

Regeneration: The New Life

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1. The purpose of the old nature

In the previous chapter, we have seen that natural man is a sinner by his birth of Adam and therefore is unsuitable for the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 15 : 50) In any case, it is necessary that the sinner is redeemed from his original lineage and is begotten or born again, by which he receives a new nature. For those of us who believe in the conciliatory death of the Lord Jesus, this redemption from the old nature is a wonderful fact because we know that "our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with [...]" (Romans 6 : 6) However, this sinner who is dead to God, also receives new life with Christ on account of Christ's resurrection being in our place, just as His death was. His resurrection is therefore our resurrection.

“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection [...]. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.” (Romans 6 : 4, 5 and 8)

Very often these verses are merely applied to the still future physical resurrection, because of the use of the word 'shall'. This word, however, does not indicate the future, but a conclusion that Paul has drawn here. He who is crucified with Christ must, as a matter of course, also be made alive with Him. That this has already happened becomes evident when we read the next verses:

“Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6 : 9-11)

Already at this present time we have been raised with Him. Paul teaches the same in Ephesians 2 : 4-6: "But God [...] made us alive together with Christ [...] and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ

Jesus." As we have shown, it is this resurrection that is exactly the same as regeneration. This also becomes evident from Peter's words, who says that "[...] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who [...] has begotten us again [...] through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." (1 Peter 1 : 3) It is quite possible to replace the word 'regeneration' with 'resurrection' in all the verses where it occurs. So in John 3 : 3 we may also read: "Unless one is raised again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And in verse 5: "Unless one is raised with Christ, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." The fact that the Bible uses two totally different words for one event has, of course, a reason: Both words cast a different light on the same matter. Life arises both through birth and resurrection, but through birth something entirely new arises, while resurrection suggests the continuation of something that already existed. Each of the two words thus indicates a different origin of that which is born or resurrected. As we have seen earlier when studying the word 'regeneration', 'regeneration' points to the Holy Spirit as the Begetter of that which is born, while 'resurrection' points to the continuation of the life originally received from Adam. The new life, just as the life of the old creation, has a double origin.

To further grasp this, let us focus once more on the grain of wheat that must fall into the earth and die in order to bear fruit. (John 12 : 24) The grain of wheat can bring forth new fruit, but can do so only when it is sown and dies. When the new stalks rise from the earth, we can rightly say that the wheat grain has brought new life; but with equal justification we can say that it was brought forth by the earth. "And the earth brought forth grass [...]" (Genesis 1 : 12) So also in connection with the grain of wheat we find two sources of life. Furthermore, it is said of the wheat grain that it must die, so it is perfectly correct to speak of resurrection when that dead and buried wheat grain nevertheless brings forth new life. Earth and grain produce new life by their union, whereby the grain represents the male element and the earth ('mother earth') the female. This principle applies to the old creation, precisely because the old creation is a type of the new creation. That the new nature partly comes forth from the old, is very strongly reflected in the birth of the Saviour Himself. He was "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15 : 20), because He was the first to rise from the dead and thereby became the head of a new creation. Likewise, Paul says in Colossians 1 : 18 that He is "the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-

eminence." After all, His resurrection is our regeneration, and from that it follows that we may also rightly call His resurrection His regeneration. Now it is remarkable that before His death and resurrection the Lord was known only by the name 'Jesus'. That was the name He received when He was born and it was therefore the name of His old nature. Only after His resurrection is He rightly called 'Christ'.

When we study the genealogy of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 1, we see that it is divided into three groups of fourteen generations. Much could be said about this, but in this context, we are only interested in the last group of fourteen, which is summarized in verse 17: "[...] and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations." In verse 12 this group begins counting from the captivity: "And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel [...]." But according to this verse and the one preceding it, (Matthew 1 : 11) this Jeconiah had already been born long before the end of the exile, so that he was not the first generation after the exile. The first of whom it is said that he was born after the exile was Shealtiel. Therefore, he is the first of the last group of fourteen generations. When we now count further, it appears that Joseph is the twelfth and that Jesus is not the fourteenth, but the thirteenth. So at first glance this count seems to be wrong. But the matter is that Matthew 1 : 17 is not talking about fourteen generations unto Jesus, but of fourteen generations unto Christ. When verse 16 says: "And Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ," then Jacob is the eleventh, Joseph the twelfth, Jesus the thirteenth, and Christ the fourteenth. This corresponds exactly to what is so emphatically stated in verse 17.

