

Home Truths.

BEING MISCELLANEOUS ADDRESSES AND TRACTS,

BY THE

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ARRANGED, REVISED, AND CORRECTED SPECIALLY
FOR THIS EDITION.

SECOND SERIES

“If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?”

(1 Cor. xiv. 8.)

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Are You Regenerate?

“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John iii. 3.

READER,

I wish to speak to you about Regeneration, or being born again.

The subject is a most important one at any time. Those words of our Lord Jesus Christ to Nicodemus are very solemn, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John iii. 3.) The world has gone through many changes since those words were spoken. Eighteen hundred years have passed away. Empires and kingdoms have risen and fallen. Great men and wise men have lived, laboured, written, and died. But there stands the rule of the Lord Jesus unaltered and unchanged. And there it will stand, till heaven and earth shall pass away,—“except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

But the subject is one which is doubly important in the present day. Things have happened which have drawn special attention to it. Men’s minds are full of it, and men’s eyes are fixed on it. Regeneration is discussed in newspapers. Regeneration is talked of in private society. Regeneration is argued about in courts of law. Surely it is a time when every true Christian should examine himself upon the subject, and make sure that his views are sound. It is a time when we should not halt between two opinions. We should try to know what we hold. We should be ready to give a reason for our belief. When the truth is assailed, those who love truth should grasp it more firmly than ever. Oh! for a greater spirit of decision throughout the land! Oh! for a more hearty determination to be always on the Lord’s side!

Reader, I invite you to listen to me, while I try to bring this disputed question before you. I feel deeply that I can tell you nothing new. I know I can say nothing which has not been better said by better men than myself. But every additional witness may be of use in a disputed cause. And if I can only throw a little Scripture light on the subject of Regeneration, and make it plain to plain readers of the Bible, I shall thank God, and be abundantly satisfied. What are the opinions of men to you or me? He that judgeth us is the Lord! One point has to be ascertained, and only one,—“What saith the Scripture of truth?”

Now I propose to attempt three things:—

I. Firstly, to explain *what Regeneration, or being born again, means.*

II. Secondly, to show *the necessity of Regeneration.*

III. Thirdly, to point out *the marks and evidences of Regeneration.*

If the Lord God shall enable me to make these three points clear to you, I

believe I shall have done your soul a great service.

I. Let me then, first of all, explain *what Regeneration, or being born again, means.*

Regeneration means, that change of heart and nature which a man goes through when he becomes a true Christian.

I think there can be no question that there is an immense difference among those who profess and call themselves Christians. Beyond all dispute, there are always two classes in the outward Church,—the class of those who are Christians in name and form only, and the class of those who are Christians in deed and in truth. All were not Israel who were called Israel, and all are not Christians who are called Christians. “In the visible Church,” says an article of the Church of England, “the evil be ever mingled with the good.”

Some, as the thirty-nine articles say, are “wicked and void of a lively faith:” others, as another article says, “are made like the image of God’s only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and walk religiously in good works.” Some worship God as a mere form, and some in spirit and in truth. Some give their hearts to God, and some give them to the world. Some believe the Bible, and live as if they believed it: others do not. Some feel their sins, and mourn over them: others do not. Some love Christ, trust in Him, and serve Him: others do not. In short, as Scripture says, some walk in the narrow way, some in the broad; some are the good fish of the Gospel net, some are the bad; some are the wheat in Christ’s field, and some are the tares.¹

I think no man with his eyes open can fail to see all this, both in the Bible, and in the world around him. Whatever he may think about the subject I am writing of, he cannot possibly deny that this difference exists.

Now what is the explanation of the difference? I answer unhesitatingly,—Regeneration, or being born again. I answer, that true Christians are what they are, because they are Regenerate; and formal Christians are what they are, because they are not Regenerate. The heart of the Christian in deed has been changed. The heart of the Christian in name only, has not been changed. The change of heart makes the whole difference.²

¹ “There be two manner of men. Some there be that be not justified, nor regenerated, nor yet in the state of salvation; that is to say, not God’s servants. They lack the renovation or regeneration; they be not come yet to Christ.”—*Bishop Latimer’s Sermons*, 1552.

² The reader must not suppose there is anything new or modern in this statement. It would be an endless work to quote passages from standard divines of the Church of England, in which the words “regenerate” and “unregenerate” are used to describe the difference which I have been speaking of. The pious and godly members of the Church are called “the regenerate,”—the worldly and ungodly are called “the unregenerate.” I think no one, well read in English divinity, can question this for a moment.

This change of heart is spoken of continually in the Bible, under various emblems and figures.

Ezekiel calls it, “a taking away the stony heart, and giving a heart of flesh;”—“a giving a new heart, and putting within us a new spirit.” (Ezek. xi. 29; xxxvi. 26.)

The apostle John sometimes calls it, being “born of God,”—sometimes, being “born again,”—sometimes, being “born of the Spirit.” (John i. 13; iii. 3. 6.)

The apostle Peter, in the Acts, calls it “repenting and being converted.” (Acts iii. 19.)

The Epistle to the Romans speaks of it as a “being alive from the dead.” (Rom. vi. 13.)

