

A BRINGING FORTH FROM ABOVE

PART I

The Way Scripture Deals with the Matter

By Arlen L. Chirwood

“...Except a man be born again [‘brought forth from above’], he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3b; cf. vv. 5, 7, 36).

The absolute necessity for “seeing”/“entering” *the kingdom*, being “born again,” is introduced and seen in John’s gospel as a birth *out of God* (1:13) and/or a birth *from above* (3:3, 7). And this is in perfect keeping with the manner in which this birth is seen in all of the other New Testament passages where it is referenced — James 1:18, I Peter 1:3, 23, and I John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18.

In John 3:3, 7, the wording in the Greek text relating to this birth is different than it is in I Peter 1:3, 23 (two words are used in John, and a compound word is used in I Peter), but the English translation in both instances should be the same — *born from above*. Then, in I John, the translation throughout is seen to be the same as in John 1:13 — *a birth, a bringing forth, out of God*. And, in James 1:18, a different Greek word is used.

(*Gennaio*, the Greek word for “begotten” or “bringing forth,” is used throughout the references in John, I Peter, and I John.

In John 3:3, 7, the word *gennaio* appears with another Greek word, *anathen*, which means “from above.” Though *anathen* could be understood and translated “again,” this translation would not really follow the manner in which this birth had previously been introduced in John 1:13 [a birth *out of God*]. Thus, understanding *anathen* in its primary sense — “from above” [cf. John 3:31; 19:11] — forms a more

natural flow of thought from that previously seen in the first chapter.

Then, in I Peter 1:3, 23, *gennaio* appears in a compound form, *anagennaio*. The preposition *ana*, which has the primary meaning of “up,” has been prefixed to the word. And though the preposition prefixed to the word in both verses is usually translated “again” in English translations [an acceptable and correct understanding and translation of the word in many instances], this would not really be in keeping with either the primary meaning of the preposition or the manner in which this birth [a bringing forth] is expressed in both John’s gospel [“out of God” and “from above”] and his first epistle [“out of God”].

The correct understanding and translation of *anagennaio* in I Peter 1:3, 23 should be the same as that seen through the use of *gennaio* and *anathen* together in John 3:3, 7 — *born from above*, a birth or a bringing forth which is introduced in John’s gospel and continued in his first epistle as being *out of God*.

Then in James 1:18, the Greek word *apokueo* is used. This is a medical term which refers to *that which occurs at the end of a pregnancy* — “a bringing forth,” “a giving birth.”)

Out of God, from Above

The birth “out of God” (John 1:13) or “from above” (John 3:3, 7) is almost universally taught in Christendom as having to do with *a birth experienced by unsaved people*, occurring at the moment they believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and pass “from death unto life.” That is, the Spirit breathing life into an unsaved individual, based on Christ’s finished work at Calvary, is looked upon as the birth “out of God,” “from above,” seen in these verses.

The problem is that this is not the manner in which the matter is introduced in John 1:13; nor is this the manner in which the matter is continued in John 3:3, 7; nor is this the manner in which the matter is seen in James, I Peter, and I John.

This is not to say that the Divine work surrounding an unsaved individual believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and being saved is not to be viewed in

the same manner, *i.e.*, as being brought forth “out of God,” “from above.” Rather, *it is to say* that the verses being used (John 1:13; 3:3, 7; James 1:18; I Peter 1:3, 23; I John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18) *don’t* refer to this initial work of God through the Spirit. Instead, they refer to subsequent works of God through the Spirit — subsequent works (pl.) because that connected with *the bringing forth “out of God”* is not the same in each instance.

The work pertaining to an unsaved individual, “dead in trespasses and sins,” passing “from death unto life,” *can only be a Divine bringing forth “out of God,” “from above.”* It has to be, for this is the way that the matter is presented throughout Scripture, beginning in the opening verses of Genesis chapter one. Ruined man is completely incapable of bringing himself out of his ruined state. A Divine work must occur.

However, Scripture never uses the type terminology seen in the referenced verses from John’s gospel, James, I Peter, and I John relative to this Divine work, unless possibly a verse such as Isa. 66:8 would be referring to this facet of Israel’s future acceptance of Christ.

There can be no Divine work performed among man (either saved or unsaved man) *apart from* this work occurring “out of God,” “from above.” *Such would be impossible.* And, in this respect, the verses from John’s gospel, James, I Peter, and I John *do describe the source of the work of salvation by grace* (for it is the same, it has to be — *i.e.*, *out of God, from above*), though these verses *do not pertain to this work per se.*

The problem, as previously noted, is that Christians have been quick to remove these verses from their respective contexts and misapply them, making these verses deal with something which the verses don’t deal with at all. And, through so doing, that work of God which the Spirit intended, as He moved men to pen these verses, *is done away with.*

The remainder of this pamphlet and the next pamphlet (Part II) will show, in all places where the birth from above is referenced (the Gospel of

John, James, I Peter, I John), why the verses dealing with this subject must be looked upon as pertaining to *different facets of God's work among the saved*, not to one facet of His work among the unsaved.