This remarkable phenomenon clarifies without a doubt that Jesus and Christ are in a sense different generations. Since one generation brings forth the next, it is stated here that Jesus brought forth the Christ. The old man brought forth the new man. It is obvious that this is what happened here through the resurrection of Jesus, who, since then, is the Christ, and should be called that way. Apparently, there is a generation gap between the old and the new man, while actually both form a unity. That is why the names 'Jesus' and 'Christ' are so often joined together. In essence, Jesus and Christ are the same person, and yet there is a distinction. He was initially born as Jesus and then born again as Christ. Now, one may only speak of 'again' if one speaks of the same person; but because of the different

nature of both births, in principle two different kinds of life arise. A person reveals himself in two lives; one, as said, is called 'psyche', and the other 'zoe'. The first is flesh and the other is spirit. Exactly the same applies to a regenerated human being. He possesses two kinds of life in that one body. One is flesh; the other is spirit. One is mortal; the other is eternal. But above all, it is true that new life is begotten through the old, so that the old nature fulfils the role of the mother, in whom the seed of the new nature is revealed. It is obvious that for that purpose the old man must receive in himself the Holy Spirit, as the Begetter. That is the path the Creator has determined for all propagation.

2. The Begetter

To know the characteristics of the new life brought forth by regeneration, it is necessary to know who the Begetter of that life is. Of the old nature, we have seen that it was begotten by a sinful and mortal Adam, so that he himself is sinful and mortal, too. As the old nature is genetically determined, so is the new nature. In this regard, we wish to remind you that the essence of the old nature is inherited from the father, and that this 'natural law' also applies to the new creation. The essence of the new nature is not determined by the mother, i. e. the old nature by which it is brought forth, but by the father. In His conversation with Nicodemus the Lord Jesus says that "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3 : 5, 6) The Saviour draws the same parallel here, and states that the male Begetter passes His qualities and character on to His posterity. The old nature is flesh because it was begotten by flesh, while the new nature is Spirit because it was begotten by the Spirit. But what is Spirit? The difficulty of this question lies in the fact that the word 'spirit' (pneuma) is the description of many differing matters. It is the collective noun for everything that belongs to the 'invisible things'. It is not a precise description of the spiritual things, because it says more about the defectiveness of our senses. Everything that is invisible belongs to the realm of the spirit. Therefore, the word 'pneuma' can also be translated as 'wind' or 'breath'. Both wind and breath are invisible, although the old creation cannot exist without either of them. The Saviour Himself alludes to this, when He explains the term 'spirit' to the teacher of Israel: "The wind (pneuma) blows (or: breathes) where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it,

but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes [...]" (John 3 : 8) Here the Lord uses the wind, which is a type of the Holy Spirit and therefore is so called, as an example. The wind can be perceived, in the sense that the results of its activity are visible and palpable; but the wind itself cannot be seen and therefore the route it takes cannot be seen either.

If the invisible Spirit is the Begetter of our new nature, then this implies that our new nature itself is also invisible. "[...] so is everyone who is born (or begotten) of the Spirit." (John 3 : 8) Our new man, as such, cannot be seen by a natural man, nor can it be seen by our own eyes. What may be seen, is the effect of the new nature. In the same way, the wind itself cannot be seen, but the rustling and the swaying of the treetops indeed give an indication of the presence of wind, which, moreover, has an important function in nature as a spreader of seeds and pollen. Accordingly, our new nature itself cannot be seen, but it could possibly express its effect in our bodies and daily lives. So a regenerated man has received a new nature, which is Spirit, and may therefore rightly be called a 'spiritual man', although the world cannot see it when looking at him. Paul speaks about this in 1 Corinthians 2 : 14, 15, when he says: "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one." An invisible Spirit is the Begetter of our new life. That is why our new life is also invisible Spirit.