The second Epistle to the Corinthians calls it “being a new creature, old things have passed away, and all things become new.” (2 Cor. v. 17.)

The Epistle to the Ephesians speaks of it as a resurrection together with Christ, “You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins, (Ephes. ii. 1.) as “a putting off the old man, which is corrupt,—being renewed in the Spirit of our minds,—and putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” (Ephes. iv. 22, 24.)

The Epistle to the Colossians calls it a “putting off the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” (Coloss. iii. 9, 10.)

The Epistle to Titus calls it, “the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” (Titus iii. 5.)

The first Epistle of Peter speaks of it as “a being called out of darkness into God’s marvellous light.” (1 Peter ii. 9.) And the second Epistle as “being made partakers of the divine nature.” (2 Peter i. 4.)

The first Epistle of John calls it a “passing from death to life.” (1 John iii. 14.)

All these expressions come to the same thing in the end. They are all the same truth, only viewed from different sides. And all have one and the same meaning. They describe a great radical change of heart and nature,—a thorough alteration and transformation of the whole inner man,—a participation in the resurrection life of Christ,—or, to borrow the words of the Church of England Catechism, “a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness.”³

This change of heart in a true Christian is so complete, that no word could be chosen more fitting to express it than that word “Regeneration,” or “new birth.” Doubtless it is no outward, bodily alteration, but undoubtedly it is an

³ “All these expressions set forth the same work of grace upon the heart, though they may be understood under different notions.”—*Bishop Hopkins*. 1670.

entire alteration of the inner man. It adds no new faculties to a man's mind, but it certainly gives an entirely new bent and bias to all his old ones. His will is so new, his tastes so new, his opinions so new, his views of sin, the world, the Bible, and Christ so new, that he is to all intents and purposes a new man. The change seems to bring a new being into existence. It may well be called being *born again*.

This change is *not always given to believers at the same time in their lives*. Some are born again when they are infants, and seem, like Jeremiah and John the Baptist, filled with the Holy Ghost, even from their mother's womb. Some few are born again in old age. The great majority of true Christians probably are born again after they grow up. A vast multitude of persons it is to be feared, go down to the grave without having been born again at all.

This change of heart *does not always begin in the same way* in those who go through it after they have grown up. With some, like the apostle Paul, and the jailor at Philippi, it is a sudden and violent change, attended with much distress of mind. With others, like Lydia of Thyatira, it is more gentle and gradual: their winter becomes spring almost without their knowing how. With some the change is brought about by the Spirit working through afflictions or providential visitations. With others, and probably the greater number of true Christians, the word of God, preached or written, is the means of effecting it.⁴

This change is *one which can only be known and discerned by its effects*. Its beginnings are a hidden and secret thing. We cannot see them. Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us this most plainly: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John iii. 8.) Would you know if you are regenerate? You must try the question, by examining what you know of the effects of Regeneration. Those effects are always the same. The way by which true Christians are led, in passing through their great change, are certainly various. But the state of heart and soul into which they are brought at last, is always the same. Ask them what they think of sin,

⁴ "The preaching of the word is the great means which God hath appointed for Regeneration: 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' (Rom. x. 17.) When God first created man, it is said that 'he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,' but when God new creates man, he breathes into his ears. This is the word that raiseth the dead, calling them out of the grave: this is that word that opens the eyes of the blind, that turns the heart of the disobedient and rebellious. And though wicked and profane men scoff at preaching, and count all ministers words, and God's words two, but so much wind, yet they are such wind, believe it, as is able to tear rocks and rend mountains; such winds, as if ever they are saved, must shake and overturn the foundations of all their carnal confidence and presumption. Be exhorted, therefore, more to prize and more to frequent the preaching of the word."—*Bishop Hopkins*. 1670.

Christ, holiness, the world, the Bible, and prayer, and you will find them all of one mind.

This change is *one that no man can give to himself, nor yet to another*. It would be as reasonable to expect the dead to raise themselves, or to require an artist to give a marble statue life. The sons of God are “born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John i. 13.) Sometimes the change is ascribed to God the Father, “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath begotten us again unto a lively hope.” (1 Peter i. 3.) Sometimes it is ascribed to God the Son, “The Son quickeneth whom he will.” (John iii. 21.) “If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.” (1 John ii. 29.) Sometimes it is ascribed to the Spirit,—and He, in fact, is the great agent by whom it is always effected: “That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.” (John iii. 6.) But man has no power to work the change. It is something far, far beyond his reach. “The condition of man after the fall of Adam,” says the tenth Article of the Church of England, “is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God.” No minister on earth can convey grace to any one of his congregation at his discretion. He may preach as truly and faithfully as Paul or Apollos: but God must give the increase. (1 Cor. iii. 6.) He may baptize with water in the name of the Trinity: but unless the Holy Ghost accompanies and blesses the ordinance, there is no death unto sin, and no new birth unto righteousness. Jesus alone, the great Head of the Church, can baptize with the Holy Ghost. Blessed and happy are they, who have the inward baptism, as well as the outward.⁵

Reader, I lay before you the foregoing account of Regeneration. I say it is that change of heart which is the distinguishing mark of a true Christian man,—the invariable companion of a justifying faith in Christ,—the inseparable consequence of vital union with Him,—and the root and beginning of

⁵ “The Scripture carries it, that no more than a child can beget itself; or a dead man quicken himself, or a nonentity create itself; no more can any carnal man regenerate himself, or work true saving grace in his own soul.”—*Bishop Hopkins*. 1670.

