

*Bible Study & Research Paper*

# THE BORN AGAIN TEACHING

In the light of history and Biblical salvation principles

## A DOCTRINAL POSITION

By CM White



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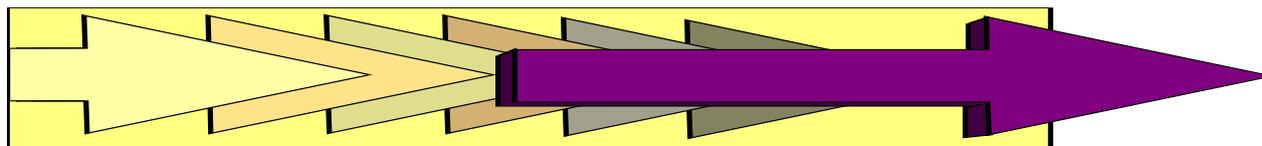
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**“All is mystery; but he is a slave  
who will not struggle to penetrate the dark veil”**

Benjamin Disraeli

### **Proverbs 2:1-10**

**“My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;  
So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;  
Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;  
If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;  
Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.  
For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.  
He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk  
uprightly.  
He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.  
Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good  
path.  
When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;  
Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee.”**



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## ***The Born Again Teaching in the Light of***

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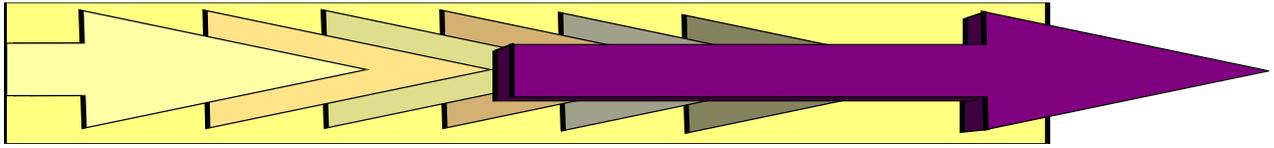
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The purpose and desire is to foster Biblical, historical and related studies that strengthen the Church of God's message & mission and provides further support to its traditional doctrinal positions.



## **INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

The purpose of this paper is to take another look at the born again doctrine; not just from the angle Herbert W Armstrong presented the case, nor the mainstream Protestant approach allegorising the words of Christ. The concept is not merely an argument that the new birth occurs at the resurrection or upon conversion to Christianity.

Rather, this paper takes a brief look at the history of the doctrine as espoused by Herbert W Armstrong which may be traced at least back to Sabbatarians and Russellites in the 19th century. Thus I attempt to show that we have an historical legacy that should not be ignored nor lightly dismissed. It should also be noted by the reader that the author presupposes that the reader already has at least a rough understanding of the view held by Herbert W Armstrong.



**Herbert W Armstrong**

The following section examines the various scriptures dealing with salvation, conversion, redemption, the new creature in Christ, baptism and so forth in an attempt to prove that these various overlapping aspects of salvation are a process in 3 broad stages. This is wonderful knowledge which Herbert W Armstrong touched upon in some of his literature. It is argued that surely then it must follow that born again is a process which occurs in 3 stages. It is something that does not just occur at the time of conversion to Christianity but takes a life-long process to accomplish.

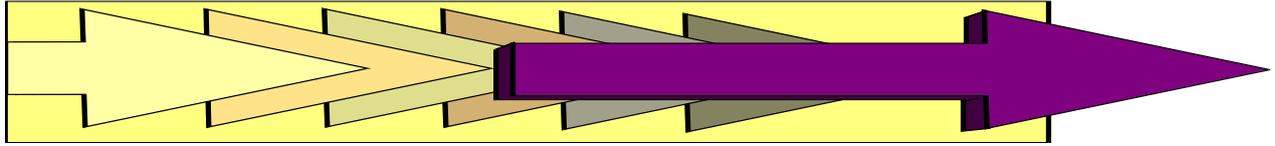
The next section deals with the background to the words of Christ and the teachings of the Babylonian Mysteries in the first century on the subject. The statements of certain Protestant scholars are very insightful and helpful. So be prepared for a few surprises! The final section discusses our spiritual resurrection, John 3 and 1Cor 15 parallels and whether Christ was born again.

It is a certainty, as Protestants themselves admit, “Being born again is not conversion, nor a change of views, nor a change of affections, but a change of state” (A. Campbell, *The Christian System*, p. 61). Campbell, like some other scholars, is onto something. Born again is a state - but what exactly they cannot grasp. He is touching upon a concept that he cannot now seem to penetrate fully and reach its ultimate conclusion. It is a real obstacle to those that think that the Kingdom of God is here now; that Christians are a part of it now (and thus have no need to keep the Law as they have already made it); that prophecy is primarily fulfilled and therefore Christians must try and solve the world’s problems now; and as a result Christians have immortal souls whose reward is to go to heaven. They know not the past, present and particularly the future aspects of God’s Plan. They could know if they wiped away some of the baggage they have inherited and the paradigms they operate within and returned to Biblical doctrine. They could know if they kept the Law and the Holy Days which outline God’s great Plan of Salvation for mankind.

Born again: an event at conversion, a state of being Christian or a future event? This paper will explore all of those aspects of the debate.

Finally, dear reader, I only ask for some feedback if you possess the time or to at least acknowledge that what is discussed in this paper has some credibility, even though you may not agree with its conclusions.





## HISTORY OF THE BORN AGAIN DOCTRINE

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Some early Christian writers believed in a birth at the resurrection
- Some scholars admit that God is a family
- Early SDA's and especially the Russellites believed in a birth at the resurrection
- The Church of God (seventh day) originally believed in the concept and to this day some branches of that Church still believe it

**W**e need to now turn our attention to the fragments of information available on the history of this teaching. By so doing we might penetrate the dark veil which may prevent us from obtaining an historical background to this teaching and understand its roots.

### I. EARLY CHURCH HISTORY

Beside the Bible, the earliest references or inferences to a new birth at the resurrection may be found in literature in the first few centuries after Christ. Note the following quoted from Lampe's *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* concerning the new birth:

"3. the Nativity; a ... generation, engendering, also birth ... parallel with eternal generation ... threefold birth of Christ (Nativity, Baptism, **Resurrection**) dist. by Jo.Nic.nativ.(M.96.1440a)... 4. spiritual birth, regeneration ... through practice of virtue ... through baptism ... ; hence of man's threefold birth, physical, baptismal, **and in resurrection**, Gr.Nyss. *Eun.4* (2 p.64.21;M.45.636c); Max.ambig.(M.91.1325B); 5. = ... creation, Hipp.haer.5.25(p.126.27; M.16.3194B); ...Ath.exp.in Ps.109:3(M.27.46ID); Gr.Nyss.*Eun.4* (2 p.58.3; M.45.628D); *ib.8*(p.185.10,22; 780A,B)."

It would appear from this reference that John of Nicosia or Nicea and Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa in the 4th century, in his work *Eunomius* reflected knowledge, albeit a knowledge that had almost died out completely in the non-sabbatarian churches, that the resurrection is likened to a birth. One wonders how much material was destroyed on this teaching over the previous 200 years. Certainly this knowledge has been lost for centuries. Hippolytus (c170-236AD), in *Philos. X.34* stated:

"thy body shall be immortal and incorruptible as well as they soul. **For thou hast become God**. All the things that follow upon the divine nature God has promised to supply to thee, for thou was deified **in being born to**

immortality".

Here he seems to make the new birth current rather than future, and may be indicative of the gradual process of corruption of the truth.

Another is Theophilus of Antioch (c180AD):

"But the moon wanes monthly, and in a manner dies, being a type of man; then it is born again, and is crescent, for a pattern of the future resurrection" (*To Autolycus*, Book 2, Chapter XV).

Theodore of Mopsuestia (c 350-428AD) wrote in terms of baptism as a womb preparing Christians for birth; he describes the baptismal water as the water of second birth, itself typed by the fluid surrounding the foetus in the mother's womb (*Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, pp. 53-54). While Dionysus (5<sup>th</sup> century AD) stated the following in reference to baptismal candidates:

"They have not received an inspired existence in the divine birth, but areas yet being incubated by the paternal scriptures ... It is just as when children of the flesh arrive before their proper incubation. They are unready and unshaped like still-born fetuses".

This could be a reference to a vague understanding or residue of the truth of the conception process which was still extant in some form in the non-sabbatarian churches.

Here is another important quote from an early Church 'father', Athanasius writing c.360AD:

"For God not only created them to be men, but called them to be sons, as having begotten them. For the term 'begat' is here as elsewhere expressive of a Son, as He says by the Prophet, 'I begat sons and exalted them;' and generally, when Scripture wishes to signify a son, it does so, not by the term 'created,' but undoubtedly by that of 'begat.'

And this John seems to say, 'He gave to them power to become children of God, even to them that believe on His Name; which were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' And here too the cautious distinction is well kept up, for first he says 'become,' because they are not called sons by nature but by adoption; then he says 'were begotten,' because they too had received at any rate the name of son ... He became man, that, as the Apostle has said, He who is the 'Beginning' and 'First-born from the dead, in all things might have the pre-eminence ... He said to be **First-born from the dead**,' not that He died before us, for we had died first; but because having undergone death for us and abolished it, **He was the first to rise**, as man, for our sakes raising His own Body. Henceforth He having risen, we too from Him and because of Him rise in

due course from the dead ... He is called 'First-born among many brethren' because of the relationship of the flesh, and '**First-born from the dead,**' **because the resurrection of the dead is from Him and after Him** ... And as He is First-born among brethren and rose from the dead 'the first fruits of them that slept;' so, since it became Him 'in all things to have the pre-eminence" [emphasis mine]

Tom Roberts noted in his paper *Faith and Practice in Early Christianity* that

"The new birth process from conception to begettal to resurrection was later interpreted to be granted when the Holy Spirit gives the impregnable eternal seed as the convert receives eternal life. (Hippolytus in *Philos.* X.34) And it should be noted that Orthodox theology unto this very day holds the position that we shall have our deification completed in the resurrection when we shall with Christ during His Messianic Reign over the nations." (p. 17)

Trying to track any doctrine resembling a birth to occur at the time of the resurrection is difficult to find until the 19th century. However, there may be something in the last line of the following poem attributed to Francis of Assisi, the founder of the Order of Friars (1182-1226AD), but I am told, actually composed by gentlemen of the Order sometime during the nineteenth century:

**ETERNAL LIFE**

**If you can Lord,  
Make me an instrument of your peace,  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.  
Where there is injury, pardon.  
Where there is doubt, faith.  
Where there is despair, hope.  
Where there is darkness, light.  
Where there is sadness, joy.**

**O divine Master,  
Grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled, as to console  
to be understood, as to understand,  
to be loved, as to love.**

**For it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned  
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.**

Could there be some inference in the last line of this beautiful poem? Perhaps we shall never know in this life; but we could at least speculate that this idea may well have been lurking around for centuries in both the Sabbatarian communities and mainstream 'Christianity'.

But what is the purpose of such a birth? Perhaps some early 'Christian' writings reflect beliefs of primitive Christianity in terms of Christian destiny and human purpose upon the earth:

**"God became man that you might become gods"** - Augustine of Hippo in the 5th century AD

"For we cast blame on Him, because we have not been made gods from the beginning, but at first merely men, **then at length gods**" - Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book IV, Chapter XXXVIII; ANF, Vol. I, p. 522.

"And thou shalt be a companion of Deity, and a co-heir with Christ, no longer enslaved by disease., For thou hast become God ... For the Deity (by condescension,) does not diminish aught from the dignity of His divine perfection; **having made thee even God unto His glory!** - Hippolytus, *The Refutation Of All Heresies*, chapter XXX; ANF, Vol. V, p. 153

**"If, therefore, man has become immortal, he will also be God.** And if he is made God by water and the Holy Spirit after the regeneration of the laver he is found to be also joint-heir with Christ after the resurrection of the dead" - Hippolytus, *Discourse On The Holy Theiphany*, (section) 8; ANF, Vol. V. p. 237).

Indeed, divinisation has been a component, albeit radically decreasing component, of 'Christian' theology. To early Christians, being given immortality was equivalent to being ascribed or granted godhead or a relationship with God that is so close and so akin to the life He experiences, that it is divine or godly. See further details in the paper *God's Glory and Man's Destiny* which discusses in more detail divinisation/deification which was taught in the early Eastern churches and, in fact, in the Eastern Orthodox Church to this day.<sup>1</sup>

This concept continued in a limited undercurrent over the centuries. The *New Dictionary of Theology* states that Calvin taught that "Christians are admitted, through the Holy Spirit, to participation in the inner life of the Godhead" (p. 694).

"The passage which Christ quotes [ie John 10:34] is in Ps. lxxxii.6 ... Christ applies this to the case in hand, **that they receive the name of gods**, because they are God's ministers for governing the world. For the same reason Scripture calls angels gods, because by them the glory of God beams forth on the world" - John Calvin, in his *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, Grand Rapids, Wm. Eerdman's Publishing, vol. 1, p. 419.

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<sup>1</sup> It seems that they taught that 'born again' commenced with baptism and culminated in the resurrection. See Clendenin's *Eastern Orthodox Theology*: "Frank Schaeffer ... calls the standard evangelical doctrine a "false bill of goods." The simplistic 'born-again' formula for instant painless 'salvation' is not only a misunderstanding, I believe it is a heresy. It contradicts the teaching of Christ in regard to the narrow, hard, ascetic, difficult way of salvation." (p. 268)

One wonders whether we may deduce from these quotes how close to the truth on this issue these people were. Note that even famous researcher and trinitarian, Spiros Zodhiates, wrote the following concerning John 1:18:

“The word *monogenees* actually is a compound of the *monos*, ‘alone’, and the word *genos*, ‘race, stock, family’. Here we are told that He who came to reveal God - Jesus Christ - is of the same **family**, of the same stock, of the same race as God. There is ample evidence in the Scriptures that **the Godhead is a family ...**” (*Was Jesus God?*, p. 21).

We are destined to have a very close family relationship with God. God is indeed our Father. A father is a member of his family. Thus those in God’s family are in the very family of God - the God Family if you wish. Peter Toon in *Born Again. A Biblical and Theological Study of Regeneration* writes:

“ ... Paul ... speaks of believers as being changed to bear the image and likeness of God that Christ himself perfectly bears and reflects .. we are to bear the true image of God ... [Christians] **are able to have an intimate communion with their heavenly Father**, just as a child might address his or her earthly father by a familiar term like the Aramaic *Abba* or the English *Daddy* ... **Birth from above is birth into a family** ... Growth in new life is growth into Christ within his body, the church” (pp. 44-45, 65).

Another non-Church of God mainstream writer who implied that we are finally born again in the resurrection is Fred Malda in *Why We Believe in Creation Not in Evolution*:

“In all nature one can scarcely find anything more beautiful than the butterflies! But before a butterfly becomes an adult it must go through a complete metamorphosis in four stages: egg, larva (worm or caterpillar stage), pupa (or chrysalis), and the adult butterfly. Why such a roundabout path to produce a butterfly? If unguided nature or evolution were doing it according to Darwin’s theory of ‘natural selection’ and ‘survival of the fittest’ the impractical devious route would not have a chance. The butterfly would hatch directly from the egg as it would seem to be the normal route. Unguided evolution in a billion years could not even think up such an involved plan as a ‘complete metamorphosis’ - much less put it into working order.

“Could it be that God, the Master Teacher, so designed the life cycle of the butterfly to teach us a lesson? Undoubtedly, spiritual and moral truths are illustrated in nature - and the metamorphosis of the caterpillar into the butterfly is an obvious lesson. If the grovelling, repulsive, greedy, earth-bound caterpillar pictures man in his lowly, fallen estate, **then the transformation into the butterfly is a lesson in the need and reality of the new birth (see John 3:3, 5, 7). And the butterfly, released from its cocoon, flying heavenward, is a picturesque display of glory, speaking of the glory of the coming resurrection for the saved of earth (1 Corinthians 15:42-44; Philippians 3:21).**” (pp. 297-98) [emphasis mine]

Refer to the paper *God’s Glory and Man’s Destiny* for further details about the God Family and His Plan for man.

Certainly the knowledge of some of the early 'Christian' writers on such subjects as man's destiny, eternal bliss or the future age of bliss (somewhat different to the 'bliss' taught by Buddhists), the nature of God (in some cases), divinisation, God as the ground of being or the source of all that exists, water baptism, the bodily resurrection, mortality of the soul (eg Arnobius), showing concern about the infiltration of paganism via icons and crosses etc into the church, the works of Simon Magus, the 1,000 year reign of the Messiah (see for example the extra-biblical *Epistle of Barnabas*; the writings of Ireneaus, Hippolytus, Justin Martyr etc), and the birth at the time of the resurrection, all would have been reminiscent of the doctrines of an earlier primitive Christianity and the traditions of the Church of Jerusalem (under the auspices of James) and their descendants, the Nazarenes.



**The human family – type of the God Family**

Over time these doctrines receded and gradually disappeared in the non-Sabbatarian churches. Although a small residue of the truths seemed to remain in the Eastern churches (which were originally Sabbatarian) for some time (to this day the Eastern Orthodox Church teaches divinisation). It should be noted here that more and more historians confess that the Jerusalem Church was a Sabbatarian community which kept the Holy Days, clean & unclean foods, had a close affinity to Israel and so forth; they admit that the Jerusalem Church actually gave rise to the Nazarenes. Who were these Nazarenes? As we shall see in a future paper, they were the very line continuing the existence of the True Church of God which existed alongside the assemblies which became the Great False Church - Mystery Babylon - mother of many whores which were borne in bloody protest.

## **II. THE REMNANT CHURCH OF GOD IN THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES**

We do not need to re-hash here the history of the Sabbatarian community during the nineteenth century. Suffice to know that they did, indeed, exist (see the many studies by Richard Nickels on this subject).

Let us now examine what some have taught over the past century and a bit. The Church of God published an article on this subject in *The Hope of Israel* (1865, vol 2 no 10, pp. 1-2) "Being Born Again" (no author given). The entire article discusses the new birth occurring in

the resurrection. This is the earliest Sabbatarian source which I have been able to uncover on this particular doctrine. Note the *Statement of Beliefs* of the Seventh-day Adventists in 1872:

**“The new birth comprises** the entire change necessary to fit us for the kingdom of God, and consists of two parts: first, a moral change, wrought by conversion and a Christian life; **second, a physical change at the second coming of Christ**, whereby, if dead, we are raised incorruptible, and if living, are changed to immortality in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye”.

The 1889 *Statement of Beliefs* similarly states:

“That **the new birth** comprises the entire change necessary to fit us for the kingdom of God, and consists of two parts; First, a moral change wrought by conversion and a Christian life (John 3: 3, 5); **second, a physical change at the second coming of Christ**, whereby, if dead, we are raised incorruptible, and if living, are changed to immortality in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Luke 20: 36; 1 Cor. 15: 51, 52.”