The Gospel of John

When Christ came to Israel the first time, He came to a people capable of spiritual perception and discernment, else He could not have appeared on the scene calling for the nation's repentance and proclaiming the kingdom as being "at hand."

Christ came to a disobedient nation, though to a saved generation of Jews, to a nation which had been sacrificing and availing itself of the blood of the paschal lambs year by year.

Christ was born *King* in the nation's midst, presenting Himself as *the God-sent Deliverer in this respect* — deliverance from the consequences of centuries of disobedience, which had resulted in a complete reversal of conditions pertaining to the nation's calling (Lev. 26:14-39; Deut. 28:15-67).

Israel's spiritual condition and position at this time was that of *a son being chastened because of disobedience* (cf. Zech. 1:14, 15). Or, to place the matter within another frame of reference, it was that of *God dealing with an adulterous wife who had been caught up in harlotry among the nations* (cf. Jer. 3:1-3).

And, viewing the matter from either vantage point, it is evident that the whole of Christ's message to Israel had to do with things beyond the thought of eternal salvation, particularly since "signs" were in view. His message had to do with *deliverance relative to the nation's condition and the kingdom being proclaimed*. And deliverance effected through receiving the Christ, believing, for the Jews at this time (whether in the offer of the kingdom preceding the events of Calvary or the reoffer following) must be understood accordingly.

(For more detailed information along these lines, refer to the author's book, FROM ACTS TO THE EPISTLES, particularly the first four chapters.)

Those Jews receiving the Christ at His first coming in John 1:12, 13, through believing on His name, were said to be "born...of God [brought forth out of God]" and given the right to become "the children of God." And, as previously noted, such an act centered around *deliverance, with the kingdom in view*, not eternal salvation.

These were Jews, part of a nation which comprised God's firstborn son (Ex. 4:22, 23), though a disobedient son, being given the right to become "children of God" through *receiving the Christ and being brought forth out of God*. And acceptance, belief on the part of the people, could only have had to do with *the manner in which Christ presented Himself to the Jewish people* (a regal manner), along with the message being proclaimed (the kingdom being "at hand").

It may at first sound strange to take one who is already a son and view him as a child, but not so. This is exactly the manner in which *it had to occur in Israel then or must occur in Christendom today*.

Israel had been called out of Egypt under Moses as *God's firstborn son to rule at the head of the nations, with the nations being blessed through Israel*. And this entire thought must be carried over into the deliverance which Christ was offering Israel as the One greater than Moses. God's firstborn son was again being called forth for exactly the same purpose. But at this time, unlike during Moses' day, *a disobedient son* was being dealt with.

The matter can be clarified through referencing two passages of Scripture — John 8:31-44 and Heb. 12:5-8.

In the former passage (John 8:31-44), Jews rejecting Christ were looked upon as *children of the Devil* (vv. 37-44 [i.e., being brought forth from below rather than from above, doing the works of the Devil]).

And Jews receiving Christ, according to John 1:12, 13, had been removed from this position and given the right to become *the children of God*.

In the latter passage (John 1:12, 13), *sons are seen being trained from the vantage point of a child* (cf. Heb. 12:5-8). The Greek word translated "chastening," "chasteneth," and "chastisement" in Heb.

12:5-8 has to do with *child-training*. The passage deals with *sons presently being child-trained*, with a view to Christ one day bringing "many sons unto glory" with Him (Heb. 2:10), or, as stated in Rom. 8:19, a "manifestation of the sons of God."

(For additional information on the child-training of sons, refer to the author's book, GOD'S FIRSTBORN SONS, Ch. III, pp. 27-33.)

John 1:12, 13 had to do with God taking His disobedient sons (individuals within the nation forming His firstborn son), performing an act similar to that seen in Col. 1:13 (causing them to change sides with respect to two kingdoms), and then child-training His sons with a view to that which sonship implies — *rulership*.

And Jesus' discourse to Nicodemus involved exactly the same thing. It was simply a continuation and expansion of another facet of that which began to be developed earlier in the gospel account. Being brought forth *from above* in chapter three, previously described as *out of God* in chapter one, had to do with being brought forth "out of water and Spirit" (v. 5, literal rendering from the Greek text).

Christ's words to Nicodemus in verse five could only have drawn from the type having to do with the Israelites under Moses, with *the experiences of the Israelites during the Red Sea passage and beyond*. It could only have pointed to that seen on the eastern banks and beyond — *resurrection life (removed from the place of death [from the waters of the Sea]), with God, through His Spirit, then leading them away from Egypt and the Sea toward another land*.

John 1:11-13 deals with *the child-training of disobedient sons*, and John 3:3-8 deals with *particulars surrounding this child-training*.

A deliverance of *saved individuals*, a deliverance with *regality in view*, is seen throughout.

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