“There are two kinds of baptism, and both necessary: the one interior, which is the cleansing of the heart, the drawing of the Father, the operation of the Holy Ghost: and this baptism is in man when he believeth and trusteth that Christ is the only method of his salvation.”—*Bishop Hooper*. 1547.

“It is on all parts gladly confessed, that there may be, in divers cases, life by virtue of inward baptism, where outward is not found.”—*Richard Hooper*. 1592.

“There is a baptism of the Spirit as of water.”—*Bishop Jeremy Taylor*. 1660.

inward sanctification. I ask you to ponder it well before you go any farther. It is of the utmost importance that your views should be clear upon this point,—*what Regeneration really is,*

I know well that many will not allow that Regeneration is what I have described it to be. They will think the statement I have made, by way of definition, much too strong. Some hold that Regeneration only means admission into a state of ecclesiastical privileges,—being made a member of the Church,—but does not mean a change of heart. Some tell us that a regenerate man has a certain power within him which enables him to repent and believe if he thinks fit, but that he still needs a further change in order to make him a true Christian. Some say there is a difference between Regeneration and being born again. Others say there is a difference between being born again and conversion.

To all this I have one simple reply,—and that is, *I can find no such Regeneration spoken of anywhere in the Bible.* Regeneration which only means admission into a state of ecclesiastical privileges may be ancient and primitive, for anything I know. But something more than this is wanted. A few plain texts of Scripture are needed; and these texts have yet to be found.

Such a notion of Regeneration is utterly inconsistent with that which St. John gives us in his first epistle. It renders it necessary to invent the awkward theory that there are two Regenerations, and is thus eminently calculated to confuse the minds of unlearned people, and introduce false doctrine. It is a notion which seems not to answer to the solemnity with which our Lord introduces the subject to Nicodemus. When he said, “Verily, verily, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” did he only mean, except a man be admitted to a state of ecclesiastical privilege? Surely He meant more than this. Such a Regeneration a man might have, like Simon Magus, and yet never be saved. Such a Regeneration he might never have, like the penitent thief, and yet see the kingdom of God. Surely He must have meant a change of heart. As to the notion that there is any distinction between being Regenerate and being born again, it is one which will not bear examination. It is the general opinion of all who know Greek, that the two expressions mean one and the same thing.

To me indeed there seems to be much confusion of ideas, and indistinctness of apprehension in men’s minds on this simple point,—what Regeneration really is,—and all arising from not simply adhering to the word of God. That a man is admitted into a state of great privilege when he is made a member of a pure church of Christ, I do not for an instant deny. That he is in a far better and more advantageous position for his soul, than if he did not belong to the church, I make no question. That a wide door is set open before his soul, which is not set before the poor heathen, I can most clearly see. *But I*

do not see that the Bible ever calls this Regeneration. And I cannot find a single text in Scripture which warrants the assumption that it is so. It is very important in theology to distinguish things that differ. Church privileges are one thing. Regeneration is another. I, for one, dare not confound them.⁶

I am quite aware that great and good men have clung to that low view of Regeneration, to which I have adverted.⁷ But when a doctrine of the everlasting Gospel is at stake, I can call no man master. The words of the old philosopher, are never to be forgotten, “I love Plato, I love Socrates, but I love truth better than either.” I say unhesitatingly, that those who hold the view that there are two Regenerations, can bring forward no plain text in proof of it. I firmly believe that no plain reader of the Bible only, would ever find this view there for himself, and that goes very far to make me suspect it is an idea of man’s invention. The only Regeneration that I can see in Scripture is, not a change of *state*, but a change of *heart*. That is the view, I once more assert, which the Church Catechism takes when it speaks of the “death unto sin, and new birth unto righteousness,” and on that view I take my stand.

“Reader, the doctrine before you is one of vital importance. This is no matter of names, and words, and forms, about which I am writing, and you are reading. It is a thing that you and I must feel and know by experience, each for himself, if we are to be saved. Try, I beseech you, to become acquainted with it. Let not the din and smoke of controversy draw off your attention from your own heart. Is that heart changed? Alas! it is poor work to wrangle, and argue, and dispute about Regeneration, if after all we know nothing about it within.

Reader, Regeneration, or new birth, is the distinguishing mark of every true Christian. Now just consider what I say. *Are you regenerate or are you not?*

II. Let me show you in the second place, *the necessity there is for our being Regenerated, or born again.*

That there is such a necessity is most plain from our Lord Jesus Christ’s words in the third chapter of St. John’s Gospel. Nothing can be more clear and positive than His language to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” “Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye

⁶ “The mixture of those things by speech, which by nature are divided, is the mother of all error.”—*Hooker*. 1595.