In the Seventh Day Adventist *Review and Herald*, “Christ for To-Day” (14 April 1896, p. 232) W. Prescott conveys a drift from the above position, yet still hinting at it:

“As Christ was twice born, once in eternity, the only begotten of the Father, and again in the flesh, thus uniting the divine with the human in that second birth, so we, who have been born once already in the flesh, **are to have the second birth, being born again in the Spirit**, in order that our experience may be the same,--the human and the divine being joined in a life union.”

Famous Adventist pioneer, Alonzo T Jones was still teaching this or something similar in 1899:

“He who goings forth have been from the days of eternity, the first-born of God, was born again in order that we might be born again” (“Christian Perfection,” *Review & Herald*, 7 July – 1 August.)

In the booklet *Membership of the Seventh-day Church*, 1894, only the first aspect is referred to and the other dealing with the resurrection has no mention at all. This may reflect an oversight or the gradual change in doctrine. However, the original position was re-stated by one of the prominent Seventh-day pioneers, Uriah Smith, in the chapter on “Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists” in the *1912 Yearbook*. It may also be found in the 1914 Statement. But it is omitted from the 1931 and 1980 Statements.

Some Adventist groups still teach this – one of them produced a 4 page study guide on the matter which included the following statement:

“The physical change is necessary before entering into the Kingdom

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.” (1 Corinthians 15:50)

A physical change - *A new creature physically*”

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, (52) ...” (“Study Guide #5 – The New Birth”, Seventh Day Home Church Fellowships, p. 4)

It seems that the belief that one aspect of born again includes the resurrection, still lurks among some SDA scholars. Here is one example:

**“Sometimes the term refers to the resurrection of the righteous** when Christ returns. Matt. 19:28 says, “And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the *regeneration* when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” The Greek word translated “regeneration” in this verse [*palingenesia*] does literally mean “the being born again” or “the rebirth.” **Yet Jesus is talking about the resurrection of the dead when he returns, when we will be “born again” into immortal life (see 1 Cor 15:54).** He is also talking about the “rebirth” of this world as a place of beauty and peace and holiness, “a new heaven and a new earth” (Rev 21:1).

If this is what Jesus means when he speaks with Nicodemus, then He is reading Nicodemus’s mind, sensing that when Nicodemus confesses Him to be “a teacher come from God” (John 3:2), he is really asking Jesus if He is about to set up His messianic kingdom on earth. Jesus, thus, would be telling Nicodemus that he will only “see” and “enter into the kingdom of God” if he is resurrected. Could this be part of what Jesus means by “born again”? There are other clues to guide us.” (Ed Christian, ““Are You Born Again?”: A Doctrine of Regeneration”, *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, Vol. 10, Nos. 1-2 (1999), p. 226) [emphasis mine]

Although that is just about all about the subject contained within a larger article on born again, it does demonstrate that an old theological position still abounds.

Of great interest to Church of God historians is that a Church of God, Seventh-day pastor residing in Auckland, New Zealand in the early twentieth century, wrote a 16 page booklet on the subject with the title *Begotten Again, or Born Again, Which?* (1902). The entire booklet powerfully proclaims that the new birth occurs at the resurrection. On the final page he notes:

“It is therefore untrue that the new birth takes place at conversion. If so, it is false, and those who teach it are teaching falsehood, and that must be displeasing to the God of truth. We cannot be born anew unless we are begotten, and we cannot be begotten unless we receive with meekness the implanted word, the ten words of God” (p. 16).

Another Church of God minister who believed in the new birth culminating at the resurrection was Andrew Dugger, famous Church of God (seventh day) leading minister (R Coulter, *The Journey. A History of the Church of God (Seventh Day)*, p. 317).

Of interest is that Gilbert Cranmer (a Church of God leader) taught that the new birth culminates in the resurrection and was outlined in his article "The Birth of the Spirit," *Hope of Israel*, 1863, 14 Sept, p. 3.

Historian Richard Nickels adds further insight to the historical background of this teaching in the Church of God, Seventh-day:

"William C. Long in April 1893, wrote in the Advocate: "We are begotten of God; we are born of the Spirit. These two events do not occur at the same time. We are begotten at conversion; **we are born at the resurrection**" ... this ... was defended by the church for many years. In 1955, the Denver Group Ministerial Council identified the new birth and conversion as synonymous terms. The 1974 doctrinal statement finally adopted the position: "Conversion, also called the new birth, is the process by which one is changed from his old, sinful life into a new creature in Christ" (R C Nickels, *Bible Doctrine*, p. 11.13).



**Richard & Shirley Nickels**

Another who wrote on this was David Nield, a pastor with the Church of God in New Zealand. He wrote *Begotten Again, or Born Again – Which?* (1902, 15pp).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Further information about Nield from a SDA perspective: "I find in our files that there was a critical minister, a David Nield said to be the pastor of the Church of God at Devonport, Holloway, London North, England, Auckland and Wellington, New Zealand, author of the Good Friday Problem which proves that Christ died on Wednesday and rose on Saturday" (*Ellen G. White Estate – Question and Answer File*, 13 May, 1965, by Arthur L. White, Secretary, Ellen G. White Publications, p. 1).

"Nield was known as a pastor of the Church of God and not sympathetic to the Adventist cause. He held such beliefs as a Wednesday crucifixion of Christ, the continuing necessity to celebrate the Passover .... He challenged the Pitcairners to give up Adventism and accept his teachings as his wife had done. Instead, the islanders refused and despatched an urgent request to Australia for a resident Adventist missionary." (*Sequel to a Mutiny Early Adventism on Pitcairn Island*, by Milton Hook, South Pacific Division Department of Education, Wairoa, c.1980, p. 16)

"From its low ebb the fervour on Pitcairn soared to a high peak during those eight months of 1924. News then came to hand that Nield had died in New Zealand and the Hares left Pitcairn on October 23." (p. 17)"

A further article advocating the culmination of the new birth at the resurrection was published in *The Bible Advocate* 24 October 1911, p. 763: "Born of the Spirit. When?" by A. J. Manning.

Indeed, the time of the new birth has been a contentious issue for some time and is mentioned as such, along with other doctrines, at the 1929 General Conference of the Church of God at Stanberry. The time of the new birth was an issue at that conference, at which time it seems to have been 'dumped' by the major branch of the Church of God (R C Nickels, *A History of the Seventh Day Church of God*, p. 222).

A Sabbatarian residing in Melbourne, Australia, has published an interview with an elderly lady who, as a young girl, was once part of a branch of the Church of God in the Brute Shire in Scotland early this century, but now lives in Melbourne. The lady, Margaret McCormack, confirmed several Sabbatarian beliefs, including that "it was clearly understood that man's destiny was to **be born into the family of God**" (J Morgan, *Church of God in Scotland*, p. 1). Whether there was any connection to the other sabbath-keepers around the country we cannot be sure.

It should come as no surprise therefore, that the Church of God (Seventh Day) based at Salem, West Virginia, still teaches a future birth at the resurrection. Their general belief is birth in three stages: 1. the natural birth at the time we enter this world; 2. birth at the time of water baptism; 3. **the third birth at the time of the resurrection** (see their booklet *The Three Births*). See their article "The Birth of the Spirit", *The Advocate of Truth*, April 2022.

Another group worth mentioning is the Church of God (Abrahamic Faith) which is one of the groups directly emanating out of the Millerite Second Advent Movement. Most of their doctrines appear identical to the Church of God (seventh day) except they observe Sunday and their view of Christology is a form of Unitarianism. In their publication *The Restitution Herald* (Aug/Sept 1997) we find an excellent article by a certain Pastor Sydney Hatch, reprinted from the 15 April 1965 edition of that magazine. The article is titled "Vocabulary of the Resurrection". The following quote indicates very clearly that an aspect of the born again doctrine was well understood by many of that church:

"To speak of "regeneration" or "new birth" as referring only to the present robs it of its prophetic splendor. In the Old Testament, resurrection was regarded as a new birth or second creation (Isa. 66:7-9; Ezek. 37). Some early Christian fathers made "regeneration" synonymous with "resurrection". Thoughtful students of the Word will realize Jesus had more in mind than the present when He told Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again" John 3:7)".

It is obvious that this church, which dates to 1888, received this truth from the Millerite movement. It is a pity that it is dying out in that church and even the various churches of God. However, it may yet see a revival (dare I say "resurrection") over the next few years as news of this much neglected truth is circulated across the globe.

Finally, it may be opportune to mention here that some are reconsidering their position on this doctrine. The Adventist Laymen's Foundation, an SDA spin-off, in a private communication related the following:

"In all honesty, I had not perceived this unique concept previously. I am happy that you have called this to our attention. I shall give it some serious thought, and suggest its incorporation into the Statement of Beliefs on which we are presently working. The more one thinks about it, the more merit it has. It clarifies some questions relative to instantaneous sanctification, and covers very succinctly the whole of the Christian life."

Also, Dr Kai Arasola, Finnish SDA academic, admitted the following in a personal letter:

"Thank you for your letter on the two births. You brought out a concept that I never considered when going through Millerite material ... My first reaction is to consider what effect simple linguistics may have on this issue. Paul uses language which comes close to calling the resurrection a birth. He compares the process to sowing a seed (Gr. *spermaton*) and rising to new life (1Cor 15:20,23)."

Perhaps scholarship will be renewed into this wonderful teaching and that more and more resources will be brought to bear on tracing its origins followed by its resurrection (no pun intended) in various churches.

A SDA offshoot which publishes *The Remnant Herald* newsletter, acknowledges that Christ was 'born' at his resurrection, but do not go the next logical step, to likening the Christian resurrection to a new birth ("Winds of Doctrine", *The Remnant Herald*, April 1997). Their view is similar, if not identical to, Bullinger's *Companion Bible*, as we shall see in a future chapter.

Since writing the above in the mid-1990s, I found myself reading an interesting article by S. Joseph Kidder on the macro chiasmus in the Gospel of Matthew.

For those readers who do not know about chiasmus, it is one of the most important rules to understanding the Scriptures. The Bible has an estimated 2,000 chiasmus which reveal its Hebrew character and circular thinking (the Western mind thinks more linear). If you have Bullinger's *Companion Bible*, you would have seen the chiasmus patterns outlined throughout his Bible.

In essence it is a repetition pattern in order to clarify earlier described events. It can take on a parallel or circular form. To find out more, I would suggest having a read of "Chiasmus: An Important Structural Device Commonly Found in Biblical Literature" by Brad McCoy. Details for this article, which can be downloaded from the internet, is found in the bibliography.

The article by Kidder is titled “Christ, the Son of the Living God: The Theme of the Chiastic Structure of the Gospel of Matthew”, *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* (vol 26, no 2, 1995, pp. 149-170).

The overall purpose of the article is to build upon the research of others into the chiastic structure in Matthew and demonstrate that there is an over-arching or mega-chiasmus in Matthew.

Without going into detail, this overall chiastic structure of Matthew shows how Christ’s death and resurrection complements His birth. This means that his death and resurrection is a new birth:

“Kingship of Jesus rejected, chief Jewish leaders plot to kill Jesus 27:1-32

The crucifixion and **resurrection (rebirth)** of Jesus 27:33-28:15

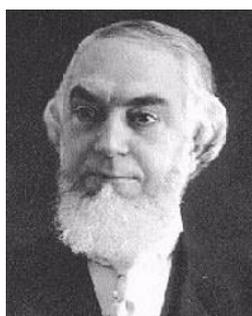
..

The genealogy of Jesus in Matthew highlights His place in the royal line of David, while His resurrection reaffirmed Jesus’s divine sovereignty over sin.

**The resurrection can also be seen as a New Birth** for Jesus in which He is able to rightly claim His heavenly throne.” (pp. 155-56) [emphasis mine]

### III. THE RUSSELLITES (EARLY WATCHTOWER OR JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES)

In my paper *Roots of our Beliefs* I discuss the relationship between the Sabbatarians, Russellites and Christadelphians. This sub-section will briefly address the born again doctrine as taught by these people.



Charles Taze Russell



Watchtower Seal

The Watchtower has a fascinating history with roots in Millerism/Adventism. When the Great Disappointment hit the Millerites after 22 October 1844, they split into two broad groups: one which believed that Christ came invisibly and will yet return visibly (the Russellites) and those that he will return visibly (the Adventists). Charles Taze Russell, while holding to some unfortunate beliefs, certainly had much more truth than the current JW administration. Some of the beliefs were: held to the name Church of God (unofficially), were anti-trinitarian, held Passover on 14 Nisan, baptism by immersion, anointing for healing, mortality of the soul, Christendom is the great Whore with many daughters, Gospel of the future Kingdom of God, second advent and 1,000 year reign of the Messiah.

While they believed they were the Church of God, it was only in 1931 that they adopted the name Jehovah's Witnesses. The aforementioned paper discusses how much the JWs have changed the truths that Russell had held to, which has led to numerous spin-offs, accusing them of being Laodicean. There is some talk among these groups to co-operate and to adopt the name Church of God. Some of them are quite aware of their distant relationship to the Church of God (Seventh-Day). Note the following comment from researcher Jerry Bergman:

"When he did die [31 October 1916], the organisation was thrown into a turmoil which resulted in the formation of a number of large splinter groups ... The changes made in policy and doctrine after he died were so drastic that many scholars now consider the Jehovah's Witnesses to be an offshoot of the original movement which Russell started. Today a number of movements claim to be the "faithful" followers of Russell's teachings." (*Jehovah's Witnesses and Kindred Groups*, p. xvii)

Ruth Tucker, author of *Another Gospel*, writes the following:

"... through clever manoeuvring, Rutherford managed to seize control and maintain his position despite the intense opposition from individuals and factions ... Rutherford prevailed and brought a new style to the movement. As a result, many of Russell's Bible Students deserted the organization ... 'Thus,' writes Rogerson, 'modern-day Jehovah's Witnesses are not necessarily direct successors of Pastor Russell ... the evil within the organization [is traceable] to Rutherford, not to Russell, who at times is depicted as a virtual saint in comparison to his successor' ... in 1931 [Rutherford] began referring to the movement as Jehovah's Witnesses" (pp. 125-128).

As we shall shortly see, many of these groups continued his teachings on the born again doctrine. Russell certainly held the view that the new birth occurs in the resurrection, not at baptism. Note the following from Russell's work *Studies in the Scriptures. Series 1. The Plan of the Ages*:

"... after being dead three days, he [Christ] was raised to life - to the perfection of spirit being ... born of the Spirit - "the firstborn from the dead." "That which is *born* of the Spirit is *spirit*." Jesus, therefore, at and after his resurrection, was a spirit - a spirit being, and no longer a human being in any sense" (pp. 230-31).

"The Greek word *gennao* and its derivatives, sometimes translated *begotten* and sometimes *born*, really contains both ideas, and should be translated by either one of these two English words, according to the sense of the passage in which it occurs. The two ideas, begetting and birth, are always in the word, so that if the one is stated, the other is always implied, as birth is the natural consequence of begetting, and begetting the natural antecedent to birth. When the active agent with which *gennao* is associated is a male, it should be translated *begotten*; when a female, *born*. Thus in

1John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,18, *gennao* should be *begotten*, because God (masculine) is the active agent)" (p. 278).

"... you will be *begotten* of the Father to anew life and the divine nature, which, if it develop and become quickened, will insure your being *born* a new creature, a spirit being, in the first resurrection; and as such you shall not only see but share the kingdom" (pp. 279-80).

The entire book is vitally important in our studying Adventist-Millerite heritage, but I will not belabor the point by quoting any more from it. Another teacher of this doctrine was George W Stetson who was a Second Advent Christian preacher. He died in 1879 and Russell preached at his funeral. In *The Present Truth* of Sept-Oct 1991 it is acknowledged that George W Stetson, a minister with the Advent Christian Church, was influential in bringing certain doctrinal understanding to Russell, including the born again in the resurrection doctrine (p. 1). Stetson wrote an article in the 13 September 1871 *World's Crisis* on "Infant Salvation" (reprinted in the aforementioned *Present Truth*, pp. 72-73). In this remarkable article he argues for the new birth to occur at the resurrection when we shall be full Sons of God.

Russell was very frank and honest by indicating that he was indebted to the Adventists and also George Stetson and George Storrs in formulating doctrine (MJ Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed*, p. 15). In fact Storrs was involved with the movement led by William Miller since 1842 (ibid, p. 16). Russell was also indebted to Storrs for the observance of Passover on 14 Abib, rather than as a weekly or quarterly Lord's Supper (*Apocalypse Delayed*, p. 17). Storrs was also instrumental in bringing the British-Israel truth into the Churches of God as far as we know.

One spin-off from the JWs, protesting at the doctrinal shift away from the teachings of Russell, is the Dawn Bible Students Association. Their booklet, *Born of the Spirit* discusses this subject thoroughly and concurs that "Christians are begotten now by the Spirit and in the resurrection will be born into the heavenly realm to live and reign with Christ" (p. 12).

Another spin-off is the Laymen's Home Missionary Movement. Their booklet *Born Again and once in Grace, Always in Grace - Is this Scriptural?*, discusses the born again doctrine within this context. It is clear that they believe that Christians are impregnated with the Holy Spirit at baptism, undergo a gestation Christian life and are finally born into the Kingdom. They maintain that Christ was born from the dead etc. The booklet is remarkably similar to HWA's position.

It is my hope that more information will be forthcoming on the roots of this doctrine. It obviously may be traced back to the sabbatarians and both the early SDAs and Sunday Adventists at the very least. Very likely, as more research is undertaken, we will uncover its true roots. Perhaps we may find evidence for it among certain Seventh-day Baptists and scattered remnants of the Church during the period c1802-1844 and even amongst certain Protestants, for the concept was known amongst them in the 1800s.

#### IV. HERBERT W ARMSTRONG - THE SIFTER

In my paper *Roots of our Beliefs* I show that Herbert W Armstrong was a sifter who utilised the works of others. It was this garnering and purifying nature of his which led him to scan many works from other groups and to incorporate certain of their teachings into the foundations he had learned from the Church of God (seventh-day).

He looked at material from the SDAs and JWs (he said so himself) and *Judah's Sceptre and Joseph's Birthright* by JH Allen (he said so himself in a taped Bible Study in 1980). Works by other British-Israelites, the Christadelphians, various splinter groups and such like were obviously looked at. As such, Christ used him as a sifter, thereby restoring much lost truth to, or building upon the foundations of, the Church of God this century.

Even the names of publications he used reflected that of Millerites, Second Adventists and Russellites. The aforementioned paper *Roots of our Beliefs* settles once and for all that HWA plagiarised. Instead, he certainly was inspired to sift, but that was from a Higher source. We would have been without these wonderful teachings if it were not for him – his crystal clear teachings certainly were sharper and more accurate than others. God works in mysterious ways.

