THE NEW BIRTH.

REV. W. H RICHAN.

"Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God" JOHN, 3:5.

Nicodemus was an eminent man—a member of the great national council of the Jews. He was also a humble an earnest seeker after truth, and wise enough to seek for information from the only infallible source. Jesus was a poor and despised man, but he taught as man never taught. Nicodemus was convinced that he was a teacher come from God, and although he had not yet the courage to identify himself with the followers of the Nazarene, he was willing to sit at his feet as a learner. The first lesson was a very difficult one, and so different from anything he had ever heard before that he had to ask in amazement, "How can these things be?" The doctrine of the new birth was new and startling, and it is even now a mystery to many wise and prudent, but revealed unto babes. The Kingdom of God includes all the saved; and as there is no salvation beyond its limits, it should be the highest ambition of every soul to be enrolled amongst the subjects. Every person who has any regard for his eternal interests must see the importance of the Saviour's injunction, "seek first the Kingdom of God," Matt. 6:33. But a great change is essential to admission, "Ye must be born again." Let us consider. 1. The necessity of the New Birth. 2. Its nature. 3. The instrumentality and the agent, whereby it is effected. This change is necessary because by natural birth we are sinners. We belong to a degenerate race. All the streams of human blood were polluted at the fountain head. Human nature is depraved. "So then they that are in the flesh," i. e. is in a state of nature "cannot please God," Rom. 8:8. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh," and such it will remain. It may be cultivated, refined, and adorned, but it is flesh still, and "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God," 1 Cor. 15:50. You may cultivate a thorn bush and make it very different from what it once was, but you cannot change it into a grapevine. "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles," "Marvel not, that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." 2. Let us consider the nature of the change. It is the beginning of a new life. "You hath he quickened who were dead," Eph. 2:1. It is the reception of a new nature. "That ye might be partakers of the divine nature," 2 Pet. 1:4. It is a new creation. "For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus," Eph. 2:10. "Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature," 2 Cor. 5:17. It is not the cultivation or improvement of the old carnal nature. That will be brought into subjection, but remain ever the same as to its moral character. When the Israelites took possession of Canaan, they did not destroy all the inhabitants, but allowed many to live who became thorns in their sides, sometimes almost getting the mastery and sometimes being subdued. There was continual conflict. It is just so in the newborn subjects of the Kingdom. There are new principles, feelings, desires, hopes, aspirations, affections, and purposes. There are also, the remains of the old nature. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts," Gal. 5:24. "Our old man is crucified with him," Rom. 6:6. But the *old man* dies hard. Crucifixion is a lingering death. The victim lives long after he is nailed to the cross. Consequently those who have been born into the Kingdom still have the experience of Paul recorded in Rom. 7. It is true that the beloved John says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin," 1 John 3:9. But surely Paul was a child of God, when he had the experience of Rom. 7, in which he confesses his sinfulness. Is there then a contradiction between these two saints? Let Paul explain himself. "Now it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me that is in my flesh dwelleth no good thing," ver. 17-18. "I delight in the law of God after the *inward man*. But I see another law in my members," ver. 22-23. "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin," ver. 25. There are two men in the same individual "The old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" and the "new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," Eph 4:22-24. The latter "doth not commit sin." But if we are the children of God, ultimate and complete victory over sin is assured. "Now are we the sons of God and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is," 1 John 3:2.

3. Let us consider the instrumentality and the agent. These are "water and the Spirit." Is this word water to be understood literally? If so it must refer to baptism, the subject of which is thereby made "a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." But the Bible teaches no such doctrine. Elsewhere we are expressly told how the new birth is effected. Peter speaks of the children of God as "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever," 1 Pet. 1:23. James says, "Of his own will begat he us with the *word of truth*." Paul writes to the churches of Galatia, "Ye are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." According to these three passages the Word of God is evidently the instrument employed in regeneration. In the last one *faith* only is mentioned, but we know that "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." And as water used as a symbol of the Word? Let us see. In Is. 55 we have the gospel invitation "Ho, every one that thirsteth come ye to the *waters*. . . . Incline your ear and come unto me, hear, and your soul shall live. . . . . For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven and returneth not thither, but waereth the earth. . . . So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth." In the first Psalm the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, is likened to a "tree planted by the rivers of water." "There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God," Pss. 46:4

"That sacred stream, thy holy word
Supports our faith, our fear controls."
—Watts.

In Ezekiel 36, God having promised the restoration of his chosen people thus addresses them, ver. 25, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you." Can this be baptism, or the application of any material water which possesses such cleansing efficacy? Or have we here an emblem of the Word? It is said of the Messiah "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth," Ps. 72:6. And he himself said to his disciples, "Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you," John 15:3. "Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it with the washing of water with the Word." Eph. 5:26. "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit which that believed on him were to receive;" John 7:28-29. How wonderfully this word was verified on the day of Pentecost. "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." There flowed out from them rivers of living words. The Spirit does not operate apart from the Word. "He shall guide you into all the truth for he shall not speak from himself but whatsoever things he shall hear that shall he speak, and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine and declare it unto you," John 16:13-14.