⁷ For instance, Bishop Davenant and Bishop Hopkins frequently speak of “a sacramental regeneration,” when they are handling the subject of baptism, as a thing entirely distinct from spiritual Regeneration. The general tenor of their writings is to speak of the godly as the regenerate, and the ungodly as the unregenerate. But with every feeling of respect for two such good men, the question yet remains,—What Scripture warrant have we for saying there are two regenerations? I answer unhesitatingly,—we have none at all.

must be born again.” (John iii. 3, 7.)

The reason of this necessity is the exceeding sinfulness and corruption of our natural hearts. The words of St. Paul to the Corinthians are literally accurate, “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him.” (1 Cor. ii. 14.) Just as rivers flow downward, and sparks fly upward, and stones fall to the ground, so does a man’s heart naturally incline to what is evil. We love our soul’s enemies,—we dislike our soul’s friends. We call good evil, and we call evil good. We take pleasure in ungodliness, we take no pleasure in Christ. We not only commit sin, but we also love sin. We not only need to be cleansed from the guilt of sin, but we also need to be delivered from its power. The natural tone, bias, and current, of our minds, must be completely altered. The image of God, which sin has blotted out, must be restored. The disorder and confusion which reigns within us must be put down. The first things must no longer be last, and the last first. The Spirit must let in the light on our hearts, put everything in its right place, and create all things new.

It ought always to be remembered that there are two distinct things which the Lord Jesus Christ does for every sinner whom He undertakes to save. He washes him from his sins in His own blood, and gives him a free pardon:—*this is his justification*. He puts the Holy Spirit into his heart, and makes him an entire new man:—*this is his Regeneration*,

The two things are *both absolutely necessary to salvation*. The change of heart is as necessary as the pardon; and the pardon is as necessary as the change. Without the pardon we have no right or title to heaven. Without the change we should not be meet and ready to enjoy heaven, even if we got there.

The two things are *never separate*. They are never found apart. Every justified man is also a regenerate man, and every regenerate man is also a justified man. When the Lord Jesus Christ gives a man remission of sins, He also gives him repentance. When He grants peace with God, He also grants power to become a son of God. There are two great standing maxims of the glorious Gospel, which ought never to be forgotten. One is, “He that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark xvi. 16.) The other is, “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” (Rom. viii. 9.)

Reader, the man who denies the universal necessity of Regeneration, can know very little of the heart’s corruption. He is blind indeed who fancies that pardon is all we want in order to get to heaven, and does not see that pardon without a change of heart would be a useless gift. Blessed be God that both are freely offered to us in Christ’s Gospel, and that Jesus is able and willing to give the one as well as the other.

Surely you must be aware that the vast majority of people in the world *see*

nothing, feel nothing, and know nothing in religion as they ought. How and why is this, is not the present question. I only put it to your conscience,—is it not the fact?

Tell them of the sinfulness of many things which they are doing continually;—and what is generally the reply? “They see no harm.”

Tell them of the awful peril in which their souls are,—of the shortness of time,—the nearness of eternity,—the uncertainty of life,—the reality of judgment. “They feel no danger.”

Tell them of their need of a Saviour,—mighty, loving, and divine, and of the impossibility of being saved from hell, except by faith in Him. It all falls flat and dead on their ears. “They see no such great barrier between themselves and heaven.”

Tell them of holiness, and the high standard of living which the Bible requires. They cannot comprehend the need of such strictness. “They see no use in being so very good.”

There are thousands and tens of thousands of such people on every side of us. They will hear these things all their lives. They will even attend the ministry of the most striking preachers, and listen to the most powerful appeals to their consciences. And yet, when you come to visit them on their death-beds, they are like men and women who never heard these things at all. They know nothing of the leading doctrines of the Gospel by experience. They can render no reason whatever of their own hope.

And why and wherefore is all this? What is the explanation,—what is the cause of such a state of things? It all comes from this,—that man naturally has no sense of spiritual things. In vain the sun of righteousness shines before him: the eyes of his soul are blind, and cannot see. In vain the music of Christ’s invitations sounds around him:—the ears of his soul are deaf and cannot hear it. In vain the wrath of God against sin is set forth:—the perceptions of his soul are stopped up,—like the sleeping traveller, he does not perceive the coming storm. In vain the bread and water of life are offered to him:—his soul is neither hungry for the one, nor thirsty for the other. In vain he is advised to flee to the Great Physician:—his soul is unconscious of its disease:—why should he go? In vain you put a price into his hand to buy wisdom:—the mind of his soul wanders,—he is like the lunatic who calls straws a crown, and dust diamonds,—he says, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” Ah! reader, there is nothing so sad as the utter corruption of our nature. There is nothing so painful as the anatomy of a dead soul.

Now what does such a man need? He needs to be born again, and made a new creature. He needs a complete putting off the old man, and a complete putting on the new. We do not live our natural life till we are born into the

world, and we do not live our spiritual life till we are born of the Spirit.

But, reader, you must furthermore be aware that the vast majority of people *are utterly unfit to enjoy heaven in their present state*. I lay it before you as a great fact. Is it not so?

