

The Canadian Evangelist.

"GO . . . SPEAK . . . TO THE PEOPLE ALL THE WORDS OF THIS LIFE."

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THE Canadian Evangelist

is devoted to the furtherance of the Gospel of Christ; and pleads for the union of all believers in the Lord Jesus in harmony with his own prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, and on the basis set forth by the Apostle Paul in the following terms: "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all."—Eph. iv. 1-6.

John iii. 5 Again.

MR. EDITOR,—Since Jesus declares, *except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*, it becomes of infinite importance to each individual that he understand in his own experience the exact import of these words.

As Jesus taught largely by metaphor His meaning can often be ascertained only by comparing, and sometimes combining "spiritual things with spiritual." He also suited His teaching to the circumstances and capacity of His hearers, so that when the moral Nicodemus was before Him, trusting to his outward ablutions, he was given to understand that the principle of purity must be implanted in his heart. When the Samaritan women came to perform her tiresome task, Jesus said to her "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee 'Give me to drink,' thou wouldst have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water." Did not Jesus mean that He would give her power to enter the kingdom? And is that not equivalent to being born of water and the Spirit? "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood ye have no life in you." The very moment that the soul begins to assimilate the flesh and blood of the Son of Man, that moment is he born of water and the Spirit and into the kingdom. The fountain opened to the house of David for sin and for uncleanness is also appointed for sustenance.

E. S. says, in speaking of the new birth, "This great change is effected by God. It is effected by God through the agency of the Holy Spirit, begetting in us a new life. The agency of the Holy Spirit in this great renovation is through the instrumentality of the word." Then he quotes the appropriate passages and almost immediately goes on to state that "in not one of those passages is it said 'by the word and Spirit.'" What difference can it make whether the Spirit is mentioned or not so long as His work is so clearly implied. He says further "The work of the Holy Spirit and the power of the truth He has made known are not used as the complements of one another but are used interchangeably by Christ and his Apostles." This is real sound doctrine. It might be said that the work of the Spirit and the power of the truth are identical; nevertheless the Holy Spirit Himself and the truth, or word, are entirely different from each other. The Word of God is called the Sword of the Spirit. When we hear of people being slain by the sword it is always understood that some one has used the sword, so when we read that the word of God is "quick and powerful" we understand that when it is so, the Spirit is always using it.

The question is asked in Psalm cxix.

"Where withal shall a young man cleanse his way?" and the answer is, "By taking heed thereto according to Thy word." The washing of water by the word plainly implies the cleansing away of moral and spiritual defilement by the application of the word to the heart and conscience, just as the application of water cleanses from bodily filth.

Immersion in water gives a very clear idea of a burial and resurrection, but there is nothing in it that has the remotest resemblance to a birth, which very term suggests the necessity of sharing the nature of that which bears.

I do not agree with the writer that this was the last command that Jesus gave just before He ascended upon high. The way I read my Bible Jesus' last command to his disciples was to wait at Jerusalem until He would baptize them with the Holy Ghost. After that they were to be witnesses of Him. We have on inspired account that Jesus gave them any command to baptize in water; He merely confirmed what John had stated at the commencement of his own ministry, "I indeed baptize you with water but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." What is quoted as Mark xvi. 16 was never written by Mark, and the probability is that it was never written at all till after the Book of Inspiration was closed, as it is not found in either of the two oldest Greek manuscripts.

The words and acts of Jesus cannot contradict each other. How could He then have instructed Peter that baptism was for the remission of sins and afterwards prove it false by remitting the sins of Cornelius and his household and bringing them into the kingdom, before they were baptized in water? They must else have been born of water and the Spirit or they could not have entered. Again, the Samaritans under the preaching of Philip believed and were baptized, but did not get into the kingdom until some time afterwards, consequently were not, at their baptism, born of water and the Spirit. It is idle to argue that he had one way for the Jews, another for the Gentiles, and still another for the Samaritans. The Lord's ways are not unequal and His words must stand: **FAKCT A MAN BE BORN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT HE CANNOT ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

It is because the subject of the new birth is of such vital importance that we desire to give the passage we have under consideration a thorough examination.

While it is true that by comparing spiritual things with spiritual we can best understand the Word of God, it is also true that by "combining" and mixing the figurative language used by Christ and his inspired servants we can most effectually confuse and mislead ourselves and others as is the case in the foregoing communication.

For instance it is assumed that our Saviour "suited His teaching"—that is, employed the metaphor of a birth in his conversation with Nicodemus because he was "trusting to his outward ablutions." As we stated in a previous article, we fail either to convey our own meaning or to understand the meaning of another if we disregard the points of resemblance between the figure used and the truth we wish to convey by it.

Horne, in his "Introduction to the Bible," says: "that we inquire in what respects the things compared and that with which it is compared respectively agree, and also in what respects they have any affinity or resemblance."

Now it would be reasonable to expect

that if Christ regarded Nicodemus as a man trusting to his outward ablutions that He would have used a metaphor of moral purification; but if on the other hand (as we conceive was the case) He viewed this ruler of the Jews as an Israelite, expecting to receive every spiritual blessing that any teacher sent from God would communicate because he was born of Abraham, then the figure of speech which Christ used would be quite appropriate. That this was the ruling thought in the mind of Nicodemus seems probable from what is said of the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to John the Baptist for baptism, for he warns them that they must bring forth fruits meet for repentance, for it was not a sufficient ground for salvation that Abraham was their father. This same dependence upon Abraham lineage was shown by the Jews who said to Christ, "We be Abraham's seed and were never in bondage to any man, how sayest thou 'Ye shall be made free?'"