Although Mr Armstrong apparently took on board the Church of God's doctrine of two spiritual births based on John 3 (ie at conversion and at the resurrection), the emphasis was on the spiritual 'birth' at conversion.

Here is evidence of his early acceptance of the Church's teaching:

"So what must we conclude? That which is born of the flesh IS FLESH, John 3:6. When fleshly, sinning, mortal man REPENTS and is BAPTIZED as a symbol of his FAITH in Christ, he RECEIVES THE HOLY SPIRIT -- not as a result of "tarrying," but through FAITH (Galatians 3:14; John 7:37, 39). And this RECEIVING of the GIFT of the Holy Spirit is the baptism with the Spirit INTO the Church!

He is then a CHILD OF GOD. He has been typically BORN AGAIN -- **though the real re-birth must come at the time of the resurrection**. He is born from above -- born of the Spirit. And thus he is baptized BY the Spirit into the body of Christ!" ("Tongues. Is the Pentecost Experience Being Repeated Today?" *Plain Truth*, Nov 1934, p. 7) [emphasis mine]

Here he seems to subscribe to the traditional Church of God belief of that time – two aspects of born again (conversion and resurrection).

But notice that in the June 1938 *The Bulletin of the Churches of God*, he makes a statement

in the fourth paragraph that shows that he believed that one is born again now, and that seems to have been the emphasis in those days:

“We recognize that all born-again souls become members of the spiritual Body of Christ, the true CHURCH OF GOD.”

However, he was led to understand human destiny by the early 1950s. Unlike the born again in the resurrection as taught by the Church of God in those days, he took it to another level by demonstrating it included a literal birth into God’s Family. The booklet first published in 1962 was titled *Just what do you mean ... Born Again?* and expanded upon over time.<sup>3</sup>

He explained this in an article published in 1969:

“Many NEW truths have come to light in the past twenty years. Some has been revealed through various of God's ministers - my son Garner Ted, Mr. Roderick Meredith, Dr. Herman Hoeh, Mr. Raymond McNair, Mr. Albert Portune, Mr. Charles Hunting, Dr. Ernest Martin, Dr. Charles Dorothy, and others. And also God has continued to reveal important and basic truths through me. Among these have been the TRUTH about the PURPOSE of human life - the fact that God is not merely one Person, or a "trinity," but the divine FAMILY or KINGDOM. The truth that we are now only BEGOTTEN, and that being BORN AGAIN is to be actually BORN into that very FAMILY, as sons of God, even as the living Jesus Christ is a divine Son of God. THAT Truth is BASIC - and I did not understand it until after the college was founded. **I could "see" it, even up in Oregon, but was AFRAID to accept it** - it seemed like "blasphemy" to assume we humans could become members of the DIVINE FAMILY that IS God! But finally I had to accept it, when faced with the fact that it is taught throughout the New Testament!" (“Personal from the Editor”, *Good News*, August 1969, p. 6). [emphasis mine]

And that concludes the history of the born again doctrine. In the following chapter we discuss the Biblical proofs for this teaching in more detail.

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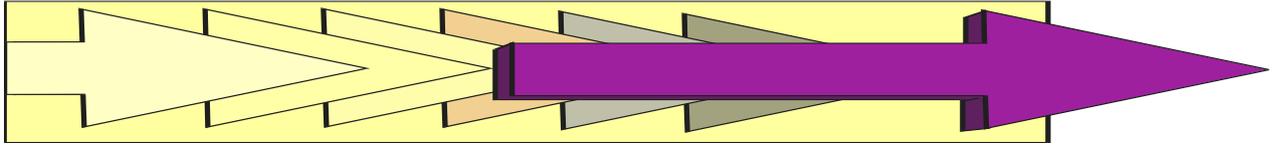
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#### FURTHER READING

- *Just what do you mean ... “Born Again”?* by H W Armstrong
- *Born of the Spirit* by the Dawn Bible Student Association
- *The Three Births* by Church of God (seventh day), Salem West Virginia
- *Begotten Again, or Born Again*. Church of God, Seventh-day, by D Nield

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<sup>3</sup> Ray Straub of the Church of God (seventh day) seems to critique the booklet in his article “Are Christians Begotten or Born? *Bible Advocate*, July 1972, pp. 3-5, 23-24.



## BIBLICAL SALVATION PRINCIPLES

### HIGHLIGHTS

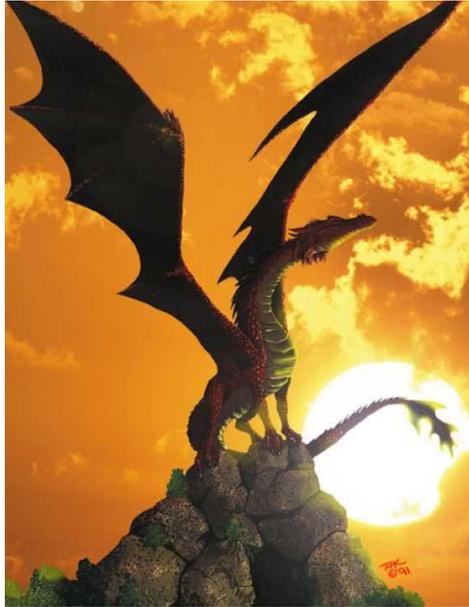
- The Holy Days outline the Plan of God
- Salvation, redemption and so on are all a process in 3 stages
- Real, full salvation etc are not reached until the resurrection - current salvation etc are mere tiny steps toward the final goal
- Similarly, we are born at the resurrection, but regenerated and commence new life now. Therefore we are now conceived, not yet born in ANY sense.

Now that we have considered a little of the historical roots of the ‘born again in the resurrection’ doctrine, we need to turn our attention to explicit Biblical principles on salvation and its inter-relationship to the born again concept. To do this we take a look at dozens of relevant Scriptures – as such, this chapter can be consider a Bible study.

### BACKGROUND

As we shall shortly see, if we search the entire New Testament we shall ascertain quite clearly that salvation and related or overlapping concepts follow the same patterns: **we are saved** from past sins, **we are being saved** on a daily basis by Jesus Christ our High Priest, by washing us clean by His precious blood, by washing of our conscience by the spiritual water (the Holy Spirit) and by the Word (eating daily of the Bible and its teachings and lessons); **and we will be finally saved** by inheriting immortality in the resurrection. Salvation is nothing without immortality. Past salvation pictured by the Passover is very incomplete without our current salvation of adhering to God’s Ways and Laws and receipt of the Holy Spirit to enable us to develop Godly characteristics such as the fruits of the spirit and the beatitudes (pictured by the Days of Unleavened Bread).

We are placed within His Church to enable us to have the best means to grow spiritually (Pentecost). Then, at the resurrection, pictured by the Feast of Trumpets, we are finally saved. But even then salvation continues with the removal of Satan (Atonement), the Millennial reign of the Messiah (Tabernacles) and the billions given a chance of salvation (Last Great Day).



**Satan the Dragon is on the prowl to devour the unborn children of God**

A salvation which concentrates primarily upon the death of Christ misses out on the rest of the story. It is a very limited or even stunted salvation resting upon the historical Christ and little, if anything, upon the eschatological Christ. Let us be certain that our salvation does not begin and end with the Passover sacrifice of Christ. Christ is a lot bigger than merely the four Gospels. He is the whole Word of God and everything he stands for or will do is to be found stated throughout the entire Bible.

It is clear that these overlapping concepts, which are utilised by Almighty God to inculcate in us an understanding of what He is doing in us (that is replicating His own kind as we shall see later in this paper), are used in the sense of one process in three stages. I ask the reader to bear with me and to examine the many quoted scriptures to prove this point. We find the consistency wherever the Newer Testament speaks of our calling into glory, salvation/grace/blood of Christ, conversion/reconciliation/ sanctification/justification, redemption, put on Christ/the new man/ new creation, washing of baptism by the spirit, water and blood, resurrection/renewal/re-creation/glorification and Kingdom of God membership.

My basic argument is simply this: if these aforementioned aspects of salvation are to be found in scripture to fulfil a process in three stages, then why not born again? It would seem inconsistent if indeed this were not the case.

Could it be true that born again is a process commencing at baptism (pictured by the baptism of the Red Sea crossing), undergoing growth trials and pangs (pictured by the Wilderness wanderings) and reaching its fullness at the resurrection (pictured by the baptism of the crossing of the Jordan) whence we enter the Kingdom (pictured by the Holy Land) in similitude to the other aspects of salvation?

At this point, before we take a peek at the scripture itself, we should understand that the

first stage in all of these aspects of salvation, is a very minuscule part of the whole process. Thus, our past salvation, as important, wonderful and beautiful as it is, should be seen within the overall process: the beginning is so small, it is merely a 'taste' or 'foretaste' of the ultimate reality (see Heb 6:4). Our past salvation is a mere 'molecule' compared to the glory which shall be. A parallel may as well be a comparison of a worm with a butterfly (Rom 12:2); or ant with a human; or, better still, compare an unborn babe with the limited 'knowledge' and senses it has, with a born child. See 1Cor 15:37, 42-43.

To prove the point, let us now turn to that great book, the Bible.

## **I. CALLING INTO GLORY**

God is in the process of calling persons out of the world and together into an holy assembly. He has called us individually into His wonderful light. Yet, as we shall see, His calling is continuous, perhaps each day: our loving Father calls out to us to fellowship with Him daily; he also calls out to any straying or lost sheep. And the greatest calling of all is yet to occur. Indeed, He will call us into the Kingdom at the final trump. Our calling, then, is a continuous process, in three stages, culminating in the resurrection.

### **STAGE 1:**

Rom 8:30: Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he **called**, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also **glorified**.

Heb 9:15: And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which **are called** might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

2Tim 1:9: Who hath saved us, and **called** us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

2Thess 2:14 Whereunto he **called you** by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Col 1:27: To whom God would make **known what is the riches of the glory** of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

### **STAGE 2:**

Eph 1:18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his **calling**, and what the riches of the **glory** of his inheritance in the saints.

1Thess 2:12 That ye would **walk** worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and **glory**.

**STAGE 3:**

Matt 22: 2-14 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **For many are called, but few are chosen.**

Rom 8:17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that **we may be also glorified together.**

1Thess 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

1Pet 1:7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and **glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.**

Col 1:27; 3:4 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory ... When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall **ye also appear with him in glory.**

Rev 17:14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

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## II. SALVATION/GRACE/BLOOD OF CHRIST

Herbert W Armstrong taught that salvation was a process in three stages. He showed that the future salvation, in the resurrection, is the far greater salvation, yet dependant upon the previous stages.

### STAGE 1:

Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he **saved** us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. (Greek for “regeneration” may be translated rebirth, renovation or restoration according to Strong’s Concordance. According to Thayer’s Lexicon it may be translated as new birth, reproduction, renewal or re-creation. Obviously, given the context, any one of these words may be used, except rebirth or new birth).

Rom 8:24 For **we are saved** by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

Rom 3:24-25 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness **for the remission of sins that are past**, through the forbearance of God.

Rom 4:7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose **sins are covered**.

1Pet 3:21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also **now save us** (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1John 3:2 Beloved, **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.

Eph 2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye **are saved**).

2Tim 1:9 Who **hath saved us**, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

### STAGE 2:

1Cor 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto **us**

**which are saved** it is the power of God.

1Cor 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

1Cor 2:15-16 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that **are saved**, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

Phil 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

### **STAGE 3:**

Rom 5:8-10 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, **we shall be saved from wrath** through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Rom 13:11 And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for **now is our salvation nearer** than when we believed.

Matt 24:13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same **shall be saved**.

Matt 10:22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end **shall be saved**.

1Pet 1:5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith **unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time**.

Heb 9:28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him **shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation**.

Is 35:4 Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; **he will come and save you**.

Is 51:6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: **but my salvation shall be for ever**, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.

Is 56:1 Thus saith the LORD, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for **my salvation is near to**

**come**, and my righteousness to be revealed.

Is 62:11 Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, **Behold, thy salvation cometh**; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.

Salvation is therefore a process in three stages, each dependant upon the other. At last, universal "salvation will conclude with the arrival of a new age and new order of creation" (Toon, p. 51). After our initial salvation, the new being is not in a static mode, but he/she which is deeply involved in growth (hope, love, faith) "in view of the final salvation which is to come" (Balz and Schneider *in Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, p. 77).

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### **III. CONVERSION/RECONCILIATION/SANCTIFICATION/JUSTIFICATION**

In similitude to salvation, Mr Armstrong also taught that there were three stages to conversion.

#### **STAGE 1:**

Luke 22:32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and **when thou art converted**, strengthen thy brethren.

1Thess 1:9 For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how **ye turned to God** from idols to serve the living and true God.

James 5:19-20 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him. Let him know, that **he which converteth** the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

1Pet 2:25 For ye were as sheep going astray; **but are now returned unto the Shepherd** and Bishop of your souls.

#### **STAGE 2:**

John 4:14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water **springing up** into everlasting life.

2Cor 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet **the inward man is renewed day by day**.

Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is **renewed in knowledge** after the image of him that created him.

Eph 3:16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be **strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man**.

Rom 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but **be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind**, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

### **STAGE 3:**

John 4:14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up **into everlasting life**.

1John 5:18 We know that **whosoever is born of God sinneth not**; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

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## **IV. REDEMPTION**

Given the processes of salvation and conversion, it follows that in all likelihood, that redemption likewise reflects this Biblical model. Although Herbert Armstrong did not, to my knowledge, preach three stages to redemption, yet, as we shall see, the Bible is clear on this also. GWH Lampe wrote that Christians are “awaiting the day of redemption” (*The Seal of the Spirit*, p. 47). Well, is it a future event as Lampe suggests; or past? Or is it past, present and primarily future?

### **STAGE 1:**

Rom 3:24-25 **Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus**: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.

1Tim 2:6 Who **gave himself a ransom for all**, to be testified in due time.

Matt 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and **to give his life a ransom for many**.

Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of

the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; **Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us** from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

1Pet 1:18-19 Forasmuch as ye know that **ye were not redeemed with corruptible things**, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Eph 1:7 In whom **we have redemption through his blood**, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which **he hath purchased with his own blood**.

Rev 5:9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, **and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood** out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Col 1:13-14 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom **we have redemption through his blood**, even the forgiveness of sins.

1Cor 6:20 For **ye are bought with a price**: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit ...

## **STAGE 2:**

Eph 1:13-14 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise. Which is the earnest of our inheritance **until the redemption** of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

## **STAGE 3:**

Rom 8:23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, **waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body**.

Luke 21:28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; **for your redemption draweth nigh**.

Eph 4:30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby **ye are sealed unto the day of**

**redemption.**

Surely there can be no denying that redemption also has past, present and future aspects.

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## **V. PUT ON CHRIST/ THE NEW MAN/ NEW CREATION**

Amongst terminology used by God to convey understanding of His plan, He utilises terms which accurately portrays what He is trying to do in us. Amongst these terms are phrases about 'putting on Christ', becoming a 'new man' or becoming a 'new creation'. Could these also be referred to in the three ways by Paul: past, present and future? And if so, does it show a growth or maturing and perfecting of the Christian from a small beginning toward the grand finale? Let us see what the scriptures have to say.

### **STAGE 1:**

Rom 6:6 Knowing this, that **our old man is crucified with him**, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Gal 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ **have put on Christ**.

Eph 4:15, 22-24 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ, That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that **ye put on the new man**, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Col 3:8-10 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing **that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man**, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.

### **STAGE 2:**

Rom 7:22 For **I delight in the law of God after the inward man**:

Rom 13:14 But **put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

2Cor 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, **yet the inward man is renewed day by day**.

2Cor 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, **all things are become new.**

Eph 3:16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, **to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;**

Eph 6:15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, **but a new creature.**

1Pet 3:4 But **let it be the hidden man of the heart**, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

### **STAGE 3:**

1Cor 15:47-53 The first man is of the earth, earthy: **the second man is the Lord from heaven.** As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, **we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.** Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

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## **VI. WASHING OF BAPTISM BY THE SPIRIT, WATER & BLOOD**

Given the aforementioned Biblical principle, is it at all possible that even baptism could be a process paralleling the three stages of salvation, conversion, redemption and so forth? Be prepared for a surprise.

### **STAGE 1:**

Rev 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and **washed us from our sins in his own blood,**

1John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, **and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.**

1 Pet 1:18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But

with **the precious blood of Christ**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

1Pet 3:21 The like figure whereunto even **baptism doth also now save us** (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Heb 9:14 How much more shall the **blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, **purge your conscience** from dead works to serve the living God?

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath **purchased with his own blood**.

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, 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 Ghost.

Rom 6:3-4 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? **Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death**: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life ("Paul generally speaks of baptism, not as a new birth, but as a "burial with Christ" in the baptismal waters followed by a rising again therefrom" - JH Bernard, *The International Critical Commentary. The Gospel According to St. John*, pp. clxiii-iv).

Col 2:12 **Buried with him in baptism**, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

1Cor 12:13 For by one Spirit are **we all baptized into one body**, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

## **STAGE 2:**

Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, **by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost**;

Heb 10:22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, **having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water**.

2Cor 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet **the inward man is renewed day by day**.

1Cor 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not **the communion of the blood of Christ**? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

1Cor 6:11 And such were some of you: **but ye are washed**, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Eph 5:26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with **the washing of water by the word**.

John 15:3 Now **ye are clean through the word** which I have spoken unto you.

### **STAGE 3:**

Matt 3:11-12 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: **he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire**: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but **he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire**.

Mark 10:38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and **be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with**? [here Christ was speaking of His future sufferings, death and resurrection. Cp Ps 11:6; 42:7; 69:1-3; 124:4-5; Is 51:17].

Luke 12:49-51 I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? But I have a **baptism to be baptized with** [His future sufferings, death and resurrection]; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:

From the above we may deduce the following:

Firstly, we have been both physically baptised and spiritually washed clean of all sin and purity by the precious, rich, warm incredible blood of the Son of God (the bath of regeneration) in order to make us pure, righteous, upright and thus God-like. Secondly, God continues to wash us clean by the blood of Christ upon repentance of sins each day. And, as Christians are spiritual priests after the order of Melchizedek, inheriting the functions of the physical Levitical priesthood in a spiritual service to God, they must be bathed on a daily basis, in the waters of the holy spirit in contact with God via His Word. In effect, they are spiritually baptised as the priests were physically baptised prior to presentation to God.

Thirdly, we see that Christ's death and resurrection and the third resurrection are likened to a baptism. If so, then why not the first resurrection for Christians? Perhaps we will experience another 'washing of the spirit - actually putting on Christ and becoming composed of the spirit - at this time. How like a baby at the 'breaking of water' at the time of birth and then its washing by the nurse or mid-wife. Does this not fit the overall schema and

God's plan of salvation?