A further explanation of the spiritual things is given to us in 2 Corinthians 4 : 18: "For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Firstly, we find the statement that all visible things are temporary and therefore should disappear. This means that the entire visible universe must disappear and make way for a new earth and new heaven (Revelation 21 : 1), because the entire old creation is in the power of satan.

“[...] the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.” (1 John 5 : 19)

Our eyes, which are part of the old creation, are only capable of perceiving the old creation. Secondly, it is stated here that the invisible things will last forever. As

the terms 'spirit' and 'invisible' are synonymous, this means that our new nature, which is spirit, will not pass either, but will live forever. Life of the new nature is eternal life. That spiritual life is eternal life, is also explained by another feature of the Spirit. For Spirit is not only invisible and eternal, but also life-giving. This is already evident from the first time the Spirit is mentioned in the Bible, in Genesis 1 : 2. There we find the Spirit of God 'moving' or 'hovering' upon the earth, which was then 'without form' and 'void'. Because of that work of the Spirit, an earth comes into being that is vibrant with life. And when God has made Adam from the dust of the earth, He breathes the 'spirit' or breath of life into his nostrils. Adam only came to life when he received Spirit in his body. The exact same truth can be found, for example, in Ezekiel 37, where Israel is represented by a collection of 'very dry' bones. First these bones come together to subsequently form bodies on their own (!), wherein, however, there is no life yet. (Ezekiel 37 : 7, 8) Then Ezekiel must prophesy again about these still dead bodies and say: "[...] Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." After wind and breath are mentioned simultaneously, it goes on to say "[...] breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet [...]" (Ezekiel 37 : 10)

So Spirit is life-giving. That is why we say of someone who died that spirits are departed from him. Here we find again the principle that creation is female, in the sense that she must receive life from the man, the Spirit. This applies to the old creation, but also to the new, since in both cases the Creator is the same. If then the Spirit is life-giving, this means that the life of the Spirit exists in Himself and is therefore eternal.

"[...] The letter [*the law*] kills, but the Spirit gives life." (2 Corinthians 3 : 6)

"And so it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being.' The last Adam became a life-giving spirit." (1 Corinthians 15 : 45)

So, the Spirit is invisible, eternal and life-giving. These are attributes of Him who has begotten our new life and therefore the characteristics of our new life.

"It is the Spirit who gives life [...]. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life [*zoel*]." (John 6 : 63).

3. The Holy Spirit

So far, we have spoken of 'spirit' in quite general terms, but 'spirit' is not merely the designation of the Spirit of God or of the Holy Spirit; also angels, demons and satan are called in this way. However, there are many indications that the Begetter of the new life is the Holy Spirit. Firstly, of regeneration it is stated that 'the Spirit' is the Begetter, while God Himself is mentioned as Begetter as well.

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1 : 12, 13)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who [...] has begotten [*regenerated*] us again to a living hope.” (1 Peter 1 : 3; see also 1 John 2 : 29; 3 : 9; 4 : 7; 5 : 1, 4, 18)

Now when it is said that both God and the Spirit have begotten those who are regenerated, this means that God and the Spirit are identical. The Spirit is therefore the Spirit of God. Secondly, the Saviour does not say that someone must be begotten by 'spirit' (spirit in general or by any spirit), but by 'the Spirit'. Here the definite article defines that the Spirit He is talking about is the Spirit of God.

The third argument is less obvious, but not less significant. We have already seen that our regeneration is based on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible draws a parallel between the conciliatory suffering and death and the resurrection of the Lord and the regeneration of a sinner. In doing so, His suffering was considered our suffering; His death was our death; His resurrection was our resurrection. Thus, His regeneration is our regeneration. The life He gave up on Calvary was our life. This means that the life with which He arose from the dead is indeed also our new life. By regeneration we have become partakers of the life of Christ. That is the essential meaning of being 'in Christ'. The word in this expression that was translated with 'in', actually expresses an inseparable connection. We are inseparable from Christ, because His life has become our life by regeneration. Therefore, it is not just us in Christ, but Christ in us as well.