Look at the masses of men and women gathered together in our cities and towns, and observe them well. They are all dying creatures,—all immortal beings,—all going to the judgment seat of Christ,—all certain to live for ever in heaven or in hell. But where is the slightest evidence that most of them are in the least degree meet and ready for heaven?

Look at the greater part of those who are called Christians, in every part throughout the land. Take any parish you please in town or country. Take that which you know best. What are the tastes and pleasures of the majority of people who live there? What do they like best, when they have a choice? What do they enjoy most, when they can have their own way? Observe the manner in which they spend their Sundays. Mark how little delight they seem to feel in the Bible and prayer. Take notice of the low and earthly notions of pleasure and happiness, which everywhere prevail, among young and old,—among rich and poor. Mark well these things,—and then think quietly over this question:—“What would these people do in heaven?”

You and I, it may be said, know little about heaven. Our notions of heaven may be very dim and indistinct. But at all events, I suppose we are agreed in thinking that heaven is a very holy place,—that God is there,—and Christ is there,—and saints and angels are there,—that sin is not there in any shape,—and that nothing is said, thought, or done, which God does not like. Only let this be granted, and then I think there can be no doubt the great majority of people around us are as little fit for heaven as a bird for swimming beneath the sea, or a fish for living upon dry land.⁸

And what is it they need in order to make them fit to enjoy heaven? They need to be regenerated or born again. It is not a little changing and outward amendment they require. It is not merely the putting a restraint on raging passions and the quieting of unruly affections. All this is not enough. Old

⁸ “Tell me, thou that in holy duties, grudgest at every word that is spoken;—that thinkest every summons to the public worship as unpleasant as the sound of thy passing bell; that sayest, ‘when will the Sabbath be gone, and the ordinances be over?’ What wilt thou do in heaven? What shall such an unholy heart do there, where a Sabbath shall be as long as eternity itself; where there shall be nothing but holy duties; and where there shall not be a spare minute, so much as for a vain thought, or an idle word? What wilt thou do in heaven, where, whatsoever thou shalt hear, see, or converse with, all is holy? And by how much more perfect the holiness of heaven is than that of the saints on earth, by so much the more irksome and intolerable would it be to wicked men,—for if they cannot endure the weak light of a star, how will they be able to endure the dazzling light of the sun itself?”—*Bishop Hopkins*.

age,—the want of opportunity for indulgence,—the fear of man, may produce all this. The tiger is still a tiger, even when he is chained; and the serpent is still a serpent, even when he lies motionless and coiled up. The alteration needed is far greater and deeper. They must every one have a new nature put within them. They must every one be made new creatures. The fountain head must be purified. The root must be set right. Each one wants a new heart and a new will. The change required is not that of the snake when he casts his skin, and yet remains a reptile still. It is the change of the caterpillar when he dies, and his crawling life ceases, but from his body rises the butterfly,—a new animal, with a new nature.

All this, and nothing less, is required. Well says the Homily of Good Works, “They be as much dead to God that lack faith, as those are to the world that lack souls.”

The plain truth is, the vast proportion of professing Christians in the world have nothing whatever of Christianity, except the name. The reality of Christianity, the graces, the experience, the faith, the hopes, the life, the conflict, the tastes, the hungering and thirsting after righteousness,—all these are things of which they know nothing at all. They need to be converted as truly as any among the Gentiles to whom Paul preached, and to be turned from idols, and renewed in the spirit of their minds, as really, if not as literally. And one main part of the message which should be continually delivered to the greater portion of every congregation on earth, is this, “Ye must be born again.” I write this down deliberately. I know it will sound dreadful and uncharitable in many ears. But I ask any one to take the New Testament in his hand and see what it says is Christianity, and compare that with the ways of professing Christians, and then deny the truth of what I have written, if he can.

And now let every one who reads these pages remember this grand principle of Scriptural religion, “No salvation without Regeneration,—no spiritual life without a new birth,—no heaven without a new heart.”

Think not for a moment that the subject of this tract is a mere matter of controversy,—an empty question for learned men to argue about, but not one that concerns you. Away with such an idea for ever! It concerns you deeply. It touches your own natural interests. It is a thing that you must know for yourself, feel for yourself, and experience for yourself, if you would ever be saved. No soul of man, woman, or child, will ever enter heaven without having been born again.⁹

⁹ “Make sure to yourselves this great change. It is no notion that I have now preached unto you. Your natures and your lives must be changed, or, believe it, you will be found at the last day under the wrath of God. For God will not change or alter the word that is gone out of his mouth. He hath said it,—Christ, who is the truth and word of God, hath pronounced

And think not for one moment that this Regeneration is a change which people may go through after they are dead, though they never went through it while they were alive. Away with such a notion for ever! Now or never is the only time to be saved. Now, in this world of toil and labour,—of money-getting and business,—now you must be prepared for heaven, if you are ever to be prepared at all. Now is the only time to be justified, now the only time to be sanctified, and now the only time to be born again. So sure as the Bible is true, the man who dies without these three things, will only rise again at the last day to be lost for ever.