As we saw in the first chapter, Theodore of Mopsuestia (c 350-428AD) wrote in terms of baptistry as a womb which, he believed, was for preparing Christians for birth; incredibly, he even describes the baptismal water as the water of second birth, which was itself typed by the fluid surrounding the foetus in the mother's womb (*Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, pp. 53-54).

It was surprising to me to come across this quote as I had already come to this conclusion and had shared this speculation with several of my acquaintances. There seems to be some credibility to this: the embryo 'floats' in amniotic fluid within the sac. An outer membrane, the chorion, encloses the amniotic sac. This is known as the womb or uterus. The amniotic sac is also known as the water bag. When it breaks upon birth, the fluid and blood washes over the baby almost like some kind of baptism. Further, the baby is then washed by the midwife or nurse. Could this be a type of baptism of the resurrection at which time our 'midwives', the angels, deliver us to Christ? See Matt 24:31; 1Thess 4:17.

In a future paper on the Christian spiritual Exodus, the 'baptism' of the Red Sea will be revealed to be equivalent to Christian water baptism and the 'baptism' of the River Jordan will be shown to represent the resurrection of spiritual Israelites.

Toon himself likens baptism to a mere seed of new life (p. 87). He further states that

" ... the verb used in Mark 12:10 to describe Jesus' arising from the water is *anabaino*, the very verb used in John 3:13; 6:62; 20:17; and Ephesians 4:8-10 to refer to the ascension of Jesus. Thus there is probably an allusion to the ascension of Jesus in his coming up out of the river. And, of course, following this ascent there was the descent (*katabaino*) of the Spirit upon him" (p. 22).

Of course, for baptism pictures the repentant being washed clean, dying to sin and rising with Christ, partaking of His sufferings, plus his/her future resurrection. A future baptism of a bodily death and resurrection awaits all Christians at the return of Christ.

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## VII. RENEWAL, RE-CREATION, RESURRECTION, GLORIFICATION

Be prepared for another surprise. Please examine the following verses carefully and then read my comments at the end of this sub-section.

### STAGE 1:

1Cor 15:36-37 Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that

which thou sowest, **thou sowest not that body that shall be**, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:

Eph 2:5-6 Even when we were dead in sins, **hath quickened us together with Christ**, (by grace ye are saved;). **And hath raised us up together**, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

Col 2:12-13 Buried with him in baptism, **wherein also ye are risen with him** through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, **hath he quickened together with him**, having forgiven you all trespasses;

Col 3:1-4,10 **If ye then be risen with Christ**, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God ["hid"? How? Perhaps this is a hidden analogy of the foetus in the womb of the Body of Christ, fully enclosed by it]. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory ... And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

Rom 6:3-13 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: **that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life**. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. **Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ** our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: **but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead**, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

## **STAGE 2:**

Eph 5:26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it **with the washing of water by the word**,

Eph 4:23-24 And **be renewed in the spirit of your mind**; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, **by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost**;

Rom 8:8-11 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But **ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit**, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, **the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness**. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Rom 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed **by the renewing of your mind**, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

2 Cor 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, **yet the inward man is renewed day by day**.

Col 3:10,12 And have put on the new man ... **which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him**: Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

### **STAGE 3:**

1 Cor 15:44,49-53 It is sown a natural body; **it is raised a spiritual body** [ie a body composed of spirit - the holy spirit itself]. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

1Thess 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and **the dead in Christ shall rise first**:

Matt 24:31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

John 6:54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; **and I will raise him up at the last day**.

Phil 3:10-12 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; **If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained**, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Well, what do you think, dear reader? Do not the scriptures say that we have been spiritually 'resurrected' at baptism when we received the holy spirit? Were we not given a new life? Was this not the germ of eternal life - a mere spark of life not unlike that of a foetus in the womb? And this was thus a 'taste' of the future Kingdom of God? The generating of new life via that 'resurrection' pales into insignificance compared to the resurrection that shall be at the coming of Christ. We might say similar things of salvation, conversion, redemption and so on. Hence the focus should be primarily on the future salvation, future resurrection and future Kingdom of God.

The word for "regeneration" used in Titus 3:5 ("the washing of regeneration") is "palingenesia" and is used in only one other place, Matt 19:28. Bullinger's *Companion Bible* states that in Matthew it refers to the same "restoration" as in Acts 3:21. A synonymous expression is used in Mark 10:30 where, he says, "The Syr. Reads 'in the **new world**'" (p. 1353) (emphasis mine). In Matt 19:28 the Greek word is derived from words meaning rebirth and renovation (see Strong's #3824, 3825 and 1078).

Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon* (#3824) states that the word refers to "new birth, **reproduction**, renewal, re-creation ... regeneration, the production of a new life consecrated to god, a radical change of mind for the better ... the word denotes the restoration of a thing to its pristine state, its renovation, as the renewal or restoration of life after death".

Each day, we must be spiritually re-baptised and 're-resurrected' - it is an ongoing process. But the much, much, much greater resurrection - the bodily resurrection - will yet occur. Do we not all hope for that wonderful event and to be forever with Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour?

I was very surprised to see the following quote in Toon's book:

"Paul uses the verb *zoopoiein*, "to make alive" ... Though *zoopoiein* usually refers to the new life in the resurrection body of the future kingdom, there is an implied reference to the beginning of that new life within the old body in this age ... In fact the individual can receive the full inheritance promised in Christ only when there exist a new age and world [ie the World Tomorrow] in which that inheritance can be given to all saints" (pp. 43, 49).

Indeed. But, if words such as *zoopoiein* may be used in reference to various matters or various stages in the resurrection, then why not *gennao*? We shall see shortly whether this is possible.

We are told in John 6:63 and Col 2:13 that the spirit of God "quickens" us. *The Oxford Paperback Dictionary* defines this word as:

"1. To make or become quicker. 2. To stimulate, to make or become livelier, our interest quickened. **3. To reach a stage in pregnancy (the quickening)**

**when the foetus makes movements that can be felt by the mother”.**  
(Emphasis mine)

The Greek is “zoopoieo” = “to vitalize ... make alive, **give new life**, quicken” (*Strong’s Concordance* #227). *Thayer’s Lexicon* comments that this word means “to produce alive, beget or **bear living young** ... to cause to live, make alive, give life ... to reanimate, restore to life ... **seeds quickening into life, i.e. germinating, springing up, growing**: ICor xv.36” (p. 274). (Emphasis mine)

See Rom 4:17; 8:11; ICor 15:45; John 5:21; 6:63 where the same word is used in connection with resurrection. Also, the same word is used when we are “quickened” in our spiritual resurrection at baptism and made into a “new man”. Cp Rom 6:2-5.

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## VIII. KINGDOM OF GOD MEMBERSHIP

Let us now turn our attention to the various scriptures on the Kingdom of God. You will notice again, the past, present and future reality of this terminology - this wonderful Kingdom. Indeed, at the time of Christ, the term ‘Kingdom of God’ or ‘Kingdom of Heaven’, were interchangeably used of the future reign of the Messiah. This was by far the most prominent meaning of the term. A secondary meaning meant the rulership of God in the true believer’s life:

“While thus the acknowledgment of the Rule of God, both in profession and practice, was considered to constitute the Kingdom of God, its full [ie much, much greater] manifestation was expected only in the time of the Advent of Messiah ... an analysis of 119 passages in the New Testament where the expression ‘Kingdom’ occurs, shows that it means the rule of God; which was manifested in and through Christ; is apparent in the Church; gradually develops amidst hindrances; is apparent at the second coming of Christ (‘the end’); and, finally perfected in the world to come” (Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, pp. 268, 270).

### STAGE 1:

Matt 12:28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then **the kingdom of God is come unto you.**

Mark 4:30-32 And he said, Whereunto shall we liken **the kingdom of God**? or with what comparison shall we compare it? **It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth**, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

Luke 10:9 And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, **The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.**

Luke 17:21-22 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, **the kingdom of God is within you.** And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.

Col 1:13-14 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and **hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:** In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

1Thess 2:12 That ye would walk worthy of God, **who hath called you unto his kingdom** and glory.

Heb 6:4-5 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and **have tasted of the heavenly gift,** and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

1Pet 2:3 If so be ye **have tasted that the Lord is gracious.**

#### **STAGE 2:**

Rom 14:17 **For the kingdom of God is** not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

1Cor 4:20 **For the kingdom of God is** not in word, but in power.

2Cor 10:4-5 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God **to the pulling down of strong holds;**) [like the Israelites entering Canaan - type of the Kingdom -ed] Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

#### **STAGE 3:**

Luke 13:28-29 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, **in the kingdom of God,** and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

1Cor 15:49-53 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed**, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

Titus 3:7 That being justified by his grace, we should be **made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.**

James 2: 5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, **and heirs of the kingdom** which he hath promised to them that love him?

Rev 5:10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Biblically, we had the Kingdom of Israel (indeed, the nations and governments of Israel are still extant upon the earth). In the Newer Testament Christ represented the future Kingdom as the scriptures indicate. "How?" one might ask. For He was its chosen future king, proclaiming the Good News of the coming Kingdom of God upon the earth in its much greater fullness. The Church today is like the Kingdom of God in embryo; but the much greater Kingdom of God in its fullness is yet future - that is what the Gospel is all about. This future Kingdom is billions of times greater than the Kingdom of God in embryo that our emphasis **MUST** be on this future Kingdom.

Peter Toon in his interesting and highly readable work *Born Again. A Biblical and Theological Study of Regeneration* writes:

"The expression "the kingdom of God is near" is to be understood in terms of both space and time. It is near in terms of space because Jesus, who embodies and communicates the gracious reign of God, is now beginning his ministry of confronting Satan, sin, death, and disease ... This rule in its [billion times greater] fullness is yet to arrive" (p. 38).

Peter Toon is partly correct. The Kingdom was exemplified in Christ, at least in a small way - prefiguring His future, greater coming as Messiah which will herald His salvation of the world. It is today in an embryonic state within the Church. But its greatest glory is infinitesimally beyond our imagination. That supreme glory is yet to emerge.

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## **IX. BORN AGAIN**

Now for the main thrust of my argument. We have seen that the New Testament relates the various aspects of salvation in three time periods - a process in three stages, if you will (past

small beginnings, present growth and advancement, and the much greater future realisation and fulfilment). Now, if this be true, what of the born again doctrine?

Please read the following verses and then let us acknowledge the Biblical principle.

### **STAGE 1:**

Eph 1:13-14 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that **holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance** until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

2Cor 1:22 Who hath also sealed us, and given **the earnest of the Spirit** in our hearts.

2Cor 5:5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us **the earnest of the Spirit**.

1Cor 15:35 But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, **that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be**, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. **So also is the resurrection of the dead.** It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

John 12:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, **Except a man be born of water** and of the Spirit [two separate regenerations here ed], he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Rom 6:5-6 **For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:** Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Gal 6:8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; **but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.**

Mark 4:30-32 And he said, **Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth,** is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

## **STAGE 2:**

1Pet 1:23 **Being born again, not of corruptible seed,** but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

1Cor 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not **the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?**

John 6:53-57 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. **Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life;** and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

1John 5:4 For whatsoever is born [Gr can mean begettal or birth] of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

Eph 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may **grow up into him** in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

Eph 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together **groweth** unto an holy temple in the Lord:

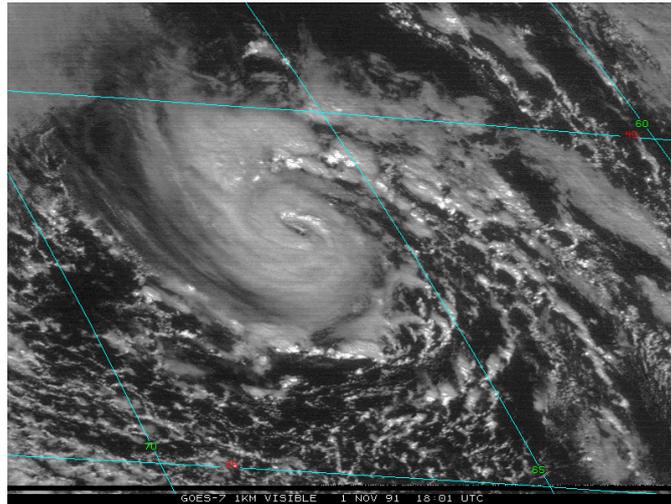
2Pet 3:18 **But grow** in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ [His knowledge - the entire Word of God]. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

## **STAGE 3:**

1John 5:4,18 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith ... **We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not;** but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

1John 3:9 **Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;** for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

John 3:3-8 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. **That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.**



The mighty power of wind – the hurricane at full force

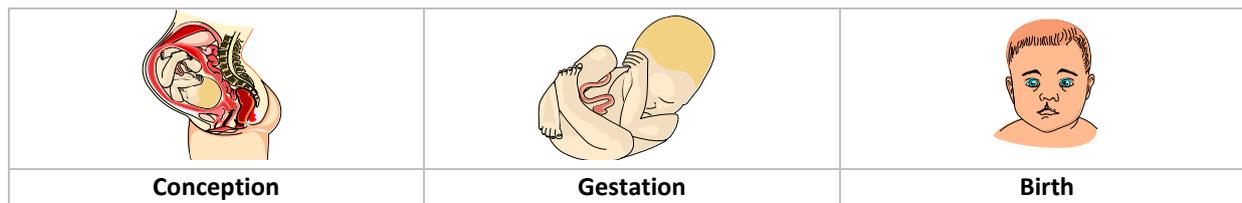
Mic 4:10 **Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion** [This is not just Israel - the daughter of Zion is the Church of God in prophecy, as the daughter of Babylon is the Great False Church. That church had many apostate daughters born from harlotry, which emerged in protest], like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies.

Jer 4:31 For I have heard **a voice as of a woman in travail**, and the anguish as of her that bringeth forth her first child, **the voice of the daughter of Zion**, that bewaileth herself, that spreadeth her hands, saying, Woe is me now! for my soul is wearied because of murderers.

Jer 6:23-27 They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea; and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee, **O daughter of Zion**. We have heard the fame thereof: our hands wax feeble: anguish hath taken hold of us, and **pain, as of a woman in travail**. Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way; for the sword of the enemy and fear is on every side. O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes: make thee mourning, as for an only son, most bitter lamentation: for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us. I have set thee for a tower and a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way.

Is 66:7-9 Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? **for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.** Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the LORD: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God.

Other related scriptures which tie in are: Jer 13:21; 30:6; Mic 5:13; Hos 13;13; Gal 4:25-27; Job 15:20; Ps 7:14; Eccl 2;23, 26; 4;6; IThess 5;3; Rev 12:2; Matt 24:8.



After reviewing these scriptures, what do we find? Surely the answer is self-evident?: “ ... the kingdom of God belongs to the realm or order of spirit” (RH Lightfoot, *St John’s Gospel*, p. 116).

We find that God is consistent: our birth into the Kingdom when we become spirit, takes place in the resurrection. But we certainly have new life now, we absorb the blood and flesh of the body of Christ which is His church. How like an unborn babe which feeds upon the body and nutrients of its mother. Surely, if we were to feed upon Christ’s body as born children, then we would be cannibals? But, if we are yet to be born, but are feeding upon the body of Christ, then the analogy fits. For we are heirs to the promised Kingdom. We are not yet born children with anything near the powers or awareness or knowledge of what we shall be. We are so minuscule in our being that we are as if we are unborn.

Richardson in *A Theological Wordbook of the Bible* comments that in the Old Testament the Hebrew for “birth”, “beget”, “bear”, “regeneration” are normally from the root *yalad* and is used metaphorically of the rebirth of Israel after exile (Is 66:8f); **of resurrection** (Ezek 37:1-14); of Zion’s children (Is 49:21; 54:1ff). Indeed, the roots of the New Testament doctrine of this concept of birth as children at a resurrection at Christ’s coming are found within the Old Testament. As is usually the case, the New Testament builds upon the foundations of the Old Testament.

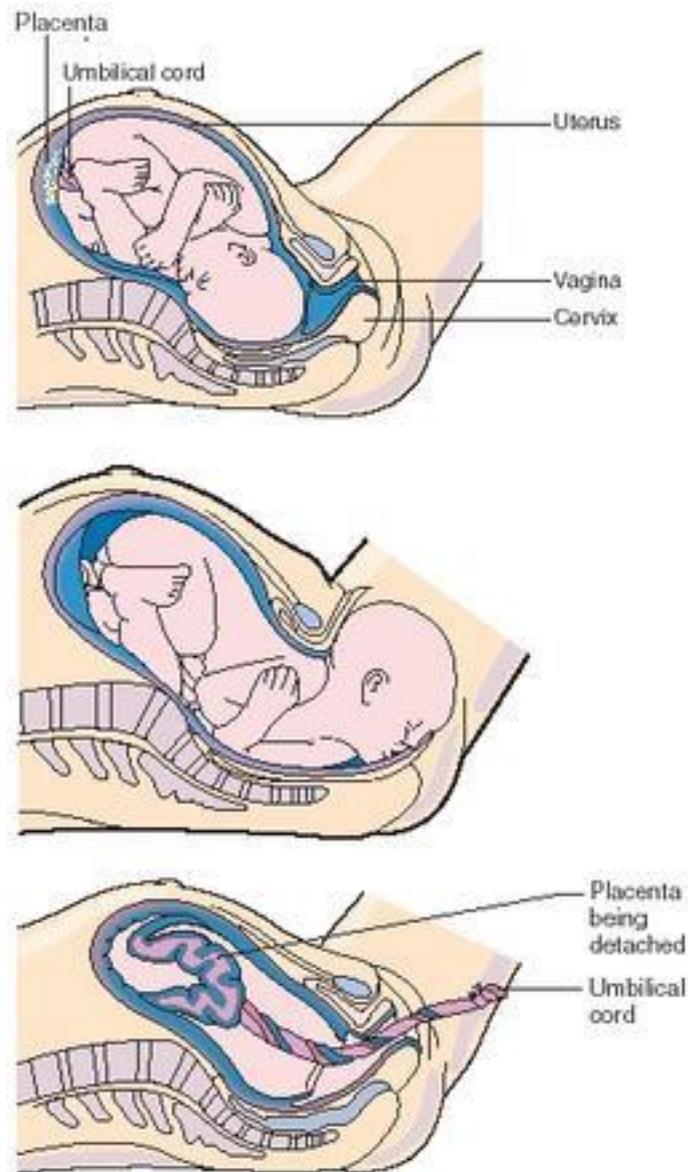
As we shall see in the following section, the Greek word *gennao* means not begettal nor birth alone. But it may be translated either way dependant upon context. The word reflects the whole process from begettal (call it a regeneration of sorts if you wish) to the wonderful, awesome and powerful resurrection at which time we enter the Kingdom.