From these considerations it appears plain that the work of regeneration is effected by the Word applied to the heart by the Spirit. But to make this matter still plainer, Jesus presents to Nicodemus the very "marrow and fatness" of that gospel which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. In the 14, 15, 16 verses he presents himself as the Son of God given to save a perishing world and as the son of man to be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is begotten of God," 1 John 5:1.

A TRUE IDEAL OF EDUCATION.

Founder's Day Address at McMaster University.

Rev. P K Dayfoot, M. A., Port Hope, Ont.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Faculty, Fellow-Students and Friends:

I am to speak to you tonight on a true Ideal of Education. Does this topic seem threadbare and worn with age? then let the great importance of the subject be the plea that will justify its choice.

Looking back along the line of history, I find that in every nation that has attained to any preeminence in civilization, there has been an educational system of some sort. Even in Egypt which was one of the oldest, if not the very oldest, of the ancient empires, there was an educational system so thoroughly organised that it could be said of Moses, 1500 years before Christ, that he was trained in all the learning of the Egyptians; and when God wanted a statesman to give laws to his people, it was not some wandering and unlettered shepherd but this Egyptian-trained lawyer, whom He appointed, ordained and commissioned to assume the office and perform the task.

I find also that these educational systems were centred about certain ideals to which the systems themselves were conformed, and for the securing of which the educational methods were directed. A few examples will illustrate:

In the Confucian system which prevails today in China, the whole aim of education is the Civil Service. There is no country where students are more diligent or painstaking, or where a larger number present themselves at the triannual examinations, but the one thought of each and every candidate is that the obtaining of a degree will be the passport to one of the many offices in the gift of the government.

The system of which Buddha was the founder had in view not the uplifting but the annihilation of the individual. Life, according to his teaching is only evil continually; and the supreme purpose of all effort should be the blotting out of personality and the sinking of existence in undisturbed Nirvana, absolute quietude, and self effacement.

The Grecian idea was more material and more practical. There the State was everything and the citizen existed only for the State. For the State he was born, for the State he lived, for the State he died. Living or dying he belonged to the State.

The Roman thought was military. Rome went for the conquering and to conquer. One by one the countries surrendered to Roman arms until the City of the Tiber ruled the world. It was natural then that to the Roman the one object of life should be conquest, and the ideal man should be the soldier. To this end was Roman education. To march and countermarch, to stand in the cohorts and handle the pilum and the sword, this was the ambition of every Roman lad.

These ideals so far as they went, were praiseworthy. The Civil Service needs trained officials. The repression of the individual is wise and safe. Citizenship in any state is important. Conquest is worth striving for in any department of life. But the weakness of all these systems is their one-sidedness. They are all of them partial in their application, and all of them together would not produce anything more than a man entirely earthly in aim and method of life. There is in them nothing of aspiration or upreaching. There is in them no recognition of anything higher or nobler than the powers of this world, and in the case of Buddhism there is a shrinking from even these, and a desire to find refuge in complete forgetfulness. But any system of education that is to be world-wide in its application, that is to make for the highest good of the state and for the truest development of the individual, must include all that these systems included and more. What then is a true ideal of Education? It is the cultivation of the whole being of the student so as to develop the very best of which every student is capable bodily, mentally and spiritually.

Nothing less than this will be a true ideal of cultivation, and this ideal if realised will satisfy all the demands of society, the state and the individual.

Have we any pattern or model to which we may conform in our pursuit of this ideal? Certainly. Long ago there lived in Palestine a man who was the embodiment of human nature in its highest form. Physically he was perfect, being free from all taint of disease and all bodily weakness. Mentally he was marvellously keen, intuitively perceiving the truth of all questions however shrouded in the fog of casuistry, without going through the slow process of argumentation. Spiritually he was so highly developed that he lived and moved and had his being in a region to which the saintliest of all ages have never reached even by the most arduous toil. Here then is an example of the very best of which human nature is capable, and here is the incarnate ideal to which every true system of Education will strive to attain.

It will be evident then that the education for which I plead is christian education. We hear much in these days of a rallying cry "back to Christ".

Whatever this may mean in Theology it certainly is true in Education, and the truest system will be that which produces the most Christ-like character.

If this definition is valid, it will bear the test of being applied to details. Can we teach Mathematics in this spirit? Why not? What are the Binonial Theorem and the Differential Calculus and the Laws of Kepler but the methods by which Christ wrought when he made the worlds?