You may be saved, and reach heaven without many things which men reckon of great importance,—without riches, without learning, without books, without worldly comforts, without health, without house, without land, without friends;—but *without Regeneration you will never be saved at all*. Without your natural birth you would never have lived, and moved, and read this book on earth;—without a new birth you will never live and move in heaven. I bless God that the saints in glory will be a multitude that no man can number. I comfort myself with the thought that, after all, there will be “much people” in heaven. But this I know and am persuaded of from God’s word, that of all who reach heaven, there will not be one single individual who has not been born again.¹⁰

“Are you born again?” I say to every one whose eye is upon this page. Once more I repeat what I have already said, “No salvation without a new birth.”

III. Let me in the third place point out *the marks of being Regenerate, or born again*.

It is a most important thing to have clear and distinct views on this part of the subject we are considering. You have seen what Regeneration is, and why it is necessary to salvation. The next step is to find out the signs and evidences by which a man may know whether he is born again or not,—whether his heart has been changed by the Holy Spirit, or whether his change is yet to come.

Now these signs and evidences are laid down plainly for us in Scripture.

it,—that without the new birth, or regeneration, no man shall inherit the kingdom of God.”—*Bishop Hopkins*, 1670.

¹⁰ “Regeneration, or the new birth is of absolute necessity unto eternal life. There is no other change simply necessary, but only this. If thou art poor, thou mayest so continue, and yet be saved. If thou art despised, thou mayest so continue, and yet be saved. If thou art unlearned, thou mayest so continue, and yet be saved. Only one change is necessary. If thou art wicked and ungodly and continuest so, Christ, who hath the keys of heaven, who shutteth and no man openeth, hath himself doomed thee, that thou shalt in no wise enter into the kingdom of God.” —*Bishop Hopkins*. 1670.

God has not left us in ignorance on this point. He foresaw how some would torture themselves with doubts and questionings, and would never believe it was well with their souls. He foresaw how others would take it for granted they were regenerate who had no right to do so at all. He has therefore mercifully provided us with a test and gauge of our spiritual condition in the First Epistle general of St. John. There He has written for our learning, what the regenerate man is, and what the regenerate man does,—his ways, his habits, his manner of life, his faith, his experience. Every one who wishes to possess the key to a right understanding of this subject, should thoroughly study this First Epistle of St. John.

Reader, I invite your particular attention to these marks and evidences of Regeneration, while I try to set them before you in order. Forget everything else in this volume, if you will, but do not forget this part of it. I might easily mention other evidences besides those I am about to mention. But I will not do so. I would rather confine myself to the First Epistle of St. John, because of the peculiar explicitness of its statements about the man that is born of God. He that hath an ear let him hear what the beloved Apostle says about the marks of Regeneration.

1. First of all, St. John says, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;” and again, “Whosoever is born of God sinneth not.” (1 John iii. 9; v. 18.)

A regenerate man *does not commit sin as a habit*. He no longer sins with his heart and will, and whole inclination, as an unregenerate man does. There was probably a time when he did not think whether his actions were sinful or not, and never felt grieved after doing evil. There was no quarrel between him and sin;—they were friends. Now he hates sin, flees from it, fights against it, counts it his greatest plague, groans under the burden of its presence, mourns when he falls under its influence, and longs to be delivered from it altogether. In one word, sin no longer pleases him, nor is even a matter of indifference: it has become the abominable thing which he hates. He cannot prevent it dwelling within him. “If he said he had no sin, there would be no truth in him;” (1 John i. 8.) but he can say that he cordially abhors it, and the great desire of his soul is not to commit sin at all. He cannot prevent bad thoughts arising within him, and short-comings, omissions, and defects appearing, both in his words and actions. He knows, as St. James says, that “In many things we offend all.” (James iii. 2.) But he can say truly, and as in the sight of God, that these things are a daily grief and sorrow to him, and that his whole nature does not consent unto them, as that of the unregenerate man does.

Reader, I place this mark before you. What would the Apostle say about

you? Are you born of God?¹¹

2. Secondly,—St. John says, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” (1 John v. 1.)

A regenerate man believes that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour by whom his soul can be pardoned and redeemed; that He is the divine person appointed and anointed by God the Father for this very purpose, and that beside Him there is no Saviour at all. In himself he sees nothing but unworthiness, but in Christ he sees ground for the fullest confidence, and trusting in Him, he believes that his sins are all forgiven and his iniquities all put away. He believes that for the sake of Christ’s finished work and death upon the cross, he is reckoned righteous in God’s sight, and may look forward to death and judgment without alarm. He may have his doubts and fears. He may sometimes tell you he feels as if he had no faith at all. But ask him whether he is willing to trust in anything instead of Christ, and see what he will say. Ask him whether he will rest his hopes of eternal life on his own goodness, his own amendments, his prayers, his minister, his doings in Church and out of Church, either in whole or in part, and see what he will reply. Ask him whether he will give up Christ, and place his confidence in any other way of salvation. Depend upon it he would say, that though he does feel weak and bad, he would not give up Christ for all the world. Depend upon it he would say he found a preciousness in Christ, a suitableness to his own soul in Christ that he found nowhere else, and that he must cling to Him.