The conclusion?: that the new birth is a process which commences at the time the holy spirit enters into us at baptism and culminates at the resurrection. And as the prophecies indicate, some will undergo painful birth into the Kingdom through great tribulation, just as Christ did.

On the following page I have prepared a chart comparing the various aspects of salvation. Please examine it closely. I am sure that it will assist you in understanding the born again and salvation as a process doctrines.

#### FURTHER READING

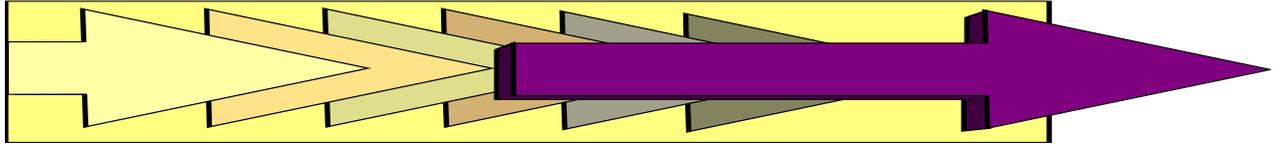
- "Are you ready to be Born Again?", *Good News*, Oct-Nov, pp. 25-57, 1986 by T Damour
- *You Must be Born Again!* by J Ritenbaugh
- "The Firstborn from the Dead," *Beyond Today*, March-April, pp. 19-21, 2019 by P Eddington



The physical – a type of the spiritual

## THE PROCESS OF SALVATION : FROM BAPTISM TO RESURRECTION

The 3 stages	Calling into Glory	Salvation/ Grace/Blood of Christ	Conversion/ Reconciliation/ Sanctification/ Justification	Redemption	Put on Christ/ the New Man/ New Creation	Washing of Baptism by the spirit, water & blood- 1 John 5:8	Resurrection/ Renewal/ Re-creation/ Glorification	Kingdom of God membership	Born Again/ Born Anew/ Born from above
<b>1</b>	Our calling (and being called Sons of God) [Rom 8:30; Heb 9:15; 2Tim 1:9; 2Thess 2:14; Col 1:27]	Saved from our past sins [Titus 3:5-7; Rom 8:24; 3:24-25; 4:7; 1Pet 3:21; 1John 3:2; Eph 2:5; 2Tim 1:9]	Converted into the Truth [John 4:14; Luke 22:32; 1Thess 1:9; James 5:19-20; 1Pet 2:25]	Christ ransoms us by paying the price with His life blood [Rom 3:24-25; 1Tim 2:6; Matt 20:28; Titus 2:11-14; 1Pet 1:18-19; Eph 1:7; Acts 20:28; Rev 5:9; Col 1:13-14; 1Cor 6:20]	the new being [Rom 6:6; Eph 4:15, 22-24; Col 3:8-10]	water baptism [Rev 1:5; 1John 1:7; 1Pet 1:18-19; 3:21; Heb 9:14; Acts 20:28; 2:38; Rom 6:3-4; Col 2:12; 1Cor 12:13]	resurrected to new life [1Cor 15:36-37; Eph 2:5-6; Col 2:12-13; 3:1-4, 10; Rom 6:3-13]	entering first stage of the Kingdom [Matt 12:28; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 10:9; 17:21-22; Col 1:13; 1Thess 2:12; Heb 6:4-5; 1Pet 2:3]	conception/ fertilisation/ seed [Eph 1:13-14; 2Cor 1:22; 5:5; 1Cor 15:35-44; John 3:5; 12:24; Rom 6:5; Gal 6:8; Mark 4:30-32; 1Pet 1:23]
<b>2</b>	being called-hearkening the voice of the Shepherd [Eph 1:18; 1Thess 2:12]	being saved each day [1Cor 1:18; 10:16; 2Cor 2:15-16; Phil 2:12]	being converted spiritually [John 4:14; 2Cor 4:16; Col 3:10; Eph 3:16; Rom 12:2]	He continues to redeem us from sin and evil [Eph 1:13-14]	the growth stage of the new man or being [Rom 7:22; 13:14; 2Cor 4:16; 5:17; Eph 3:16; Gal 3:27; 6:15; 1Pet 3:4; Col 3:1]	daily spiritual washings to crucify the old man [Titus 3:5; Heb 10:22; 2Cor 4:16; 1Cor 10:16; 6:11; Eph 5:26; John 15:3]	regeneration/ renewal each day - resurrecting the new man [Eph 5:26; 4:23-24; Titus; 3:5; Rom 8:8-11; 12:2; 2Cor 4:16; Col 3:10,12]	Church is part of Kingdom in embryo [Rom 14:17; 1Cor 4:20; 2Cor 10:4-5]	foetus grows - 'eats' the flesh and 'drinks' the blood of the Body of Christ [1Cor 10:16; John 6:53-57; 1John 5:4; Eph 4:15; 2:21; 2Pet 3:18]
<b>3</b>	the final Trumpet call at resurrection [Job 14:15; Matt 22:3-14; Rom 8:17; 1Thess 4:16; 1Pet 1:7; Col 1:27; 3:4; Rev 17:14]	finally salvation - inheriting eternal life [Rom 5:8-10; 13:11; Matt 24:13; 10:22; 1Pet 1:5; Heb 9:28; Is 35:4; 51:6; 56:1; 62:11]	final conversion into holy spirit (unable to turn from God) [John 4:14; 1John 5:18]	final redemption - we will be unable to be taken back into captivity [Rom 8:23; Luke 21:28; Eph 4:30]	the new man becomes totally comprised of the Spirit of God [1Cor 15:47-53]	washed with blood and the Spirit upon entering the Kingdom - (composed of the Holy Spirit - pictured by water - ie Christ's 'flesh & blood'). See Josh 3:16-17 [finally washed clean. Matt 3:11-12 - the unworthy will be cremated]	bodily resurrection [1Cor 15:44, 49-53; 1Thess 4:16; Matt 24:31; John 6:54; Phil 3:10-12]	Kingdom of God upon the earth [Luke 13:28-29; John 3:5; 1Cor 15:49-53; Titus 3:7; James 2:5; Rev 5:10]	Born Again (some will experience painful birth into the Kingdom) [1John 5:4,18; 3:9; John 3:3-8; Mic 4:10; Jer 4:31; 6:23-27; Is 66:7-9]



## UNDERSTANDING THE BACKGROUND TO JOHN 3

### HIGHLIGHTS

- The Babylonian Mysteries taught a born again experience akin to the Protestants and evangelicals
- The term “from above” meant the Messianic age to come to the Jews
- But born anew from above was unknown to the Jews in the first century in their religion. This term was used centuries later to refer to converts to Judaism due to Hellenistic influences
- Born of the water was a term used by rabbis to refer to impregnation

**N**ow that we have explored the historical background and Biblical data on the teaching, it is time to examine the pivotal scripture, and related scriptures, on the subject. Many quotes will be utilised. “Why?” the reader may ask. For this is one of the best ways of proving that some conservative Protestants are onto something and are close to the teaching of Mr Armstrong’s, that it is very important to display that openly. Some of them also fill in gaps which are useful to prove my thesis.

To determine the actual meaning and intent of John 3, we should firstly examine the words of Christ; are we born anew or born from above; does ‘born of the water’ differ from ‘born of the spirit’; and finally are there parallels to modern ‘Christian’ teaching on the new birth found within the Babylonian Mysteries? The following sections will attempt to address these propositions thoroughly.

### I. WHAT DID CHRIST ACTUALLY MEAN?

Following is the actual discussion in John 3:1-16:

“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water

and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

One work which is helpful in determining modern Christian thinking concerning born again is Peter Toon's *Born Again. A Biblical and Theological Study of Regeneration*. Let us note some important statements and admissions from this work. It is apparent from the Scripture that Christ's begetting and birth are types or models for Christians: "... the conception of Jesus provides a pattern of the rebirth of believers in his name" (Toon, p. 25). Later, Toon admits that

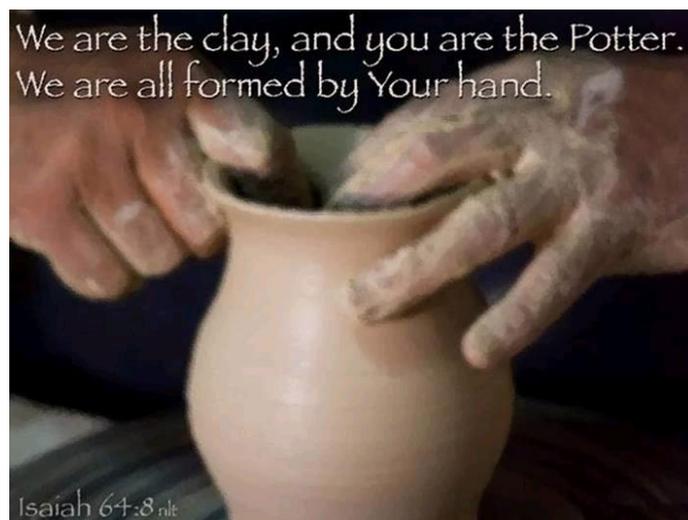
"... the gift of eternal life, received now in anticipation of its fullness in the age to come, is identified with, or at least related to ... entry into the kingdom of God ... Eternal life begins at the birth of the new age of the kingdom of God (the age to come ...)" (p. 31).

He has hit upon something important. Real life eternal - everlasting - true quality life - occurs at our entrance into the Kingdom at the coming of Christ the Messiah to resurrect the dead and to commence the Wonderful World Tomorrow. In the meantime, we frail little humans just have to contend with a temporal, physical chemical existence. We hardly even have real life. Real life is spiritual and beyond human comprehension. Real, true, perfect life is in the spirit realm. What we little humans experience is a mere short glimpse of consciousness before we pass from frail existence into dust. It is like the blink of the eye. Surely our little human minds cannot comprehend the powers, consciousness and knowledge that we shall possess at the resurrection (1Cor 2:9; Ps 16:11; 36:8-9; 31:19).

It should be mentioned here that other Protestants such as the website [Eschatology.org](http://Eschatology.org) argues for Christ having been born again at the resurrection:

"Christ *was* born again in his resurrection from the dead. That "rebirth" into his new world removed all the limitations imposed by his first birth."

No doubt there are other Protestant researchers out there that believe similarly.



God is the master potter – we are the clay – He is forming us into His image

## II. BORN AGAIN OR BORN FROM ABOVE? WHAT SOME PROTESTANTS ADMIT

From the earliest records of 'Christian' thinking on the subject, this saying was found very difficult to interpret, leading to a variety of viewpoints. (Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, p. 211). Some argue that Christ meant that one is born again. Others that we are born from above. Still others are adamant that the new birth should be understood as birth anew from above (p. 70). Which argument is correct?

Strachan (*The Fourth Gospel*, pp. 134-35) believes that no matter which way it is translated, the meaning still includes the concept of a new birth from above. He thus joins together the concepts of "from above" and "anew" or "again" (ie a rebirth).

Bultman reckons it to be only "anew", that is over again. The word may indeed be translated as "from above", "from the start" and so forth. But he argues strenuously for "anew". He further argues that the Semitic origin of this term actually means "being conceived anew". In another book, *The Gospel According to St John*, R Schnackenburg argues that both meanings of birth and begetting are possible in the Aramaic (p. 368).

Raymond Brown in *The Anchor Bible. The Gospel According to John* states that when we are begotten of God we have His seed within us. Throughout the Johannine works the usage of seed, regeneration and begetting may be found (p. 138). He goes on to state that we are sons of God at the present but that we shall, in the future, be His sons in a more perfect way. How right he is! In the postexilic period righteous men were regarded as sons of the Most High; simultaneously the fullness of sonship was regarded as something to be bestowed upon as a great reward at the Last Times (p. 139). We become

"like God and thus a member of **His family**; John speaks of begetting by God ... Jesus was proclaiming the arrival of the eschatological times when men would be God's children. This concept was known to Judaism even if the theme of divine begetting had not hitherto received much emphasis" (p. 139; emphasis mine).

How close to the truth some of these authors are, yet so very far from it. In his aforementioned work, Schnackenburg considers that

“... the full reality of “spirit” is promised to man only in the last days ... it must be perfectly clear **that earthly man must be born “from above”, which means in fact being created anew out of the divine spirit of life**; he cannot attain to God’s heavenly world otherwise ... Among the rabbis too the anithesis “below-above” was equivalent to that of “this world-the world to come” (pp. 372-3, 378; emphasis mine).

Note: “from above” had allusions to the age to come - the yet future glorious age of the Messiah. It did not necessarily have anything to do with a current event from heaven. Why do these authors get so close to the truth but seem unable to go the further step? RH Strachan (referred to above in *The Fourth Gospel*, p. 134) who feels that John 3 reveals that God is involved in an act of divine procreation as the water symbolises such an act (see “Meaning of Born of the Water” below). Note the following quote from G MacGregor, *The Gospel of John*:

“ ... ‘realm of God’ and ‘life’ may be regarded as almost synonymous terms ... Even ‘life’ in the heavenly ‘realm’ implies the necessity of ‘birth’, for procreation and birth are everywhere the presuppositions of life” (p. 69).

How right he is: procreation or reproduction or creation of new life is the basis of the universe. He is of the opinion that the concepts of “anew” and “from above” are both meant in John 3 as it is a type of “double entente”. In *The Gospel According to John*, Morris is of the opinion that both points of view (born anew and born from above) are correct. It is evident that Nicodemus took the term to mean again because he speaks of entering the womb of his mother a second time. If the Jews in that day had a saying “born again” or similar, then Nicodemus surely would have recognised it and would have linked it to Christ’s statement. But he didn’t. Is it because there was no such exact saying by the Jews in the first century? Further, he states that the verb properly indicates the action of the male parent and should be translated ‘begotten’. On the other hand it may also be used of the female parent and consequently it may be translated as “be born” (p. 213).

Yet another, Hoskyns, in *The Fourth Gospel* is of the view that the Greek adverb which is translated either “again” or “from above”, is able to mean either a second time/again, or from the beginning/utterly/completely (*The Fourth Gospel*, p. 211. See also Lindsars, *New Century Bible Commentary. The Gospel of John*, p. 150 and Barrett, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 206). Perhaps there is even something in the point that Bauer raises concerning the *Oneirocritica* of Artemidorus, I.13 where a father sees himself born again in the birth of his son (referred to in *ibid*). And certainly parents do indeed ‘see’ themselves in their children. They live on, in a sense, in their children. Does God see us in a similar light?

Finally, *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, article on “Regeneration” (vol. 4, pp. 24-28), points out that the only time that the *Septuagint* uses the term “born again”, is in reference to the resurrection in Job 14:14. Here the Greek expression “rebirth” is used instead of “change”

which is used in the *King James Version* and *New King James Version* (quoted by J Ogwyn, "An Open Answer to an Unsigned Letter", *Global Church News*, p. 17).

Regardless of the meaning, it is the timing which is the crucial issue. When are Christians finally born again - now or at the resurrection? That is the critical point we must zero in.

### III. MEANING OF 'BORN OF THE WATER'

One researcher, Dr Odeberg, has suggested that the word water is used in John 3 in the sense of what the Jews taught: a divine efflux of creative energy (*The Fourth Gospel*, p. 48). Terms like "water", "dew", "rain" and "drop" are often used of male sperm in many ancient writings including rabbinic writings. The celestial waters of Genesis 1:7 came to represent a source of spiritual creation to the Jews. So, in some metaphorical way, this "born of the water", which may also be translated as "begotten of the water", possibly has reference to the male semen (water, rain, dew and drop are often used of semen in various Rabbinic and other writings), as well as to Christian baptism (L Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 216).

Similarly, some realize that the word 'seed' carries important connotations. Strachan believes that water represents the divine gift (cf Is 55:1) and it gives life (John 4:10):

"It is quite consistent with the Johannine thought that to be born of water and the Spirit should mean to be born of a spiritual seed, in contrast with the seed of semen of physical generation (cf. IPeter I.23) ... [Christians] are begotten by a spiritual 'seed' (IJohn iii.9), begotten of God into a new kind of life. They become 'children of God'. The advent of the Kingdom of God in the person of Jesus is the implanting of the seed of a new world. The old world is worn out and doomed to die. The new world is coming to birth" (RH Strachan, *The Fourth Gospel*, p. 135).

How accurate Strachan is: we are begotten now, which leads to the fullness of being a child of God when the new world arrives, at the resurrection. Another orthodox Christian writer, Brian Grenier, is also onto something, but seems unable to go the extra step to the inevitable conclusion:

"The interpretation which most commends itself to me is one which understands water as having reference to the issue of maternal fluid which accompanies childbirth. This would help to clarify the contrast which Jesus makes in his rather cryptic statement in the following verse (3:6), 'What is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of spirit is spirit'. In the words of Sandra Schneiders (1987a:192): 'There are two births, one of water and another of spirit. The first human birth of flesh from flesh; the second is spiritual from spirit'" (*St John's Gospel*, p. 85).

Of course! Christ's words are self-evident. We are begotten now at baptism but shall be spirit at some future time - **at the baptism of the resurrection** when we will be clothed with spirit. It is at that point when taking on and clothing ourselves with Christ that we will be born to the

fullest degree. We certainly are not there yet! Concerning Christ's statement that "No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again", Toon comments:

"The Kingdom of God properly belongs to the age to come when the new creation will be totally in harmony with the will and purpose of God. However, Jesus announced that the Kingdom of God was at hand; he was referring to both his words and deeds. In and through Jesus the future kingdom has become a reality; he, as it were, is the kingdom in microcosm" (p. 27).

Interestingly, Mr Armstrong referred to the Church of God as the Kingdom in embryo. Bullinger in his *Companion Bible* states the following: "begat. Gr. Gennao. When used of the father = to beget or engender; and when used of the mother it means to bring forth into the world" (p. 1307). See also *Vines Expository Dictionary*, p. 109. Toon then swings through various interpretations and meanings of *gennao* or *gennan* and lists four possible usages, dependant upon context: born again, born from above, begotten again, begotten from above.

Toon then makes the following admission:

" ... we may presume that the exact meaning within Jesus' own mind is best conveyed in English by the expression "begotten from above". This assumption is based upon the fact that the ancients put the greater stress on the male's role in generation: he begets by placing his semen within the female where it joins one of her eggs to form an embryo. God himself through the Spirit directly causes the beginning of new life in the human soul; this action is the center of regeneration. A person in whom this creative work has occurred can then see the kingdom of God centered upon Jesus" (ibid).

He clearly shows on pp. 33-36 that the word may be translated born or begotten, dependant upon context. I was next amazed to see that Toon refers to a wonderful statement by writer Hugo Odeberg, mentioned previously in this chapter (I was surprised for I stumbled across it myself some years ago). Odeberg suggested that because rabbinic sources use "water" to refer to semen, verse 5 may allude to procreation. Indeed it does. For God created the roles of male and female, family life and the generation of children as a type of what He is undertaking. **WHY ELSE FORMULATE THE HUMAN FAMILY?** He himself touches upon this reality on page 33, speaking positively of entrance into God's family. If only he, and other conservative Protestants knew that early Christianity taught the divinisation of Christians into the Godhead upon resurrection. (see also L Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 216).