8. He teaches (John 14 : 26)
9. He has a will (1 Corinthians 12 : 11)
10. He can be grieved (Ephesians 4 : 30)
11. He can be insulted (Hebrews 10 : 29)
12. He can be lied to (Acts 5 : 3)
13. The Holy Spirit is God and God is a person
14. When the Saviour speaks of the Holy Spirit, He uses a **male personal pronoun**, although, from a grammatical point of view, it should be neuter, because in Greek the word 'pneuma' is neuter: "[...] that He may abide with you forever [...] because it neither sees Him [...] He will teach you all things [...]." (John 14 : 16, 17, 26)
15. He is the Begetter of our new nature and therefore a male person.

4. The Divine Unity

The Begetter of the new creation is the Spirit of God, who is also referred to in the Bible as 'the Holy Spirit'. Here again we find two synonymous expressions, and here again both expressions cast a different light on what is meant. Of course, it is very easy to see that 'the Spirit of God' and 'the Holy Spirit' are identical, but that does not explain why the Bible nevertheless uses two different expressions. In only three places in the Old Testament the term 'the Holy Spirit' is used, whilst 'the Spirit of God' is used many times. If we really want to understand what 'the Holy Spirit' means, it is necessary to study those three verses more closely. The first time that the Holy Spirit is called as such, is in Psalms 51 : 11: "Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me." Firstly, here it is clear that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. David speaks of: 'Your Holy Spirit', and not of: 'my Holy Spirit'. It is not the spirit of David, but the Spirit of God. Sec-

only, we wish to state without further explanation that the words of this Messianic Psalm are not only the words of David, but the words of the Son of David, who at that moment was still 'in David': the Lord Jesus. It is the Saviour Himself, who makes His confession here of the great debt that He loaded on Himself. That debt was of course our debt, which He carried at Calvary. Being in that position He asks God to destroy our debt, which had become His. And in that position, He asks God not to take His Holy Spirit from Him. Needless to say, these prayers were answered. So, the first time the Holy Spirit is called by that name, He appears to belong to the Lord Jesus Himself.

The two other places in Scripture give the same picture. We find them in Isaiah 63 : 10 and 11:

“But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; So He turned Himself against them as an enemy, and He fought against them. Then he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people, saying: 'Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? Where is He who put His Holy Spirit within them?’”

In Psalms 51 He is called 'Your Holy Spirit'; here in Isaiah 63 it is 'His Holy Spirit'. To whom does the Holy Spirit belong here or, as verse 1 of this chapter states the question: "Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" Of course, also here is spoken prophetically of the Lord Jesus Christ. This time however, not in connection with His first coming, but with His second coming. Here too the Holy Spirit still belongs to the Son of God; His prayer in Psalms 51 was answered. Throughout the Old Testament, where the Holy Spirit is called by that name, He is therefore the Spirit of Christ.

The explanation of this we find the next time the Holy Spirit is mentioned, that is in Matthew 1 : 18 and 20: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. [...] for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." Joseph too must have wondered who the Holy Spirit is. And if he opened the Old Testament to find out, he could only have consulted the three verses mentioned earlier. The Holy Spirit, who is now indicated by the definite article for

the first time, is, according to the three verses mentioned, the Spirit who came from God, the Father, and who would live in or be given to the Son, the Messiah of Israel. Here too, the principle applies that which is produced by the Spirit is Spirit. And when the Begetter of the Messiah is holy, then the one who is begotten is also holy. This conclusion is confirmed in Luke 1 : 35: "And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born [...]'. The Begetter is Spirit as well as holy and therefore that which is born is also Spirit as well as holy. The fact that Christ is holy needs no further explanation; the fact that Christ is Spirit is underlined by Paul in 2 Corinthians 3 : 6 and 17: "[...] for the letter (this is the law; vs. 3) kills, but the Spirit gives life. [...] Now the Lord is the Spirit [...]". Furthermore, verse 18 of this chapter does not end with 'the Spirit of the Lord' in the original Greek text, but with 'the Lord, who is the Spirit'. Also 1 Corinthians 15 : 45 states that the last Adam, Christ, is a quickening (life-giving) Spirit.

