

ing feature of a standing or fallag soul in the sight of God. The question is not whether he understands or accepts that doctrine, but whether he is born again. Baptism is a good thing, and the Lord's Supper is a good thing, and church ordinances are good things which no wise Christian will neglect, but if regeneration is wrought without any of them, as it may be, their absence will not exclude from the Kingdom of Heaven. Membership in a church is a good thing, and some churches may be nearer the New Testament ideal than others, but if in any church, however corrupt, or in no church, a man is brought to give his heart in simple loyalty to God, no pope or council may shut him out from his share of the Kingdom. He himself may not have the faintest idea now he has come there, but

if through the leading of the Spirit he is there, by the very nature of the case he is within the Kingdom, and a partaker of everlasting life.

Thus the historical origin of the figure employed by our Lord throws a flood of light upon its meaning, and may help to make the whole matter simpler to many a puzzled mind. I dare say there are those who will have a sort of suspicion that by relieving this change of some of its mystery, we are making it less serious or important. But at best this is but a figure of speech, and to make a figure clearer is to make it truer as well as more helpful. Mystery has never helped anybody except into superstition.

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Ah! He, who prayed the prayer of all
mankind,
Summed up in these few, brief words
the mightiest plea
For erring souls before the courts of
heaven,—
Save us from being tempted—lest we
fall.

—Oliver Wendell Holmes.