Now how likely it is that Nicodemus had this same feeling and that Jesus should undecieve him by the assurance that in order to enter the Kingdom of God he must have a spiritual birth, and be of those believers of whom it is said, "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

But the objection is here raised that there is nothing in baptism "that has the remotest resemblance to a birth." We beg to differ. One of the most intelligent and faithful candidates that the writer has been privileged to baptize was a brother who was convinced that only immersion is baptism by the words of Christ in the metaphor we are seeking to explain. Sprinkling and pouring give no idea of a birth but coming up out of the water does.

What next? "The fountain opened to the house of Israel for sin and for uncleanness is also appointed for sustenance." Turn to the passage, dear reader, in Zech. xiii. and let verse, and, if you can find anything about "sustenance" in it, the writer cannot, even with his eye-glasses on.

But fortunately "E. S." is right and sound in the faith when he asserts that the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word He has inspired are used interchangeably and not the one as the complement of the other. Is it not strange, then, that our reviewer in conceding this does not see that also gives up *de facto* the whole issue involved in her previous article, in which her interpretation of "born of the water and the Spirit" is that the water means the Word, thus making the Word and the Spirit one the complement of the other.

It is true that the Word of God is, in Eph. vi. 17, called the Sword of the Spirit. How preconceptions blind the mind! In the words we are reviewing we are told that whenever any one is slain by the sword that it is the Spirit that is using it. In the one passage referred to, while the Word is said to be sharper than any two-edged sword and "quick and powerful," nothing is said about anyone being slain by it. In the other passage it is the deliverer who is called upon to take the Sword of the Spirit that with all prayer and supplication, in the Spirit, he may be able to

stand firm against his spiritual enemies; repel their attacks and valiantly fight the good fight of faith.

Now follows what we are sorry either to publish or to answer, as there are many statements so utterly at variance with divine truth that our readers, who hold that truth sacred, will be pained to read them.

"We have no inspired account that Jesus gave them (the Apostles) any command to baptize in water." Saying nothing about the commission as recorded in Mark, what about its record in Matthew? "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

No sophistry can set aside the fact that this command was, if the New Testament is authoritative, given to the Apostles. No ingenuity can invent even the shadow of a plea that the Apostles could baptize in the Holy Spirit; this wonderful miracle was only possible with God the Father and with Jesus Christ the Son of God, while the testimony of the inspired word shows that it was in water that the converts were baptized, as in the case of the blessed Lord Himself.

It is assumed in this self-contradicting article, that if Christ instructed the Apostle Peter that baptism was for the remission of sins and afterwards forgave the sins of Cornelius and his household without baptism that the Saviour contradicted Himself.

On the day of Pentecost Peter spoke as the Spirit gave him utterance. This special and wonderful dispensation of the Spirit was to bring all things to the remembrance of the disciples; it was to guide them into all truth and to glorify Christ; and these are the authoritative words spoken on this auspicious occasion: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

An angel appeared to Cornelius and told him to send for Peter who "shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." And instead of telling him that because the Holy Spirit had fallen on them to convince Peter that God would receive the Gentiles, that they had no need for water baptism—he gives it as a reason why they should be baptized—"Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"

Our correspondent is authoritative! "The Samaritans under the preaching of Philip believed and were baptized, but did not enter the kingdom until some time afterwards, consequently were not born of water and the Spirit." In the name of reason and Scriptural teaching what does the writer mean? Is it that they were not born of God because they had not had the gift of the Spirit imparted to them until Peter and John went to them? The record is that they "believed." The declaration of one of those who laid hands upon them is, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God"; while Paul tells the Galatian believers that it is because they are sons that God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts crying Abba, Father; not to make them sons, but

because they are sons; while Peter in the words before quoted says, repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; that is after their sins are remitted.

But enough. It is, indeed, very much to be lamented that in order to establish a popular theory that virtually sets aside the authority of our blessed Saviour so many parts of the Word of God have to be strained, set aside, or absolutely denied. One of these popular dogmas is that baptism is a non-essential, and may be changed in regard to both subject and action or omitted altogether. Oh how much better; how much safer; how much more loyal to our Lord and Master both to do and teach His commandments as He has given them to us.

Walkerton. E. SHEPPARD.

The Bible in Poetry.

A writer in the *Century Magazine*, speaking of Tennyson, says:

"It is safe to say that there is no other book which has had so great an influence upon the literature of the world as the Bible. And it is almost as safe . . . to say that there is no other literature which has felt this influence so deeply or shown it so clearly as the English. We hear the echo of its speech everywhere, and the music of its familiar phrases haunts all the fields and groves of our fine literature. It is not only to the theologians and the sermon makers that we look for Biblical allusions and quotations. We often find the very best and most vivid of them in writers professedly secular. Poets like Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth; novelists like Scott and romancers like Hawthorne; essayists like Bacon, Steele, and Addison; critics of life, unsystematic philosophers like Carlyle and Ruskin—all draw upon the Bible as a treasury of illustrations and use it as a book equally familiar to themselves and their readers. It is impossible to put too high a value upon such a univereal volume, even as a purely literary possession. It forms a bond of sympathy between the most cultivated and the simplest of the people."

As to Tennyson in particular, it has been found that there are nearly three hundred direct references to the Bible in his poems. Readers of the poet will readily recall the more striking of these and will not need to be reminded how much, both in thought and diction, the famous laureate owes to his sympathetic acquaintance with the Bible. "And yet," says the *Australian Christian World*, "from our Victorian State Schools this book is rigidly excluded, and from some of the noblest productions of our great writers, placed in the reading-books of those schools, the name has been erased of that God from whose Word they obtained an inspiration for their noblest utterances. Could any step be more likely to belittle the thought and sentiment of the coming generation?"

Trouble and perplexity drive us to prayer, and prayer drives away trouble and perplexity.—P. Melancthon.