The *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* contains the following fascinating passages:

"From the beginning, then, Scripture establishes the family as the social unit into which God put human beings and the channel through which he deals with them ...

"[Christians] being part of God's family means also to originate from him and to take his name ...

“For God’s family, the one and only originator is the heavenly Father who takes as his children all who accept his Son and who thereby take his name, his identity, his reputation ...

“The human family is not a concrete picture of an abstract idea; rather, it is one step toward an even greater reality. These writers are addressing fellow member of an eternally real spiritual family, whose origin is the ultimate reality, God ... [Christians] participate in the true family of God ...

“The family as an economic unit emerges in the picture of God’s children as “heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:17 NIV) ... God is also making for himself a family of sons and daughters who will serve him and praise him and reign with him in his kingdom forever (Rev 22:3-5)” (pp. 265-267).

Barrett in his *The Gospel According to St John* compares the water with semen and that this spiritual semen is perhaps equated with the primal heavenly water (p. 209). All this makes sense if we were to realise that the fertility cults of the ancient Near East were a perversion of the spiritual reproductive cycle God has revealed in His inspired Word. Discussing John 12:24 and 1Cor 15:36, McCurley in his *Ancient Myths and Biblical Faith* states that

“Jesus’ own resurrection (John) and the general resurrection from the dead (Paul) - both eschatological events of a once-and-for-all kind - are described by means of the cyclical patterns of sterility and fertility” (p. 122).

He relates how Baal was invited to the netherworld by Mot where “Death’ proceeded to swallow him up. The whole story corresponded closely to the annual drought and dying of crops in the Near Eastern summers. Isaiah reverses the story and relates how YHWH will swallow up death. Similarly in the resurrection chapter, Paul, once again, draws upon the Old Testament and speaks of the same thing (1Cor 15:34). The spiritual drought and dying of this world will end. God will send His Spirit and the whole world will be encompassed by it. Every human that has ever lived will be given the opportunity to undergo the spiritual fertility cycle which commences with Passover and become a part of the God Family.

In ancient Near Eastern creation stories, intercourse is described as rain falling: the stories of Anat and Baal from Ugarit contain a comparison of rain to semen. In those ancient cultures rain and semen were the divine means of causing seeds to grow and mature into plants, foetuses to grow and be born as babies,

**“and interestingly enough, the bodies of the dead to rise from their graves.** The dead, like seeds, are buried in the soil. And just as the rain moistens seeds which germinate and sprout, the world of the Bible expects the rain to bring the dead back to life as well” (VH Matthews & DC Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel 1250-587 BCE*, pp. 76-77; emphasis mine).

Indeed, the “rain”, God’s Spirit, will bring the dead back to life. How remarkably similar to Paul’s revealing statements in 1Cor 15:23, 35-38, 42-45 quoted in the previous chapter. The

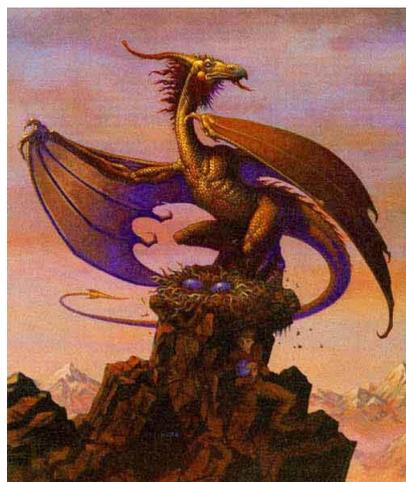
“rain” and/or the water are also referred to in Genesis 9 and in reference to the crossing of the Red Sea and River Jordan - each also being symbols of baptism. Isaiah also seems to provide us with a similar inference:

“Like as a woman with a child, draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs [“Cp. 13.8; 37.3; 42.14; 66.7-9” Bullinger, *Companion Bible*, note on p. 962]; so have we been in Thy sight, O Lord. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen [“= come to the light: i.e. by being born. The Heb *naphal*, to fall, is used of birth” Bullinger, note on p. 963]. Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. **Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead**” (Isaiah 26:17-19; emphasis mine. The NIV actually says “the earth will give birth to her dead”).

“Dust to dust; ashes to ashes” the saying goes. We humans are ultimately from the dust of the earth (Genesis 2:7). Like a garden we come from the earth, spring to life and then wilt and return to the earth. Almighty God, as the ground of all being (that is, the source of all existence), is the progenitor of everything. This is a male or masculine quality: the man is the giver and cause of new life. It is the woman that receives the life-giving substance. God is thus masculine or male. He is not a sexless, aendrogenous creature like Satan, which this ‘politically correct’ world would like us to think. God’s ways and behaviour throughout the Bible is thoroughly masculine. “Nowhere does the Bible apply “mother” metaphorically to God as it does “father”” (*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol 3, p. 426). Yet male and female created He them; we are all in God’s general image.

His Church is female as is Israel. And so is the earth. Throughout the world, “Mother Earth” is a legendary term. We still use, from time-to-time, the term “husbandman” to refer to farmers or “animal husbandry”. The farmer was the one that dressed, looked after and assisted in the mother earth producing new life. Humans are the nearest likeness to our male God. Yet we come from the earth. Or as Aeschylus states in *Eumenides* “The male begets; she’s host to her small guest”.

In perverted pagan cultures, the primary god was male usually associated with the sun; while the female goddess was identified with the earth. Traditional cultures in Germany, Japan, Australia and Africa thought of the soil and the earth as their ‘mother’. The Mbuti Aboriginal tribe, for example, even went so far as to bond the child with Mother Earth by carefully preparing a bark blanket and swaddling the child in it. In ancient pagan society they corrupted the knowledge of the Almighty by actually believing that the earth had to be impregnated by a deity before it could bear fruit. I trust that you understand that I am not advocating such a thing. Unfortunately a lot of pagan baggage was added to this knowledge (as with New Age ideas today) and that is not what I wish to explore in this paper. I simply wish to understand what ‘born of the water’ meant to the rabbis and Jews in the first century.



**Satan seeks to abort YOU!**

Perhaps, as the earth was generated by God and Israelites come from Abraham's loins, we might find a parallel: for as the woman Eve came from a rib of Adam, the new Eve, the True Church, comes from Christ's (the second Adam - 1Cor 15:45-48) very existence - His flesh and blood - we are His very body (1Cor 12:12; Eph 5:28-33). We come from His very life. Ephesians is particularly revealing: "For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph 5:30. See Luke 22:19-20; John 6:53-58). So God's physical creation may well be a conversion of spirit into physical substance. In other words, the material universe is 'female' in a sense, generated from the very energy substance of God - spirit - from God Himself. It is from this female that humanity is produced.

We came from this earth - it is a mother to us all. Like Adam who came out of the earth to life, so we came out of our mother's womb; and we shall be born out of the graves of this earth at the resurrection, which will also be a birth out of the womb of the Church of God which resides upon this earth. If we were already born, we would be in direct contact with God the Father. But given that we are not, and our relationship with Him is via the Church, our mother, it is as if the bodily 'distance' we have from Him is due to our being enclosed within the womb of the mother - cocooned divine members of His Family in the making. How joyous it will be to literally sit on our Father's lap and look wondrously into His glorious face (Rev 22:4; Ps 41:12; 1Cor 13:12).

The following chart lists the Fathers and Mothers we all have:

FATHER	MOTHER	MOTHER'S ORIGIN
<b>God</b>	<b>Earth</b> (in a metaphorical sense – not to be confused with pagan concepts)	<b>Created by God</b>
<b>Abraham or Grandson of Noah in Genesis 10</b>	<b>Israel or gentile nation</b>	<b>The loins of Abraham or man listed in Genesis 10</b>

<b>God the Father</b>	<b>Church</b>	<b>The body of Christ</b>
<b>Human Father</b>	<b>Human Mother</b>	<b>From ancestors clear back to Adam and Eve</b>

It would be strange indeed if God did not have something that He generated as His 'wife' from which we all come. Is it a mere coincidence that the original Hebrew for "In the beginning" (Genesis 1:1) is literally "in her head" which is a Hebrew expression for "head", "beginning" or "origin". The physical origins of the universe are the complement to God in a sense: she is derived from His being or existence (although, of course, the earth is not a being nor has it consciousness - this is a mere metaphor for the purpose of this section); He cares for and decorates her with great splendour; they live in harmony; He is the ultimate authority; she bears new life from His life-giving power and substance (cp Genesis 1:2, 11-12, 21-28). Together they nurture that new life and jointly bring it to the birth (eg plants). The male-female relationship is one of the most fundamental and basic doctrines of the universe - yet so utterly ignored and belittled by a politically correct environment which seems bent on destroying these natural, biologically-driven roles.

Now consider this: new life, once sprouted or produced, may then be said to be 'born from above' - from God Almighty. When God sends the rain and mists upon this planet (Genesis 2:5-6), He is the progenitor of life - the Earth's 'husband' in a sense. In parallel, He has impregnated the Church with His holy life-generating substance - the holy spirit (born or begotten of the water). Until such time as our spiritual lives have sprouted into full existence (1Cor 15: 35-42) we are mere growing seeds or fetuses. We are not yet fully born!

Further, angels, Zoa, Seraphim, Cherubim, Archangels, the 24 Council of Advisers or Elders and whatever other spirit creatures there might be, are not born of God! They have no Mother (refer to the article *The Lord of Hosts and the Elemental Spirits of the Universe* for further information. In fact, they existed prior to any physical creation as far as one can tell (Job 38:7) and as such were generated by God and form part of His 'Fatherhood' (Ephesians 3:15 - original Greek). In that sense they are His sons. But we will be real, born sons of God, like Christ was (Hebrews 1). We are to be in the literal - actual Family of God. He is our Father and we are becoming His replicas - His very children in the God Family. No father is outside of his family. Therefore God must be part of that Family. It is not merely a Family He possesses, but a Family that He is inside of and a part of. It is therefore theologically incomplete to speak only of "God's Family" or "Family of God" - **WE SHOULD SPEAK OF "THE GOD FAMILY"**.

Each member of that Family are of the same substance as the Father and are on the same divine plane or level. It is the God Family. In other words, Christians will be elevated to the membership of that Family - we will be members of the Godhead, much higher than even the highest-ranking beings in the 24 member Council of Advisers or Elders. Being members of the Godhead denotes full participation in the glory and innermost dimension of the Godhead plus bearing the name of "God" to us at that time and enjoying God life to the fullest degree conferred upon us by God Family membership. Yes, we shall be God as God is God in the sense

that we will be in the God Family as children are in the family of their parents!

Even now, as unborn babes, we are in God and He in us. How? Because we are “in Christ” (2Cor 5:17 and scores of other places) Who is also in God (Col 3:3; 1John 4:15-16). We are members of Christ’s body and members of each other (Rom 12:4-5; 1Cor 12:12-13, 26; Eph 4:25; 5:30). It is the holy spirit that binds us together with one another, to Christ and to God (John 15:1-8; Gal 2:20; 1John 3:24). It is almost as if it is like the sap of the vine which flows through all parts back and forth to all parts. Or an umbilical cord which is the conduit of life-giving substance between the mother (body of Christ) and the babe.

As such we are extensions of Him - actually extensions of God Himself! He is indeed the Father of lights (James 1:17), of which we are (Col 1:12). Christians are meant to represent God on this planet by being light-bringers (the Truth) and living a life, spiritually undefiled, but clean and pure, uncontaminated. We should be shining brightly, exemplifying obedience to His Law, believing in true doctrine, bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit and practicing the beatitudes (Matt 5:14-16; Phil 2:15).

Are we living the Truth? Are we living the way Christ lived? Do we partake of the divine nature - very God nature (2Pet 1:3-4)? Can we catch the vision of what that really means and the responsibility and lifestyle that goes with this awesome calling? **Do you see yourself as a divine Being in the making?** And as such, do you see yourself as one with the power of God, grinding your way toward the Kingdom of God? Can we at last grasp what magnitude of destiny God has promised us? Are we really desperate for it? Truly, we MUST develop holy, righteous character. For then we shall be composed of God spirit at the resurrection!

#### **IV. WHAT THE BABYLONIAN MYSTERIES TAUGHT - STRANGE PARALLEL**

There are some perverted pagan parallels of the new birth. For instance, in ancient Egypt, it was a belief that a god begot or fathered the child of a human mother. This was the child who became king. Consequently, the Pharaohs were gods on earth - the god’s representative - god in the flesh, or as we might say, humans with immortal souls who were in the Kingdom of God on earth now.

To the Gnostics, “begetting from above” meant the pre-existent origin of the spiritual ones. “But since in practice the spiritual men on earth are only brought back to their origin by the Gnosis, their redemption has the appearance of “being begotten from above” anew, or of a “rebirth”” (R Bultamn, *The Gospel of John. A Commentary*, p. 136). He then continues to discuss the general influence on the mystery religions by the Gnostic terminology. Others have also noticed the pagan “rebirths” (A Richardson, *A Theological Wordbook of the Bible*, p. 31). For instance the pagan Great Mother Attis was reborn as was Isis. For the rite of rebirth was “the principal content of the Mithras-mysteries” (MacGregor, *The Gospel of John*, pp. 70-71).

In Hellenism, immortality was conferred by sacramental regeneration (a new birth we might say). But it would appear that Christ was actually refuting, once again, the false teachings of His day. The Mysteries’ teaching on this subject were prevalent at that time: a magical renewal of

man's physical nature obtained by various rites - this was a condition of salvation. In contradiction to this, Christ in effect was saying that we must be conceived at water baptism and born in the resurrection to spirit. There is no birth at this time - it must await the resurrection when Christ will commence His real big Work and when we are finally saved.

The Babylonian Mysteries also had certain perversions of the truth. And some similarities. To such an extent that one author has actually written that "John ... has been visibly influenced by the religious literature of Hellenism ..." (R Bultman, *The Gospel of John. A Commentary*, p. 132). This is, of course, nonsense.

Further, "... we must face the question of whether John imported the image of rebirth and divine begetting from Hellenistic religion and placed it on the lips of Jesus" (Toon, p. 28). The image of being born again into the kingdom of the gods in this life is indeed found in Gnosticism and also in the writings of Philo (*ibid*).

In any event, the idea was most prevalent among the Babylonian Mystery religions of the late first century (*ibid*). R Schnackenburg in his *The Gospel According to St John* would fully agree, claiming that this notion was "widespread" (p. 367). Surely, the concept of a new birth as an equivalent to conversion, crept into early Christianity from the Babylonian Mystery Religions. We also find that the Brahman was considered "twice born"; others taught that the day of one's conversion is likened to a birthday (JH Bernard, *The International Critical Commentary. The Gospel According to St. John*, pp. clxii). Alexander Hislop in his famous *The Two Babylons* made the following observations:

"The Brahmins make it their distinguishing boast that they are "twice-born" men, and that, as such, they are sure of eternal happiness. The ancient Mexicans in their rituals too: "She then washed the body of the child with water, and spoke in this manner: 'Whencesoever thou comest, thou that art hurtful to this child, leave him and depart from him, for he now liveth anew, and is born anew; now he is purified and cleansed afresh, and our mother Chalchivitlycue [the goddess of water] bringeth him into the world' ". Further, "in the Babylonian Mysteries ... "Diphues", or "twice-born," .. was represented as a god with two heads looking in opposite directions, the one old and *the other young*".

" "Janus", the "Man of the Sea", he is generally described ... as "twice-born" or "regenerate". The "twice-born" Brahmins, who are all so many gods upon the earth, by the very title they take to themselves, show that the god whom they represent, and to whose prerogatives they lay claim, had been known as the 'twice-born' god" (pp. 132-6).

What of first century Judaism? It is indeed true that Jews later likened converts to a child just born or to a new creature (A Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, p. 384). However, that was a century or two after Christ. It was after Judaism was so riddled with pagan thinking, to make it almost unrecognisable. Regardless of what we think it means

"persons in certain circumstances - the bridegroom on his marriage [an event that

will occur for us at the resurrection], the Chief of the Academy on his promotion, the king on his enthronement [similarly we at our resurrection - see Rev 5:10] - were likened to those newly born. The expression, therefore, was not only common, but, so to speak, fluid; only, both it and what is implied must be rightly understood" (ibid).

To imply it referred only to converts to Judaism in the first century is not to be honest. Note the following:

"The description of conversion as a second birth or a divine begetting is foreign to Judaism, but familiar in the Hellenistic mystery religions" (JN Sanders, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St John*, p. 122).

"... it may have been familiar to the rabbis of the first century, although the Talmud, as we have it, being of later date, does not prove this to demonstration ... although the doctrine of baptism as a new birth is not prominent in the N.T., it was probably recognised by the end of the first century, as it certainly was in the second century" (JH Bernard, *The International Critical Commentary. The Gospel According to St. John*, pp. clxiii-iv; emphasis mine).

"The metaphor was current later - and probably also in NT times - for the conversion of a Gentile, eg 'A proselyte who has newly come over is like a new-born child' (*Jebamoth 22a*, Babylonian Talmud)" (Richardson, p. 31; emphasis mine).

Note: the reference to a proselyte as a new-born child was found in later, and Hellenised Jewish teaching. It was not found among them in the first century, although Richardson claims that it is probable, though not provable. This may be why Lightfoot claims that "Judaism, even learned Judaism, is found at a loss in this vital matter of rebirth" (*St John's Gospel*, p. 117). FF Bruce in his *The Gospel of John* states that where a proselyte was likened to a new-born child, such "a person might fittingly be described as 'born from above' or 'born anew'" (pp. 82. Emphasis mine). He relates that Nicodemus, as a teacher of Israel, should have understood Christ's saying. But he didn't! This is the biggest proof that such saying was foreign to Judaism at that time.

Barrett in his *The Gospel According to St. John* argues that John 3 and the statements which occur in rabbinic sources comparing a newly baptized proselyte to a new-born child

"is not a relevant parallel since it refers to the legal status of the convert, nor can we legitimately quote the view that the daily sacrifices have the effect of making Israel like a one-year-old child" (p. 206).

Bruce also lists the passage of Noah in the flood of his day, the Israelites crossing the Red Sea and Naaman's baptism in the Jordan as Old Testament types of Christian baptism. Noah's flood indeed pictured baptism, but note that after it he and his family entered into a new world which was a type of the Kingdom of God. In other words, the baptism of that time pictured the

Day of the Lord and the commencement of the Wonderful World Tomorrow. Toon mentions the inter-related and future aspects of the born again process:

“ ... the Spirit’s inward work of grace is presented in images of birth, rebirth, re-creation (or new creation), and resurrection. These images show that it is the beginning of a new life which will reach its fruition in a new body in the age of the kingdom of God” (p. 68).