The expression 'Holy Spirit' is therefore indirectly appropriate for Christ Jesus, because He was begotten by the Holy Spirit, and that which is begotten by the Holy Spirit is Holy Spirit. That is why He is also called 'the Spirit of Christ'. For example, in Romans 8 : 9 and 10: "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you [...]." In this verse, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ and Christ Himself successively, are said to be dwelling in the believer. This is not a sum total, for it deals with one and the same, who can be defined by any of these three names.

We, who are so used to speaking of the 'Trinity' of God, often forget that God may be a Trinity in a sense, but above all He is a unity. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!" (Deuteronomy 6 : 4) Although the word 'Elohim' (God) expresses a multiplicity of more than two, it is added immediately that God is nevertheless a unity. Also, regarding human beings, there is often talk of a trinity of spirit, soul and body; but despite that we know very well that man is a unity. In fact, humanity dies when that unity is dissolved into a trinity. In the same way God, in whose image man was created, is in the first place 'one God', meaning a unity. However, this Divine Unity appears to express itself in the 'shape' of the Spirit and in the form of the Son, who Himself says in John 10 : 30: "I and My Father are one," which

even then was reason enough to start throwing stones (vs. 31). But what we are talking about here is the fact that the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of Christ, are one Spirit, who has 'made His abode' in our hearts, by which we became 'planted together' with Him and received eternal life – a new nature.

The view that the expression 'Spirit of Christ' does not apply to the Holy Spirit, but to the human spirit of the Saviour, is quite inconsistent. When, as in this case, we differentiate between different expressions for the same matter, we must also clearly distinguish between the names of Jesus and Christ. As a human being He bore the name Jesus; the correct expression for His human spirit would then have to be 'the spirit of Jesus'. It was that Spirit which He gave up at Calvary. However, not the spirit of Jesus, but the spirit of the risen Christ lives in every believer.

“Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”
(Romans 8 : 9)

Now the different purports of the expressions 'Spirit of God', 'Holy Spirit' and 'Spirit of Christ' are as follows:

1. ©**Spirit of God**©s the definition, which is related to the old creation (Genesis 1:2).
2. ©**Holy Spirit**©s related to the new creation of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the first and the head.
3. ©**Spirit of Christ**©s related to the risen Christ and points out that the life of the new creation that arose by regeneration is the life of Christ Himself.

That these different expressions are still related to the same Spirit is apparent when we read the following considerations: God is Spirit (John 4 : 24); the Spirit of God is God Himself. Christ is God; the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit begot Christ; Christ is Holy Spirit. Christ is the Son of God; God as well as the Holy Spirit begot Him; so, the Holy Spirit is God. Christ is Holy Spirit; The Spirit of Christ is the Holy Spirit. Because God is the Begetter of the new life, it is

Divine life. Because the Holy Spirit is the Begetter, it is Holy Spirit. Because this is the life of Christ, it is the Spirit of Christ.

5. Water and Spirit

In John 3 : 5 the Lord tells Nicodemus: "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." The difficulty with this verse always lies in the fact that, apart from the Spirit, water is also mentioned as a Begetter of new life. The very common explanation that the water of baptism is meant here, is not a true explanation, because that still does not explain why the Bible nowhere else ascribes any regenerating effect to baptism in water. This would then be about the only verse in which, in very covered terms, baptism is mentioned as a producer of life. In addition, the difficulty remains that in this same conversation the Saviour repeatedly mentions the regeneration of the Holy Spirit without mentioning the water. Some believe support for this view can be found in Romans 6 : 3, 4, which states: "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." These verses speak indeed of a baptism, but not of the baptism in water. Water is not even mentioned. The immersion in Christ is the subject here, as is apparent from the context. And because the Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself in death, our baptism in Christ is called a 'baptism in death'. The baptism in water is but a type of this baptism in Christ. This baptism in Christ, namely our union with Him, is the foundation for regeneration; baptism in water plays no part in that whatsoever. Water has therefore no regenerating function. The Bible itself gives the true explanation of what that water is: "Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever." (1 Peter 1 : 23) Here the seed that produces regeneration is called 'the Word of God'. We find this in James 1 : 18 as well: "Of His own will, He begot us by the word of truth [...]" In Ephesians 5 : 26 this same Word of God is depicted by water: "That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word." The water thus represents the Word of God, which is rightly called the 'washing of regeneration'. "He saved us [...] through the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3 : 5)