Can Science be so taught? Assuredly. What are we doing when we study Geology but, as Hugh Miller expressed it, walking in the "footprints of the Creator?" and what is the Science of Astronomy but as one said as he sat at his telescope, the "thinking of God's thoughts after him?"

Can we teach Philosophy thus? Yes verily; and only as it is thus taught, will Philosophy have any profit. Vinet, the Swiss theologian and philosopher, declares that Philosophy is concerned about three questions—Whence? How? Whither? Has Philosophy by searching found an answer to these? Let the speculations, the theorisings, the disputings of the various schools of Philosophers from Thales to Hegel and from Hegel to Herbert Spencer, bear witness to their failure. But back to Christ let us go, as did one who sat at the feet of the Philosophers of his day, and who turning from them found in the Teacher of Nazareth the answer which he penned in Rom. 11:36—"For of Him (Whence), and through Him (How) and to Him (Whither) are all things", and in that brief sentence we have the answer to the profoundest problems of Philosophy.

In view of the fact that Philosophy is being taught in our own land in such a manner as to undermine the very foundations of evangelical truth, we have reason to congratulate ourselves that the Chair of Philosophy in this institution has been and is now occupied by a christian teacher who is loyal to the truth as it is in Christ. Here then we have an educational process that will lift men to the highest development of which they are capable, and enable them to respond to all the demands that may be made upon them in Society and in the State. Here we have an educational system including all that other systems have contained, and adding to them an attachment of our life to the source of all being. Here we have an educational ideal that will not have finished its work in us until we are all brought from step to step to the fulness of the stature of christian manhood and womanhood.

The Anointing of the Holy Ghost.

The anointing of the Holy Ghost was a necessity to the God-man, and having received it, he went forth in the power of the Spirit to work his miracles, to show the Father, to reveal truth, and to die on the cross. For through the agency of the Holy Ghost he accomplished the atonement. It is said, "Through the eternal Spirit he offered himself to God."

Just in proportion as believing hearts are receiving this bestowment, so is the salvation of the world advancing. This improvement is right at our hearts. Jesus stands today, as he has ever since the dispensation of the Holy Ghost was inaugurated, breathing upon his people—ministry and laity—saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Yet we go on like Gehazi, depending on the prophet's staff instead of the prophet's power. Believers remain cold and worldly, sinners dead and indifferent, the churches languish, and the people perish because we prophesy, but do not cry, "Come, O world!" The breath of the Spirit would turn our valleys of death into those of life, and great armies would stand up for God.

This Pentecostal bestowment, while it is the source of spiritual character and spiritual enjoyment to the believer, is equally the source of spiritual power, and its power is fully adequate to all the demands of the high commission of the believer and the church, and no other endowments are adequate, however necessary to the work of the church without it. He is the indispensable ally of the ministry and the church. Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.—Rev. S. A. Keen, D.D.

If you want to conquer the world for Christ, learn something about the method of campaign. Study mission more diligently and intelligently than you would study mathematics. Give your hours to it. Count your best as an unworthy gift to lay on the missionary altar. Share your knowledge among other church members, circulate missionary literature, brighten up the missionary services of your society and congregation. Give as you would give into the pierced hand of Jesus Himself. Go, if He will let you go. By any means, by all means, preach the Gospel.—Golden Rule.

Men are not weighed by God according to their ability; not weighed according to their talents, but by the manner of using them. It is not he who serves much, but he who serves perfectly, that stands highest in God's kingdom.—Mrs. C. F. Wilder.

The theory that a preacher full of the Holy Ghost can work wonders anywhere needs to be tempered by keeping in mind the fact that in His own country Jesus could do no mighty works because of their unbelief.

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THE BIBLE—THE TEACHER.

The criticism of life in its highest earnestness is infinitely harder to bear than that of the intellect. Christian people think of the groups of learned, acute, ambitious, and undevout men in the universities of Germany and Great Britain and America, and they fear for the Bible in their hands. They seldom reflect that such tests are insignificant beside those applied to this book by noble life under the sense of inadequacy for its task. It is said that the drowning man will clutch at a straw, but this he will not do if there is anything more substantial to clutch. The real and terrible test of the Word of God is applied by the sinner who cries out for forgiveness, by the spirit-crushed with the consciousness of moral infirmity in the presence of eternal ideas, by the heart under the shadow of a great sorrow, by the soul looking in bewilderment into the worlds beyond time. When one sees men going to the Bible with an awakened conscience, turning its pages in the hope that they may inspire a purpose that will hold in the mortal struggle with temptation, listening for its voices of comfort that they may weep no more, and looking for its light in the thick darkness of death, then one begins to tremble for the fate of the great book. If it can bear the strain of the intensest and noblest life, it can smile at all other tests. The intellectual trial of the Bible, compared with the moral, is as insignificant as the arrows and shells which the Lilliputians shot at Gulliver would be, placed beside the missiles of a modern battle ship. The great thing about the Bible is, not that it can survive the assaults of hostile criticism, but that it is able to endure the assaults of life. And this it has been able to do because it has carried the minds of men beyond itself. The Bible owes infinitely more to Christ than Christ does to the Bible. Take him out of it, make him no longer accessible through it, and it would become at once no more than a splendid antiquity. It is his presence in it, mystic in the Old Testament, historic in the New, real and divine in both, that has given it all its power; and its endurance of the vast moral trial to which the successive centuries of earnest men have subjected it comes from the Lord. If one retains him in it, and reaches him as the wisdom of God through it, the Bible will continue to sustain the weight of the whole earnest world. The most terrible critic is not the undevout scholar, but the man who wants standing in the truth and assurance of eternal reality.