If Toon and others like him could really see, or probably admit, that the new birth is not finalised until the resurrection, he would be capping off his work in a way which some may regard as revolutionary. But, perhaps due to not wishing to offend the Protestant world, he chooses not to do so. He is rather close to the truth on this matter, so one wonders why he has not stated the obvious. Another author, Barrett, mentioned earlier, states that John lays out the two moments of Christian salvation experience: the already accomplished work and the work yet to be consummated. He fails to explain himself, but it seems that he is hinting the past conversion at baptism and the yet future fulfilment of Christian desires at the resurrection.

Well, there we have it: a little background to John 3 which, I trust, will assist you in making a decision as to which doctrine to believe: that which came via HWA or that emphasised by evangelical Protestantism.

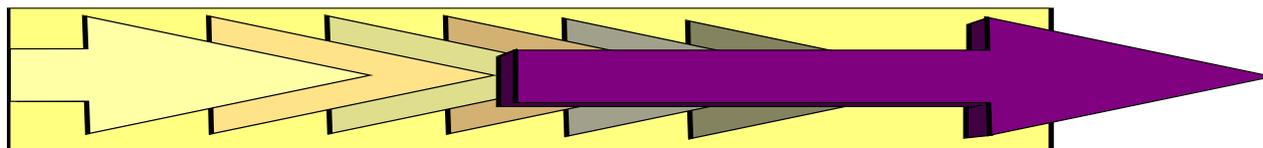
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**FURTHER READING**

- *Born Again. A Biblical and Theological Study of Regeneration.* by P Toon
- *The Lord of Hosts and the Elemental Spirits of the Universe* by C White



## FROM SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION TO BODILY BIRTH

### HIGHLIGHTS

- We have been spiritually resurrected to merely taste eternal life- currently we await our bodily resurrection to eternal life
- John 3 has marvellous parallels to ICor 15
- Christ was, Himself, born anew at His resurrection - so why not us?
- There are a plethora of smaller proofs for the belief in the born again experience to occur at the resurrection.

**W**e come now to the final chapter and the inevitable conclusions. But we need to proceed a little further to nail down this truth from a further perspective, based upon the former chapters. Consideration should next be given to our future spiritual resurrection; which scriptures throw light upon John 3 and whether Christ was born again. (Note: I have not titled it *From Spiritual Birth to Bodily Resurrection* as might be expected by those advocating a current birth into the Kingdom).

### I. THE SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION

Much has been written about Christ's resurrection, the resurrection of Christians, the second resurrection and so forth. Similarly concerning conversion, baptism, born again, the 'new man', and regeneration. What is the relationship between all of these aspects of salvation? Are they processes? Or are we fully or mostly saved/ converted/regenerated/born again/resurrected now, in this life?

What does scripture have to say?

Could the opposite be true: that is, we only have an 'inkling', 'idea', first steps, beginning, germ, first slight consciousness of spirit-eternal life? Could it be true that our human physical-temporal existences are not really 'lives' when compared to the true, invisible spirit realm? Maybe reality consists of the spirit realm. Maybe our temporary physical-chemical 'lives' are not true or complete reality. Maybe this is not real life - that real life for us is yet future. In other words the spirit beings that inhabit this universe possess and enjoy true quality life. See IICor 5:4.

Should the aforementioned be correct, then what is the difference between our 'lives' prior to

conversion/baptism/regeneration/receiving of God's Spirit and that after water baptism? Do we possess far greater powers, mental abilities, stronger bodies, immortality? Or are we still frail humans, with just the 'germ' of eternal life - a touch of the spiritual reality of what shall be. The following are helpful scriptures which should assist in further understanding these truths:

- Heb 6:4-6 we have simply "tasted" eternal life. It has hardly a full meal that could be enjoyed and digested. We are still mortal, frail little humans, composed of flesh and blood, waiting to die.

- Rom 8:15,23 full sonship is yet future. We are now sons and daughters of God or children of God, but only in part, in a very minor way in comparison to what we shall be (see Rom 9:4; 11:23-25; Eph 1:5; Gal 4:5). The *New Bible Commentary* explains that

"... the Spirit imparts the witness of our sonship (vv.15,16), [which] **will one day be fully realized at the resurrection**. The present possession of the Spirit is a sample (firstfruits) of the full harvest to be reaped at the redemption of our bodies. In a like earnest expectation to that of the visible world, Christians who experience the 'first instalment' (the same word is found in 2Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14) of the Spirit, the foretaste of His transforming power, also sigh for the deliverance of the body from sin and sin's environment. **The resurrection will be the final stage of sonship with God**. The passage in 2Cor. 5:1-10 is closely parallel. Cf. Eph. 4:30". (p. 1032; emphasis mine)

- IICor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14 we have the "earnest" of the Holy Spirit. Bullinger writes that this is "A foretaste or pledge of some future benefit" (*Companion Bible*, p. 1729). Here is clear indication that a tiny fraction of the Holy Spirit is given - like a germ or impregnation. Thus we cannot have full life/full reality/full birth now. It is a wonderful event, yet to occur.

- Is 41:14 if the whole nation of Israel is but a 'worm' to God, how much more are we. By extension, the Holy Spirit in us is a mere fraction of its whole.

- Rom 12:2 Greek for "transformed" is "metamorph" whence we get the term "metamorphosis" - like a worm or caterpillar becoming a beautiful butterfly. Cp ICor 15:51-53, 42-49. See IICor 3:18).

What does all of the above tell us?: that we are not yet born, but a mere "worm" or a small item compared to what we shall be. Therefore we cannot be fully born again at this time. Admittedly 1Pet 2:2 likens Christians to newborn babes. But notice, it says that we should be "as" newborn babes by desiring the milk of God's Word. It does not say that we are newborn babes, unlike other places where it says we are the (unborn) children of God.

Further, neither have we been fully resurrected, although a resurrection of sorts has occurred! That is, via the Holy Spirit entering into us, we experience a regeneration, renewal, awakening, a new life as a new creature in the Lord. We were spiritually resurrected from a watery grave

at baptism; are being resurrected in a sense, from sin and this world; and will be bodily resurrected at the return of Christ.

The following scriptures prove that a spiritual resurrection or regeneration has occurred already for Christians: Col 3:1-3,10; 2;12-13; Rom 6:3-4,13; 12:2; Eph 2;1,5-6 [cp 4;15,23-24]; 5:14-15,26; II Cor 4;16; 5;17; Gal 2:20; Titus 3:5; Heb 10:22.

But, as previously explained, a much greater resurrection awaits us. In the meantime we must grow on a daily basis and be washed clean to become God-like or saints (holy ones). We grow by eating the flesh and drinking in of the blood of Christ and absorbing the liquid nutrients of the Holy Spirit. This we do while in the Body of Christ - the true Church of God - one in unison with Him. We are as fetuses composed of the flesh and blood of the parents and feeding off the mother. How much plainer can it be? The spiritual resurrection is the beginnings of new life in [the Body of] Christ which ultimately leads to birth at Christ's return.

True reality or life is extant in the spirit realm. To spirit life-forms, we puny little humans are but flashes of existence - as almost nothing in comparison to spirit power and glory. Spirit creatures are trillions of times greater and more powerful in energy and mental capacity than we humans could even imagine to be in this short life. We are but chemical existences - virtual nothingness - like a worm or caterpillar. As an ant is to an adult human, so we are as to Almighty God - just virtual nothingness.



**We will be babes in the resurrection – still growing and developing**

Imagine mighty spirit beings looking at us. They must indeed wonder why we are so special to God. The angels indeed would be very careful with us and have an understanding of how precious we are to God. While the horrible demons would look at us with eyes filled with evil hatred. They must be very frustrated at God preventing them from killing or wounding us at will. Surely they must follow human history with interest. Here are these silly little humans composed of mere mortal flesh which exists in a temporary fashion - and is gone so rapidly and with such little impact on the universe - that we are like a blade of grass which withers and disappears as quickly as it appears. Yet, a giant war is being waged behind our backs between the angels and demons over Christians and the future of humanity. Why?

## II. JOHN 3 AND ICOR 15 PARALLELS

A further proof that the new birth occurs at the resurrection may be found in the parallels to John 3 in ICor 15, known as the resurrection chapter. Instead of re-typing each scripture and expounding them, I have simply produced a chart which compares them.

But firstly, before we get into that, what is the original Greek for “born again” in John 3? *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* has this to say:

“another ... ; from 507; from above. By anal. From the first; by impl. Anew:- from above, again, from the beginning (very first), the top” (#509).

“Ano ... ; adv. from 473; upward or on the top:- above, brim, high, up” (#507).

“Anti ... ; a prim. Particle; opposite, i.e. instead or because of ... substitution, correspondence, etc”. (#473)

*Vines Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* adds to our knowledge:

“Another signifies from above, or anew ... Nicodemus was not puzzled about birth from Heaven; what perplexed him was that a person must be born a second time. This the context makes clear. This is really the meaning in Gal. 4:9 where it is associated with *palin*, ‘over again’. The idea is ‘anew’” (p. 41).

**“Regeneration: Palingenesia ... new birth (palin, again, genesis, birth) ... as a result of the Second Advent of Christ ... Thereby will be accomplished the deliverance of the world from the power and deception of Satan and from the despotic and antichristian rulers of the nations ... it will fulfil the establishment of God’s Covenant with Abraham concerning his descendants, a veritable re-birth of the nation, involving the peace and prosperity of the Gentiles. That the worldwide subjection to the authority of Christ will not mean the entire banishment of evil, is clear from Rev 20:7-8. Only in the new heavens and new earth, “wherein dwelleth righteousness,” will sin and evil be entirely absent” (vol 3, p. 267) (emphasis mine).**

How true. Another work we may consult is the *New Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon*:

“ ... from above, from a higher place ... from the first: Lk.1.3; then, from the beginning on, from the very first: Acts xxvi.5. Hence ... anew, over again, indicating repetition, **(a use somewhat rare, but wrongly denied by many ...)**: Jn.iii.3, ... others explain it from above, i.e. from heaven. But, acc. To this explanation, Nicodemus ought to have wondered how it was possible for any one to be born from heaven; but this he did not say ... of the repetition of physical birth, we read in Artem ... cf. Joseph. Antt.1,18,3 ...” (p. 52; emphasis mine).

Both speak of inheriting the Kingdom and becoming spirit and becoming powerful spirits and

so forth as shown in the following chart:

JOHN 3		ICOR 15	
v3	cannot see the kingdom	v50	flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom
v5	must first be baptised then become Spirit at the entry into the Kingdom	v29, 51-53, 42-45	we must become immortal spirits by a resurrection
v6	that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit	v44	sown natural body, raised a spiritual body
v7	spirit is like a strong or powerful wind	v36, 45-48	we will be life-giving spirits

In effect what Christ is saying in John 3:5 is that we must go through the entire birth process, commencing at baptism when we receive the Holy Spirit, to birth when we become spirit. Verse 6 is the clincher:

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh;  
and that which is born of the spirit is spirit”.

What can be simpler or more straightforward to understand?

But why then are Christians said to be adopted by God in Romans 8:15, 23?

### III. WAS CHRIST BORN AGAIN?

Well was He? And if so, what evidence do we have of this in the scriptures?

In Col 1:18 Christ is called the “firstborn from the dead”. Some feel that this has reference to a title or authority. Yet the verse has such a ‘feel’ and wording that conjures up the thought of resurrection that it is difficult to think otherwise.<sup>4</sup> According to Bullinger’s *Companion Bible* (Appendix 139.4, p. 166) it has the following meaning:

“With a Preposition, and with the Article; e.g. ek ton nekron, it denotes emphatically out from among the dead bodies, or corpses. Cp. Eph. 5:14; Col. 1:18; 2:12.”

Here we have a Protestant admitting that this scripture is referring to resurrection; why don’t some of the sabbatarian groups?

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<sup>4</sup> Even so-called early Church fathers understood this: “Henceforth He having risen, we too from Him and because of Him rise in due course from the dead ... He is called ‘First-born among many brethren’ because of the relationship of the flesh, and ‘First-born from the dead,’ because the resurrection of the dead is from Him and after Him ... And as He is First-born among brethren and rose from the dead ‘the first fruits of them that slept;’ so, since it became Him ‘in all things to have the preeminence’ (Athanasius. *Discourse II Against the Arians*, Chapters 63, 64)

Notice also a further proof: Jesus knew of the verse in Psalm 2:7: “You are my Son; today I have become your Father [or begotten you]”. Toon notes that

“This important text could have been the source of Jesus’ use of the image of being begotten or born from above. It is true that official Judaism rigidly avoided language of this kind in order to preserve the distinction between this present evil age and the future glorious age of the kingdom of God. To speak of birth from God [as occurring now, instead of in the future] compromised this distinction by bringing into this age what was believed to apply only to the future age. However ... John ... knew that the kingdom of God of the age to come had already begun to make its presence and power known in the present age” (p. 29).

Bullinger’s position certainly agrees with Toon. In his *Companion Bible* he makes the following observations: “Begotten Thee. Fig. Anthropopatheia (Ap. 6). It refers to resurrection (Acts 13:33; Rom 1:3,4; Col 1:18; Rev 1:5)”. In Acts 13:33-34, Luke quotes Ps 2:7, of which Bullinger notes “begotten Thee = brought Thee to the birth, i.e. in resurrection”. Bullinger was a very wise man and definitely correct given that the next verse refers to resurrection - this is the context of the matter.

Concerning Psalm 2, researcher Peter Craigie notes

““I have begotten you” is metaphorical language; it means more than simply adoption, which has legal overtones, and implies that a “new birth” of a divine nature took place during the coronation.” (P Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, p. 67)<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Stuckenbruck writing in “Melchizedek in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature” states that “Within the main part of the psalm, the figure addressed in the 2nd person is told in the Masoretic pointing that ‘from the womb of the morning to you shall be your youth’ (v. 3b), whereas the consonants in ‘your youth’ ( ילדתיך ) **could also be taken to mean ‘I have given you birth’** (as in the LXX: ‘from the womb before the morning star I have given you birth [ἐξ ἐγίννησά σε]). The LXX reading ‘I have given you birth’ is significant as it may underlie **the link between Psalm 110.1 and Psalm 2.7** (coordinated with LXX Ps. 110.3b!) drawn in Hebrews 5.5 and 6, in which both are related to Jesus, read as the Melchizedek to whom the Lord has given birth. This in turn, provides a textual basis on which Hebrews could understand Jesus’ Melchizedekian priesthood as an expression of his supreme Sonship.” (p. 127) [emphasis mine].

David Kang wrote similarly: “... the MT reads *rehem* as temporal, that is, “the womb of the dawn”, which means the very beginning of the dawn, the LXX reads it as physical, that is, “the womb [of mother]” ... indicates that the king has divine sonship.” (“The Royal Components of Melchizedek in Hebrews 7”, *Perichoresis*, Vol. 10, No. 1 pp. 102-03)

The *NIV Zondervan Study Bible* comments: “This phrase seems to be poetically comparing the emergence of the dew in the morning with the appearance of the king’s army. They miraculously appear [as] from a mysterious womb – **possibly a veiled reference to the mystery of regeneration** (Ezek. 36:25-27; Jn. 3:3-8)”. [emphasis mine]

Michael Burgos in “An Exposition of the Second Psalm.” *Academia Letters*, Oct 2021 explains

“The cohortative “let us” is frequently used to signal significant acts of rebellion in the OT (Gen. 11:3-4; 19:32, v.4; Judg. 16:2; Ps. 83:12) and here it is the ordinance of Yahweh that is heralded by his people that are described as strictures to be broken” (p. 2)

“Whereas the blessed man of Psalm 1 derives his sustenance from the ordinance of Yahweh, the wicked seek to throw off the bonds of his instruction and sovereign rule.” (pp. 2-3)

“Verse 7 marks a change from the third person to the first person wherein Yahweh’s Son says “I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you.’” Interpreters who take a dual-fulfillment approach tend to argue that this language refers to God’s adoption of the Davidic king and **thus the verb *yalad* refers not to the king’s birth but to his coronation**, marking the start of a changed relationship between the king and Yahweh. However, the manner in which this verse is quoted and applied in the NT makes it clear that it is intended as a metaphor for exaltation. One need not invoke dual-fulfillment to get there. At Acts 13:33, (“this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you.’”) Psalm 2:7 is used to describe Jesus’ resurrection. Paul gave a similar sentiment at Romans 1:4: “[Jesus was] declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his

And when is Christ coronated? After his resurrection.

Even the thoroughly Protestant and trinitarian publication, *Affirmation and Critique*, sees Christ's resurrection as a birth. Speaking of Acts 13:33, that magazine states that this scripture refers to the resurrection of Christ

"who was the first to be born in resurrection; thus, the sense of priority obtains in the term. And He is also the Firstborn because there are many brothers who follow in His birth [in a spiritual resurrection]" (K Robichaux, "Christ the Firstborn", *Affirmation & Critique*, April 1997, p. 37)

Again, Bullinger notes: "His divine spiritual nature in resurrection is here set in contrast with His human flesh as seed of David". There can be no doubt that Herbert W Armstrong utilised Bullinger's works during his indepth study of scripture and as God began to open his mind to this and other truths.

Adam Clarke's *Bible Commentary*

"*Thou art my Son* " - Made man, born of a woman by the creative energy of the Holy Ghost, that thou mightest feel and suffer for man, and be the first-born of many brethren.

**"This day have I begotten thee. " - By thy resurrection thou art declared to be the Son of God, en dunamei, by miraculous power, being raised from the dead.** Thus by thy wondrous and supernatural nativity, most extraordinary death, and miraculous resurrection, thou art declared to be the Son of God. And as in that Son dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, all the sufferings and the death of that human nature were stamped with an infinitely meritorious efficacy.. **We have St. Paul's authority for applying to the resurrection of our Lord these words, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee; " - see Acts xiii. 33; see also Heb. v. 6; - and the man must indeed be a bold interpreter of the Scriptures who would give a different gloss to that of the apostle.** It is well known that the words, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee," have been produced by many as a proof of the eternal generation of the Son of God.

Verse 12. "*Kiss the Son, lest he be angry* " - It is remarkable that the word son (rb bar, a Chaldee word) is not found in any of the versions except the Syriac, nor indeed any thing equivalent to it.