That this conclusion is correct is evidenced by the fact that it is applicable to all the more or less different meanings of 'the Word'. In the first place, the Word is Christ Himself. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [...] All things were made through Him. [...] And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us [...]." (John 1 : 1, 3, 14) Already in the first chapter of the Bible we are introduced to the creative power of the Word. The Word made all things. This entire old creation has been established through the speaking of God. The Word gives life: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4 : 4) This law applies to both the old and the new creation. God's methods do not change. The creative Word of God can be observed in the beginning of the old creation, as well as in regeneration, the beginning of the new creation. Is not Christ Himself the living Word of God, as evidenced in John 1? And was He not the 'true wheat grain', that had to fall into the earth and die, to give shape to a new creation? This creative Word of God is also the Bible itself, the written Word. He who believes the contents of the Bible and takes it to heart, i. e. absorbs it, becomes a new creation. That is why we were regenerated by the incorruptible seed, which is the Word of God. In a more limited sense, that Word is the gospel, which proclaims that there is salvation in Christ Jesus, who suffered and died and was raised from the dead, instead of and on behalf of the lost sinner, who could thereby receive a new and eternal life with Him. We must be born of water and Spirit, "for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel." (1 Corinthians 4 : 15)

If that which the Spirit produces is spirit, then also that which is produced by water must be water. If our new nature is called 'Spirit', it must also be possible to call it 'water'. That is indeed the case in the next chapter. In John 3, the water, unlike the Spirit, is no longer mentioned, but chapter 4 explicitly uses water as a type of the new life and its Begetter. There we find the Saviour at Jacob's well, which, as a producer of water, is a type of the Holy Spirit. And when the Lord makes a clear comparison between the water of Jacob's well and the Holy Spirit, he says: "But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4 : 14) In any case, it appears that water is a type of eternal life, but it goes even further. If water is an image of eternal life and eternal life, as we have seen, is Holy Spirit, then water is ultimately a type of

(the) Holy Spirit. This leads us to the only true explanation of John 3 : 5. Water and Spirit is not water plus Spirit; it is not a matter of addition. It does not speak of two things, but of one 'thing' that can be depicted both by Spirit and water.

The statement that water represents the Word of God has of course not become incorrect, on the contrary; it has just been explained why that is the case. Because whatever one understands by 'the Word of God', in any case that Word of God has been produced by the Holy Spirit, and that which is produced by the Spirit is Spirit. The Word of God and the Holy Spirit are essentially not two things, but one; water and Spirit are thus essentially one. If to us the Word of God only implies the speaking of God, as in the creation in Genesis 1: "[...] and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said [...]," then we see that the speaking of God is accompanied by the activity of the Spirit of God. In other verses this speaking is accompanied by the activity of the wind, which, after all, is also a type of the Spirit. This is because the word (which is basically invisible) and Spirit are essentially identical. If the Word of God to us means the Lord Jesus Christ, it should be clear that the Lord Himself was brought forth by the Holy Spirit, and therefore, as argued earlier, also is Spirit.

If we take the Bible as the Word of God, we know that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God [theopneustos]." (2 Timothy 3 : 16) What is really said here is that the Scripture was 'spirited' by God. The Bible is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of God, and is therefore also Spirit itself, who leads us in all truth. See also 2 Peter 1 : 21. If we take the Gospel as the Word of God, then we know that through the gospel we try to convince people of sin, justice and judgment. But the Bible says that this is the work of the Holy Spirit. That is because the gospel as Biblical message is itself Spirit as well. Thus, water, living water, is a type of the Word of God in the broadest sense, and therefore ultimately a type of the Holy Spirit. In the expression 'water and Spirit', apparently two words have been used to define one Person. This is a figure of speech called 'hendiadys' (hen = one; dia = by; dys = two; meaning: one by two). *A hendiadys is a linguistic construction, which is common in the Bible and almost always leads to a misunderstanding, because many are not aware of such figures of speech, and therefore do not recognize them as such. A hendiadys can only be used when two nouns or two verbs are connected by the conjunction 'and', while both words are in the same case.* In such