Reader, I place this mark also before you. What would the Apostle say about you? Are you born of God?

3. Thirdly, St. John says, “Every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.” (1 John ii. 29.)

The regenerate man is a *holy man*. He endeavours to live according to God’s will, to do the things that please God, to avoid the things that God hates. His aim and desire is to love God with heart and soul, and mind and strength, and to love his neighbour as himself. His wish is to be continually looking to Christ as his example as well as his Saviour, and to show himself Christ’s friend by doing whatsoever Christ commands. No doubt he is not perfect. None will tell you that sooner than himself. He groans under the

¹¹ “The interpretation of this place that I judge to be the most natural and unforced, is this: ‘He that is born of God doth not commit sin:’ that is, he doth not sin in that malignant manner in which the children of the devil do: he doth not make a trade of sin, nor live in the constant and allowed practice of it—There is a great difference betwixt regenerate and unregenerate persons in the very sins that they commit. All indeed sin; but a child of God cannot sin, that is, though he doth sin, yet he cannot sin after such a manner as wicked and unregenerate men do.”—*Bishop Hopkins*. 1670.

burden of indwelling corruption, cleaving to him. He finds an evil principle within him constantly warring against grace, and trying to draw him away from God. But he does not consent to it, though he cannot prevent its presence. In spite of all short-comings, the average bent and bias of his ways is holy,—his doings holy,—his tastes holy,—and his habits holy. In spite of all his swerving and turning aside, like a ship beating up against a contrary wind, the general course of his life is in one direction,—toward God and for God. And though he may sometimes feel so low that he questions whether he is a Christian at all, in his calmer moments he will generally be able to say with old John Newton, “I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to be, I am not what I hope to be in another world, but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am.”¹²

Reader, I place this mark also before you. What' would the Apostle say about you? Are you born of God?

4. Fourthly,—St. John says, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” (1 John iii. 14.)

A regenerate man *has a special love for all true disciples of Christ*. Like his Father in heaven, he loves all men with a great general love, but he has a special love for those who are of one mind with himself. Like his Lord and Saviour, he loves the worst of sinners, and could weep over them; but he has a peculiar love for those who are believers. He is never so much at home as when he is in their company. He is never so happy as when he is among the saints and the excellent of the earth. Others may value learning, or cleverness, or agreeableness, or riches, or rank, in the society they choose. The regenerate man values grace. Those who have most grace, and are most like Christ, are those he loves most. He feels that they are members of the same family with himself, his brethren, his sisters, children of the same Father. He feels that they are fellow-soldiers fighting under the same captain, warring against the same enemy. He feels that they are his fellow-travellers, journeying along the same road, tried by the same difficulties, and soon about to rest with him in the same eternal home. He understands them, and they understand him. There is a kind of spiritual freemasonry between them. He and they may be very different in many ways,—in rank, in station, in wealth. What matter? They are Jesus Christ's people. They are his Father's sons and daughters. Then he cannot help loving them.

Reader, I place this mark also before you. What would the Apostle say

¹² “Let none conclude that they have no grace, because they have many imperfections in their obedience. Thy grace may be very weak and imperfect, and yet thou mayest be truly born again to God, and be a genuine son and heir of heaven.”—*Bishop Hopkins*. 1670.

about you? Are you born of God?

5. Fifthly,—St. John says, “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.” (1 John v. 4.)

A regenerate man *does not make the world's opinion his rule of right and wrong*. He does not mind going against the stream of the world's ways, notions, and customs. “What will men say,” is no longer a turning point with him. He overcomes the love of the world. He finds no pleasure in things which most around him call happiness. He cannot enjoy their enjoyments:—they weary him:—they appear to him vain, unprofitable, and unworthy of an immortal being. He overcomes the fear of the world. He is content to do many things which all around him think unnecessary, to say the least. They blame him:—it does not move him. They ridicule him;—he does not give way. He loves the praise of God more than the praise of man. He fears offending Him more than giving offence to man. He has counted the cost. He has taken his stand. It is a small thing with him now whether he is blamed or praised. His eye is upon Him that is invisible. Him he is resolved to follow whithersoever he goeth. It may be necessary in this following to come out from the world and be separate. The regenerate man will not shrink from doing so. Tell him that he is unlike other people, that his views are not the views of society generally, and that he is making himself singular and peculiar. You will not shake him. He is no longer the servant of fashion and custom. To please the world is quite a secondary consideration with him. His first aim is to please God.

Reader, I place this mark also before you. What would the Apostle say about you? Are you born of God?