The Chaldee, Vulgate, Septuagint, Arabic, and AEthiopic, have a term which signifies doctrine or discipline: "Embrace discipline, lest the Lord be angry with you," &c. This is a remarkable case, and especially that in so pure a piece of Hebrew as this poem is, a Chaldee word should have been found; rb bar, instead of b ben, which adds nothing to the strength of the expression or the elegance of the poetry. I know it is supposed that rb bar is also pure Hebrew, as well as Chaldee; but as it is taken in the former language in the sense of

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resurrection from the dead" (cf. Matt. 3:17; 17:5)." (p. 3) He understands the coronation aspect of this Psalm but not that the coronation of Christ occurred after His resurrection birth (as it will for Christians).

purifying, the versions probably understood it so here. Embrace that which is pure; namely, the doctrine of God.” [emphasis mine]

In Rom 1:4, Paul writes:

“And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”.

Later in Romans, Christ is said to be “the firstborn among many brethren” (8:29) and in Colossians as “the Firstborn of all creation” (1:15). Consider for a moment. If “birth” referred only to receipt of the Holy Spirit upon conversion, then the Old Testament men of God would have been “born” before Christ because they had the Spirit. Now, tying in with the concept raised by Paul, John states that Christ was “the First Begotten of the dead”. While some state this was a title, and it may be, it also describes an event - His resurrection. In Hebrews, 1:4-7 Christ is once again called the First begotten. Allow Bullinger to explain:

“begotten, etc = brought Thee to the birth. I.e. at resurrection, when the Son became the glorified federal head of a new order of beings. Cp 5:5; Acts 13:3; Rom. 1:4, with ICor 15:45, etc and Ps. 2:7 (Sept.) ... which, with Acts 13:33, tells us that this day was the day of resurrection.”<sup>6</sup>

The above does not refer to “First begotten” as a title alone. Nor do the above mean that Christ merely received the pre-eminence like Israel does in the world or the firstfruits/firstborn in a family. He sure does! But when is the firstborn, born? He is born first at the resurrection and is obviously followed by others. See Rom 8:29. In turn he is the forerunner of our salvation and, as such, Christians are also destined to be born at their resurrection.

Further, Christ is represented by the wavesheaf offering - He is the firstfruit of the firstfruits spiritual harvest (James 1:18). The True Church is the firstfruits/born of God’s spiritual harvests (Heb 12:23). As such this spiritual Zion/Israel receives the birthright promises (Is 61:5-7; Zech 9:12).

Another scripture proves that Christ was born at His resurrection:

“Jesus ... , Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death ...”  
(Acts 2:22, 24).

The *Interlinear Bible* translates is as follows:

“But God raised Him up, loosing the throes of death ... “

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<sup>6</sup> Many researchers and theologians miss this point. For example “As Jesus is the firstborn of creation so He is the firstborn of the dead... as in Psalm 89, so here too, being “firstborn” is associated with having supremacy.” (Ekkehardt Mueller, “Focus on Scripture: The Firstborn (Col 1:15),” *Reflections: A Biblical Research Institute Newsletter*, Oct 2005, p. 8) He does not understand that Christ has the supremacy because He is literally the first to be born into the God Family. Much like the firstborn in ancient Israel.

The Greek for “pains” or “throes” of death is “o-deen ... a pang or throes, esp. Of childbirth :- pain, sorrow, travail” (*Strong’s Concordance* #5604). Cp. Rev 12:2,6. *Vine’s Lexicon* states that it refers to travail in birth or a birth pang.

The question will no doubt arise: “What of Heb 12:23 which calls the Church the “firstborn”?”. Either the Church is regarded as the firstborn in the sense that it is called to be born; or the Church is ‘born’ but the individual members are not as yet; or it is the Church **of** the Firstborn, meaning Christ - He is now born, not us. In any interpretation, there is no proof here of individual Christians having experienced the new birth.

What was the result of His resurrection?

“He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp [KJV “image”]of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent that theirs.

For to what angel did God ever say, ‘Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee?’ Or again ‘I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son?’ And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, ‘Let all God’s angels worship him’” (Heb 1:3-6, RSV).

The original Greek for “image” or “stamp” is “charakter”. Thayer lists the following interpretations of the word (#5481):

1. The instrument used in engraving or carving;
2. A mark stamped upon that instrument; a mark or figure burned in; an impression; marked likeness; precise reproduction in every respect; facsimile; the peculiarity by which things are recognised and distinguished from each other (ie character).

In other words He became a replica of God in His perfect holy conduct while walking this earth, and fully upon resurrection: “For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col 2:9). In 2Cor 4:4 and Col 1:15 Christ is again said to be the image of God. A different, but similar, word is used, “i-kone” which means an image, figure, likeness, visible conformity (Thayer #1504). See also John 14:8-11.

In turn, Christians must develop holy, righteous character by the inculcation of the Laws of God, beattitudes and the fruits of the spirit (Rom 8:29; 1Cor 15:49-50; Col 3:10).

“And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Col 3:10).

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the

image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." (Rom 8:29).

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2Cor 3:18).

"And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1Cor 15:49).

Our Christian destiny is to be the full image of God both bodily and in character somewhat as children are replicas of their parents. How? By God and Christ living within us via the Holy Spirit and finally being born as God (Gal 2:20; 1John 4:12-13). We are to be full replicas of God as real, literal sons of God, not merely adopted sons.

But some feel that Christians are "adopted" sons of God. Is this interpretation correct? The term "adoption" means to choose or appoint someone as a son or daughter and hold them closely as a child in a way almost as if they were literal children. On the other hand, a literal son is one whom a father has literally and directly given rise to from his very substance and life-giving force, creating children that are his replicas far more so than one that is adopted. This analogy to the Romans simply assists them in understanding this concept of literal sonship. It is very likely that some (or many) in the Church at Rome were adoptees.

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* states the following helpful information:

Paul "employed the idea metaphorically much in the same manner of Christ's parables; and, as in their case, there is danger of pressing the analogy too far in its details ... the new birth and adoption are certainly aspects of the same totality of experience; but they belong to different systems of thought, and to identify them is to invite confusion ... It is pressing the analogy too far to infer from this doctrine of adoption that man is by nature not God's son. It would contradict Paul's teaching elsewhere (e.g., Acts 17:28), and he should not be convicted of inconsistency to the application of a metaphor" (vol 1, pp. 54-55).

To the Jews, adoption was virtually unknown, therefore Paul was using this analogy to assist the Gentiles at Rome (see 8:15, 23; 9:4) and Ephesus (1:15) to come to a full understanding of true, literal sonship. For the literalness of the Father-son and family relationship is everywhere attested to throughout scripture. The analogy by Paul is Christ rescuing Gentiles from slavery and 'adopting' them, for here he speaks of redemption, not the entire plan of God. Note also Bullinger's comment on Rom 8:15:

"An 'adopted' child may partake of all the privileges of the family, yet it is not begotten and born in the family. But the subjects of this verse are begotten of the Spirit (John 3:6) and are, therefore, sons of God by spiritual generation. It is thus a real sonship-spirit that enables them to cry "Abba, Father"". (p. 1678).

Bullinger therefore feels that *huithesia* (= adoption) should properly be translated as sonship here ... and it can be. But it seems that Paul is drawing on a redemption analogy rather than the literal sonship spoken of elsewhere in the New Testament.

The result of our literal sonship? According to Rev 14:1; 3;12 and John 17;11, we take upon ourselves the very name of God! Why? For we become a part of the God Family - literal sons, daughters and children of God, and He. Our literal Father. We will have a glory, power, honour, character, nature and name which applies only to God.

What does the Old Testament have to say about the concept of birth? We have already seen how the Septuagint translates Job 14:14 as a birth. We have also seen that in *A Theological Wordbook of the Bible* in the Old Testament the Hebrew for “birth”, “beget”, “bear”, “regeneration” are normally from the root *yalad* and used metaphorically of the rebirth of Israel after exile (Is 66:8f); **of resurrection** (Ezek 37:1-14) and of Zion’s children (Is 49:21; 54:1ff). But what of Israel itself?

Israel, the Old Testament Church, was the firstborn (Ex 4:22; Jer 2;3; 31:9; Hos 9:10). But the Israelites were the unborn children (Hos 11:1; Deut 14:1; Is 63:7-8; Jer 31:9) and God was their Father (Deut 32:1-6; Is 9:6; Jer 31:9; Ps 89:26). And in Ps 89:20, 27 either Christ or David are denoted as firstborn when God rules the world (cp Acts 2:34, 29; 13:35-36, 33; Col 1:18).

This brings us to another important point. If the individual Israelites were regarded as the unborn spiritual children of God, then why not we, of spiritual Israel?



Dead bodies ...



... will rise to exciting new life!

Similarly, the True Church is likened to the moon in scripture (Rev 12 etc). The Jews called each new moon the firstborn, in particular the feast of Trumpets (Edersheim, *The Temple*, p. 195). So, God’s children will be born into the Kingdom on the new moon of the feast of Trumpets by resurrection. The Church is indeed the firstborn or firstfruits (James 1:18; Rom 8:29; Heb 12:23).

In ICor 15:20 Christ is called the firstfruit of the resurrection. In scripture firstfruit and firstborn are used interchangeably. So Christ is the firstfruit/firstborn by resurrection. In Leviticus 23:10-

11, the firstfruit symbolised Christ (cf Num 18:11-15 etc). Christians are also a firstfruit which will be cut from the earth and offered to God.

Of course, it is not just the children of God that will experience the new birth. In sense so shall the earth and even the entire universe seem to crave, which Rom 8:22-23 indicates. Of this, Everett Harrison writes:

“From [Romans 8] v.22 it appears at first sight that “the whole creation” includes man. But v.23 alters this impression, for it sets the entire creation over against the whole body of the redeemed (“we ourselves”) and therefore does not include in it the people of God. The groaning of creation looks back to its subjection to frustration (v.20), whereas the pangs of childbirth anticipate the age of renewal. In other words, the same sufferings are at once a result and prophecy. Christ spoke of the renewing of the world and called it a “rebirth” (palingenesis. Matt 19:28).

“Paul makes a parallel between the saints and the material creation. In at least two respects their situation is the same – groaning (cf. 2Cor 5:2) and eagerly awaiting the new age (v.23). Perhaps a third element of comparison is intended: “the redemption of our bodies, “answering to the transformation of the earth ...” (*Romans, EBC*, vol 10, p. 94).

So, even the earth and the universe, in a sense, will experience a kind of rebirth or recreation!

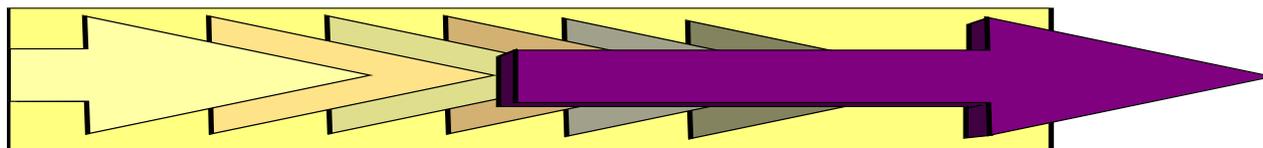
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**FURTHER READING**

- *God's Glory and Man's Destiny* by C White



## CONCLUDING REMARKS

I trust that the reader has come to understand my position on the born again doctrine and WHY I still hold to the doctrine as taught by Mr Armstrong since the mid-1940s. This paper has approached the subject from a different angle yet reaching the same conclusions. It is not a paper going step-by-step proving the born again doctrine per se. In a future update, it will be enlarged to do so. Let me be clear: Herbert Armstrong's position on this issue is Biblical and I fully agree with it. All I am trying to demonstrate here is that this doctrine may be proven from a different perspective.

Data has been gathered from historical sources indicating our Adventist and Russellite similarities in this doctrine.

It must be one of the greatest tragedies that this doctrine was changed with such little regard for Bible truth or our historical roots. We have long and deep roots, extending into the misty past of Church history. Our history is full of blood - men and women who have been butchered for holding on to precious, Godly truths. They gave their lives for God's treasures. Why do we have such callous disregard for our sabbatarian brethren butchered by that great Whore of Babylon and persecuted by her daughters who emerged in protest? Why should we adopt the poisoned doctrines of that Whore? It's almost as bad as one forsaking God's Sabbath day for the Mark of the Beast (Sunday observance).



**Our awesome universe – you are destined to birth into a wonderful new experience**

The question, dear reader, now arises: “will we give our lives as a living sacrifice to God by humbling ourselves and showing that we are willing to admit that Herbert W Armstrong was correct after all? And then genuinely and honestly debate this matter after the order of Acts 15?”. By this means we shall show our humility and will to straighten this key doctrine out and

thereby be a shining example of a peacemaker. We will invoke great blessings from our Creator if we were to undertake such a venture.

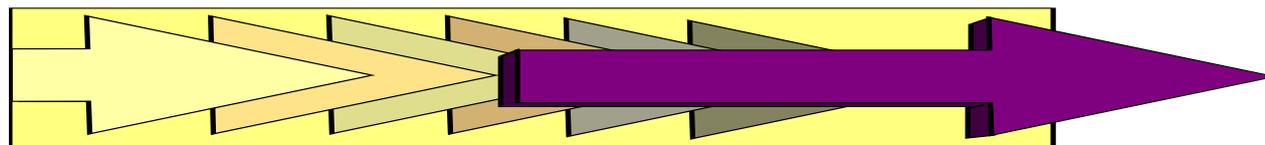
Let us commence a diplomatic debate for it was never properly debated or discussed in the first place. Let us carefully have consideration for both what the Scriptures teach us about this subject and our Sabbatarian roots.

May God Bless you and abundantly grant you the understanding of His wonderful treasures. Surely, the born again doctrine is one of His many treasures?!



**FURTHER READING**

- *Just what do you mean ... "Born Again"* by GT Armstrong
- *Seven Restorations of the Work* by C White



## GLOSSARY

<b>Adventists</b>	The group of Churches which grew out of the Millerite revival of the 1840s. The most numerous are the Seventh-day Adventists.
<b>Binitarianism</b>	The belief that both the Father and Christ have eternal pre-existence as God. They are one God, not two. One variation teaches that God cloned Himself aeons ago and formed Christ so that Christ is also God with God's power and memory (this is, in reality a Binitarian/Unitarian mix). Both He and the Father are known as YHVH in the Old Testament.
<b>Born again</b>	An event that commences with begettal at baptism, spiritual growth and final birth into the God Family in the resurrection.
<b>Christadelphians</b>	A religious group founded by Dr John Thomas in the mid 1800s with minority doctrinal views, such as adoptionism.
<b>Ditheism</b>	A belief that there are two separate Beings in the Godhead (the Father and Christ), both with eternal pre-existence.
<b>Divinisation/ Deification/Theosis</b>	The belief that Christian destiny is to become part of the Godhead at the resurrection
<b>Family of God</b>	The group of spirit beings with a close relationship to God. The correct way of stating it is that God is a Family seeing that He is our Father, Since when is a father outside of and separate from His family?
<b>From Above</b>	The rabbis understood this to mean the Age to Come. We would say that is the Millennial reign of the Messiah.
<b>Kingdom of God</b>	The rule of God upon the earth which shall commence at the return of the Messiah. At this time the God Family will rule the world under Christ.
<b>Nazareans</b>	The early True Church which historians admit was led by James at Jerusalem. They kept the Sabbath, Holy Days and had customs and doctrines similar to the Worldwide Church of God under HWA.
<b>New birth</b>	Transformation into holy spirit at the resurrection.
<b>Russellites</b>	The followers of Charles Taze Russell. He taught truths later rejected by the church he founded, the Jehovah's Witnesses, including the concept of a birth at the resurrection.
<b>Sabbatarian</b>	One who keeps sundown Friday to sundown Saturday as holy time. They believe fervently that the seventh day is a sign of one's relationship with God. Satan's counterfeit is Sunday worship - regarded as the spiritual Mark of the Beast.
<b>Salvation</b>	The process which leads to eternal life. In effect, it is God offering Christians eternal existence as a free gift, provided we grow spiritually. It commences with justification, leads to sanctification during the Christian life and results ultimately in divinisation.
<b>Trinitarianism</b>	While dozens of variations of this theory exist, it generally teaches that God is one, but in three persons. In other words, three in one and one in

three. It teaches that the Holy Spirit is a Being or Personage. Generally, the Sabbatarian Churches of God have vehemently rejected Trinitarianism.

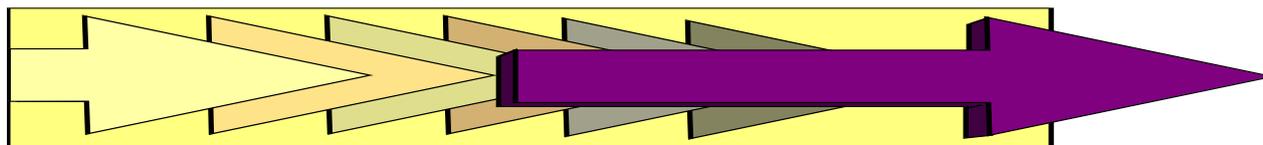
**Unitarianism**

The belief that God the Father has eternally existed, but that Christ was created in some way (eg by divine fiat, or the Father cloned Himself and so forth). It became known as Arianism due to the resistance put up to the Trinitarian doctrine by Dr Arius. This belief, along with Binitarianism, has always been prominent within the Sabbatarian community.

**Socianism**

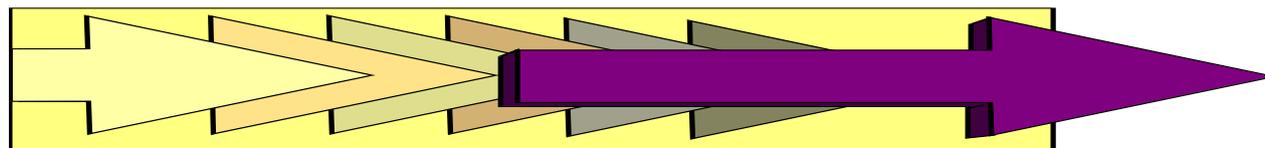
Similar to 'adoptionism.' A variation of this teaching was taught by small sections of the Church of God (seventh day) and also groups such as the non-sabbatarian Church of God (Abrahamic Faith) and Christadelphians. In effect it teaches that the utterances of God were downloaded into the infant Jesus and he was ascribed the title of 'god' - he had no existence prior to his conception when God 'adopted' him. They teach that Christ is now a divine man with God. Some Nazarenes and Ebionites may have taught it.





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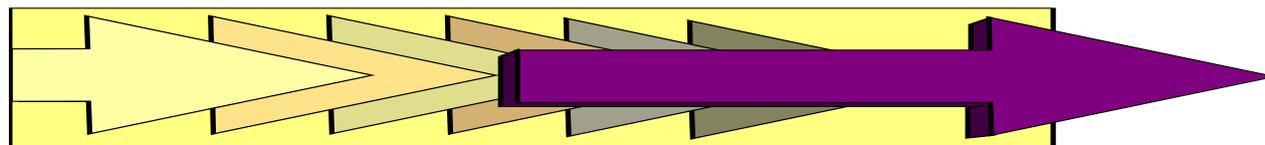
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