a case, the second word has the function of a very strong adjective, that needs to be emphasized more strongly than the first. Instead of 'water and Spirit', we can actually read 'spiritual water', with the emphasis on 'spiritual'. When we do read 'spiritual water' in John 3, it becomes clear why the Lord uses this expression. When the Lord spoke about regeneration, Nicodemus applied it to natural birth. The Lord then speaks about birth through spiritual water, as opposed to the natural birth through natural (amniotic) water, that also in this case is a type of the Holy Spirit. Even in the old creation God made it in such a way, that during birth, at first water appears and then life, because it is a type of regeneration. Hence the Lord uses this expression; regeneration takes place through spiritual water; through water that is Spirit.

A perhaps even clearer example of a hendiadys we find in the phrase "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Nobody will conclude here that this God is another than the Father. Also in this case, we could read "the fatherly God of our Lord Jesus Christ." This shows that such figures of speech, although unusual in English, are very common in the Bible. For further study, we give a few more examples of a hendiadys in connection with the Holy Spirit:

Spirit and fire: Matthew 3 : 11; Luke 3 : 16; compare with: Acts 18 : 25; Romans 12 : 11; 1 Thessalonians 5 : 10.

Spirit and power: Luke 1 : 17; 1 Corinthians 2 : 4; compare with: Romans 15 : 13; Acts 1 : 8.

Spirit and life: John 6 : 63; compare with: Revelations 11 : 11; Romans 8 : 2 and 10.

Spirit and truth: John 4 : 23 and 24; compare with: John 15 : 26; John 16 : 63; 1 John 4 : 6.

Spirit and wisdom: Acts 6 : 10; compare with: Ephesians 1 : 17.

6. The new nature

An important Biblical principle is that the son is the heir of the father. Moreover, this law of succession becomes operative as soon as the son comes of age, and certainly not only after the father dies. This is clearly apparent, for example, in the parable of the prodigal son. However, this law of succession does not only concern material possessions, but extends to the whole person. In the Bible, the son is considered the continuation of the father. That is why the Hebrew word for son ('ben') also means 'builder'. He is the one who continues to build the father's life through time. So, in a sense, the son is the father. For example, when God makes a covenant with Abraham, this passes more or less automatically to Isaac and Jacob, and then to all the descendants of Jacob: the people of Israel. The Bible explains this by pointing out that the son is originally a part of the body of the father and therefore forms a unity with him. This Biblical law has its effect on man in general, because in the first place this is a Divine principle. The Son of God Himself is God's heir and forms a unity with the Father.

This characteristic of the Creator is obviously projected on the creature. That which is produced by God is God; that which is produced by man is man; that which is produced by Spirit is Spirit, etc. That is why 'Adam' is not only the name of the first man, but of all men. The Hebrew word 'adam' has been often quite correctly translated as 'man' in our Bible, although it actually means 'red'. ("Though your sins be as scarlet [...]") That which is produced by Adam is Adam. This law applies to the Creator, and is therefore not only limited to the old creation, but also applies to the new creation; the regeneration. In connection with this the Saviour applies this principle to the Spirit: that which is produced by the Spirit is Spirit. What is more: that which is born of the Holy Spirit is Holy Spirit. The new nature that every regenerated sinner receives is called 'Holy Spirit', because the Holy Spirit has produced it. When the Bible speaks of the 'Spirit' or the 'Holy Spirit' that lives in every believer, it is the definition of that which is regenerated: the new man. Just as father and son are both man; as the Father and the Son are both God; thus, in connection with regeneration, both the Begetter and the begotten are called 'Spirit' or 'Holy Spirit'.