6. Sixthly,—St. John says, “He that is begotten of God keepeth himself.” (1 John v. 18.)

A regenerate man is *very careful of his own soul*. He endeavours not only to keep clear of sin, but also to keep clear of everything which may lead to it. He is careful about the company he keeps. He feels that evil communications corrupt the heart, and that evil is far more catching than good, just as disease is more infectious than health. He is careful about the employment of his time;—his chief desire about it is to spend it profitably. He is careful about the books he reads;— he fears getting his mind poisoned by mischievous writings. He is careful about the friendships he forms:—it is not enough for him that people are kind, and amiable, and good-natured:—all this is very well; but will they do good to his soul? He is careful over his own daily habits and behaviour:—he tries to recollect that his own heart is deceitful, and that the world is full of wickedness, that the devil is always labouring to do him

harm, and therefore he would fain be always on his guard. He desires to live like a soldier in an enemy's country, to wear his armour continually, and to be prepared for temptation. He finds by experience that his soul is ever among enemies, and he studies to be a watchful, humble, prayerful man.

Reader, I place this mark also before you. What would the Apostle say to you? Are you born of God?

Such are the six great marks of Regeneration, which God has given for our learning. Let every one who has gone so far with me, read them over with attention, and lay them to heart. I believe they were written with the view to settle the great question of the present day, and intended to prevent disputes. Once more then, I ask the reader to mark and consider them.

I know there is a vast difference in the depth and distinctness of these marks among those who are regenerate. In some people they are faint, dim, feeble, and hardly to be discerned. You almost need a microscope to make them out. In others they are bold, sharp, clear, plain, and unmistakeable, so that he who runs may read them. Some of these marks are more visible in some people, and others are more visible in others. It seldom happens that all are equally manifest in one and the same soul. All this I am quite ready to allow.

But still after every allowance, here we find boldly painted the six marks of being born of God. Here are certain positive things laid down by St. John, as parts of the regenerate man's character, as plainly and distinctly as the features of a man's face. Here is an inspired Apostle writing one of the last general Epistles to the Church of Christ, telling us that a man born of God does not commit sin,—believes that Jesus is the Christ,—doeth righteousness,—loves the brethren,—overcomes the world, and keepeth himself. And more than once in the very same Epistle when these marks are mentioned, the Apostle tells us that he who has not this or that mark, is "not of God." I ask the reader to observe all this.

Now what shall we say to these things? What they can say who hold that Regeneration is only an admission to outward Church privileges, I am sure I do not know. For myself I say boldly, I can only come to one conclusion. That conclusion is, that those persons only are regenerate who have these six marks about them, and that all men and women who have not these marks, are not regenerate, are not born again. And I firmly believe that this is the conclusion to which the Apostle wished us to come.

Reader, *have you these marks?* I know not what your opinions may be on this much-disputed subject of Regeneration. I know not on which side you may rank yourself. But once for all I warn you, if you find nothing in yourself answering to the marks I have been speaking of, you have reason indeed to

be afraid. Without these marks it is vain to fancy you are Scripturally regenerate. The witness of the Apostle John is clear and express that you are not. There must be a certain family likeness between God and His children. Without it you are none of His. There must be some visible evidence of the Spirit being within you, as plain as the stamp upon gold and silver, however small. Without this evidence you are only boasting of a false gift. Show me thy faith without thy works, said the Apostle James, when he wrote against those who are content with a dead faith. Show me thy Regeneration without its fruits, is an argument that ought to be pressed home on many a conscience in the present day.

Reader, *if you have not these marks*, awake to a sense of your danger. Arise from your sleep of indifference and unconcern. Know the immense peril of hell and eternal misery in which you stand. Begin to use diligently every means by which God is ordinarily pleased to give grace to men's hearts, when they have not received it in their youth. Be diligent in hearing the Gospel preached. Be diligent in reading the Bible. Be diligent, above all, in prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

If you take this course, I have every hope for you. None ever sought the Lord Jesus Christ in simplicity and sincerity, and sought in vain.

If, on the contrary, you refuse to take this course, and will continue as you are, I have little hope for you, and many fears. If the Bible be true, you are not yet born again. You will not use the most likely means to obtain this mighty blessing. What can I say but this, "the Lord have mercy upon your soul!"

Reader, *if you have these marks* I have been speaking of, be advised, and strive every year to make them more clear and plain. Let your repentance be a growing habit,—your faith an increasing faith,—your holiness a progressive holiness,—your victory over the world a more decided victory,—your love to the brethren a more hearty love,—your watchfulness over yourself a more jealous watchfulness. Take this advice, and you will never repent it. This is the way to be useful and happy in your religion. This is the way to put to silence the opposition of the enemies of truth. Let others, if they will, have Regeneration on their tongues, and nowhere else. Let it be your care to have it shining forth in your life, and to feel it in your heart.

Reader, I commend what I have been saying to your serious consideration. I believe that I have told you nothing but what is God's truth. You live in a day of gross darkness on the subject of Regeneration. Thousands are darkening God's counsel by confounding baptism and Regeneration. Beware of this. Keep the two subjects separate in your mind. Get clear views about Regeneration first of all, and then you are not likely to fall into mistakes about baptism. And when you have got clear views hold them fast, and never let

them go.

I remain,
Your affectionate friend,
J. C. RYLE.

* * * The reader who wishes to ascertain the true view of the Church of England on the doctrine of Regeneration, is referred to the Author's larger Work on the subject, where he will find the point fully discussed, and the objections commonly raised against the statements of the preceding pages fully considered.