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But the assumption, that when a man is forgotten his influence is necessarily over, is wholly unfounded. Keeping to Bishop Brooks as a convenient and magnificent symbol, it must be said that his publications are the smallest part of him. There are thousands of living men and women whose characters he touched with transforming power, and who are the transmitters of the great vital impulse received from him. While the generation lasts to which he spoke, his influence in the world will be conscious and controlling. There is always danger that the good book may be prized above the good men, which is fatal folly. But it is said that men die and books live on. To this it must be replied that the average term of man's existence is greatly in excess of that of even powerful books. One half of the human race, it is computed, die in infancy, and it is believed that a similar computation would show that infant mortality among literary productions is greater far. If it be true that those whom the gods love die young, nine-tenths of the books published must be very highly regarded in heaven. More human beings than books can be found, out of every generation, who have attained the age of one hundred years. Setting aside the few books that cannot die, to the number of which a remarkable century adds one or two perhaps, a human being is a vastly better investment than a novel, or a treatise scientific, philosophical, or theological. The hope of the true bookmaker is that his publication may meet a sympathetic mind, fertilize it, command its spiritual power, and thus prolong its life after death. The office of the mother is infinitely greater than that of the successful novelist. The mothers rule the world from their graves. In the influence of Edwards and Bushnell and Emerson and Carlyle, that of their first and greatest teachers still lives. What the last of these writers has said of his mother has its echo in the heart of our whole nobler humanity. "O pious mother! kind, good, brave, and truthful soul as I have ever found, and more than I have ever elsewhere found in this world, your poor Tom, long out of his school days now, has fallen very lonely, very lame and broken, in this pilgrimage of his; and you cannot help him or cheer him by a kind word any more. From your grave in Ecclefechan Kirk-yard yonder you bid him trust in God, and that also he will try if he can understand and do." There was a time when noble women forgot their sorrow for joy that a man was born into the world; now it is the issue of a novel that scatters the deep anxieties. Old Socrates was right in thinking more of the sympathetic and large minded pupil than of the literary production. The works of Plato are rich and priceless, but Plato himself is largely the work of Socrates. And the greatest achievement of the master of the Academy was that he moulded the thought and evolved the intellectual power of Aristotle. If fate should submit for the choice of the gifted and powerful a good book or a great character to bear abroad and continue his influence in the world, he would be a fool who should choose the book in preference to the character. Even if their tombstones, unlike that of Fichte's, make no mention of it, the prophecy is forever true that "the teachers shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

This is the great principle underlying the strange conceit of apostolical succession. The conceit is, that episcopal ordination runs back to the ordination which the apostles received from Christ, and that to the hands of bishops the grace that truly consecrates a man to the work of the christian ministry is confined. The great principle is, that life comes only from life, and that the moral and spiritual power of the present generation is largely derived from the holy succession that goes back to the creative soul of Christ for its endowment. The unseen is still over the christian world, and its doors are not shut against its prayers and faith. The windows of heaven are ever open, and the flood of life is always descending into hospitable souls. But all the good that believers enjoy does not come in that direct way. History means more than even the profoundest thinker can know; the ordering of human beings in a grand succession in time counts for much in the education and achievements of mankind. Jesus gathered about him the finest youth of his time. He moulded their thought, controlled their passion, dominated their will, and gave them the life of God. They went forth with the vital supply which grew greater the more it was drawn upon, and established their supremacy over thousands. Again the receivers became givers, the conquered conquerors, and the tide of divine life rolled over new spaces of our common humanity. And so it has rolled on down to our own generation. It is the stream that makes glad the city of God. It has its head-waters in Christ, and its sacred and ever-broadening channel is the multitude that no man can number that in each generation have believed that the surest way to perpetuate personal power in the earth is to charge a successor with the life of the Lord.—The Christ of Today—Gordon.

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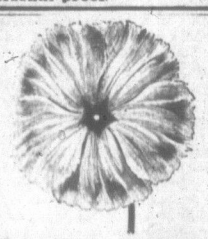

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