God are believers. And since it is taught in the word of truth that faith is a result of hearing the word of God, we see how beautiful the connection between first hearing and being taught, and then believing. **"Faith comes by hearing the word of God"** (Rom. 10:17). The birth process is, first, hearing; second, believing.

3. The third proposition relating to the identification of one who is born of God is that he has ceased from sin. **"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin"** (1 John 3:9). And again, **"Whosoever is born of God sinneth not"** (1 John 5:19). From these passages we learn that a child of God, one who is really and truly born of God is one who has turned away from sin. In the commission, our Savior said to His apostles that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Then no one can be forgiven without repenting of all past sins and no one ever was or can be a child of God without the forgiveness of his sins. On the day of Pentecost, Peter said to the inquiring multitudes: **"Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins"** (Acts 2:38). Paul in writing to the Corinthian brethren, declared godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation. Repentance then is unto salvation—and no one without salvation is saved, and an unsaved person is not a child of God. Repentance means turning away from all sin. A child of God has turned away from sin. To the Roman brethren, Romans 12:9, Paul said, **"Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that**

**which is good."** These passages show us beyond all doubt that one item of description and hence of identification of one who has been born of God is that he has turned away from sin, despises sin, hates sin, abhors sin, and cleaves to that which is good—so much so that the past of his life in sin that he once loved, he now hates.

4. The fourth proposition: One born of God loves God. **"Everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God"** (1 John 4:7). Or everyone that is born of God is here identified as one who loves God. Incidentally, it may be remarked that one who really loves God is not necessarily the outward professor. It is the one who does the will of God. **"He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me,"** said our Savior (John 14:21). Again, John says, **"This is love that we follow after his commandments"** (2 John 6). Loving obedience or obedient love for God is a mark of identification of one who is born of God, for the apostle here so declares. No one without this can be said to be born of God.

5. The fifth proposition is that one born of God overcomes the world. John says, **"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world"** (1 John 5:4). To overcome the world means to become through Christ conqueror over the world and its wicked ways—as John would say, that he has turned away from the world, the flesh, and the devil—the three mighty forces that operate against the spiritually minded in Christ. The change of life of a child of God or rather the new life, the newness of life, is here represented by another term or definition of one who has been born of God.

6. The sixth proposition in reference to the identification of one born of God is that he doeth righteousness. **"Everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him"** (1 John 2:29). And here we find a very comprehensive term of description of one who has experienced the change of character that is represented as the new birth. To follow after right—is to obey God.

To sum up what we have just said, we find (1) that in order for one to be born of God, it is necessary first of all for him to hear and learn the word of truth. **"We are begotten with the word of truth"** (Jam. 1:18). **"We have been born again of the incorruptible seed by the word of God which liveth and abideth"** (1 Pet. 1:23).

(2) One born again is one who is a believer, one who believes with all his heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

(3) One born of God is one who has turned away from

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sin, has repented of his sins and turned to the love and practice of things required of God instead.

(4) The one born of God is one who loves God. All those born of God love God fervently, truly, not in profession only but in actual practice and experience in life.

(5) The Scriptures declare with equal emphasis and clearness that one born of God overcomes the world. He has not only turned away from sin but the practice of his life is against the ways of the world and the ways of sin.

(6) And finally, one born of God is one who doeth righteousness. The Psalmist says, “**All thy commandments are righteousness**” (Psa. 119:172). Paul says, “**I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith**” (Rom.1:16 17). Thus, we conclude that when one hears, understands, believes, accepts, and obeys the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, he has been according to the Scriptures, born again. He has entered a new life. Every birth brings one into a new state of life and the birth into the moral and spiritual realm in Christ is a new life, and metaphorically speaking, a birth, born of God, born of water and the Spirit. The Spirit through inspired

men has revealed the word—the incorruptible seed. It is different from and opposed to the life in sin, and as one born, by the natural birth in this present life, enters into a new state of life, so through the seed of the kingdom which is the word of God, accepted, believed, and obeyed in the heart of man, one enters into a new life, and thus is said to be born again, born anew, born from heaven.

The doctrine of Christ, the law of Christ, the word of Christ, is the seed of the kingdom. Hearing, faith, repentance, confession, and baptism are conditions upon which one who is lost may be saved from his past sins, enter into the family of God, as one of God’s children in the divine family, and in and through this method only as it is revealed in the word of God may one be born thus, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, into the kingdom of God.~

—Deceased

*Of your unspoken words, you are the master;  
of your spoken words, the servant;  
of your written words, the slave.*