But although both are God, the Bible does distinguish between the Father and the Son. In the same way, the Bible also distinguishes between the Holy Spirit as

Begetter and the Holy Spirit as the begotten new nature. Unfortunately, this difference is not reflected in our English Bible translations. When the Holy Spirit is meant to indicate the Father, the original text uses the definite article: "the Holy Spirit." But when the begotten new nature is meant, the article is left out: "Holy Spirit." That the article defines this distinction is also apparent in the following statement of the Lord: "That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." The difficulty in our translations is that in almost all fifty cases that speak of 'Holy Spirit', this has been translated as 'the Holy Spirit', without any need for it. In itself, of course, this is a serious flaw in our translations, but in practise there is another way to easily discover whether the Divine person or our new life is meant. For example, if we disregard the concept of regeneration for a moment, and look at the Begetter as the Giver and at the begotten as the gift. When the Spirit as Giver of eternal life is meant (the 'gift of God'), it is about the Holy Spirit; on the contrary, when the gift of eternal life itself is meant, then it speaks of Holy Spirit or Spirit, consequently without the article. The new nature received by regeneration is Holy Spirit, because He was begotten by the Holy Spirit. The new nature is a person, because the Holy Spirit is a person. The new nature is a power, because the Holy Spirit is a power. The power of the Holy Spirit is clear when we compare Luke 24 : 49 with Acts 1 : 4, 5. In Luke 24 : 49 the Lord says to His disciples:

“Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”

Here it is stated that 'the promise of the Father' is 'power from on high' which the disciples would receive. In Acts 1 : 4 and 5 we read about that same event:

“And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, 'which,' He said, 'you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now'.”

First of all, we must note that the word 'the' is not found in the original text. Here there is no mention of 'the' Holy Spirit, but of Holy Spirit, and the word 'for'

indicates that Holy Spirit is 'the promise of the Father'. In Luke, the promise of the Father is 'a power from on high', while in Acts 'the promise of the Father' is 'Holy Spirit'. From this it follows that 'Holy Spirit' is the same as 'power from on high'. Actually, that is obvious because our new nature is a person and therefore also a power. It is 'power from on high', because the Begetter Himself is from on high. Moreover, one of the expressions translated by 'to be born again' literally means 'to be born from above' (gennao anothēn).

Summarizing we may say that the new nature is a person, because the Begetter is a person. He is Holy Spirit, because the Begetter is the Holy Spirit. He is Spirit of Christ, because it is the life of the risen Christ. He is the power from on high, because He was born from on high.

7. The 'baptism in Spirit'

The baptism with Holy Spirit is a subject, which unfortunately causes a great deal of confusion. In this case, too, that confusion is further enhanced by the fact that our English Bible translations fall short. However, this is not so much a lack of translation as such, but more a shortcoming of our modern languages that are not able to accurately express what the classic original text gives us. Baptism with the Holy Spirit is successively mentioned in the Bible in the following Scriptures: Matthew 3 : 11; Mark 1 : 8; Luke 3 : 16; John 1 : 33; Acts 1 : 5; Acts 11 : 16 and 1 Corinthians 12 : 13. The first six of these seven verses directly or indirectly relate to the announcement of the baptism with the Holy Spirit and do not explain what that baptism precisely stands for. In addition, in all six verses it literally speaks of baptism 'with Holy Spirit' and not 'with the Holy Spirit'. They do not primarily deal with the Begetter, but with the new life itself. Furthermore, the expression 'to baptize with Holy Spirit' is exactly the same as the expression 'to baptize with water', as we find in Mark 1 : 8 for example: "I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." That means that if 'to baptize with water' in English can be replaced with 'to baptize in water', this must also be possible with 'to baptize with Holy Spirit'. Therefore, we may just as easily speak of 'baptism in Holy Spirit'.

Strikingly, in these six verses, baptism in water is apparently seen as a type or symbol of baptism in Holy Spirit, while baptism in water is, in the first instance,

a type of baptism in Christ. But here again there is no essential difference; it is just another approach. By our baptism in, or union with, Christ, we have died with Him and were buried and raised with Him; we have been regenerated with Him and have come to share His life. And, as mentioned earlier, His life is Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit begot Him. This Holy Spirit is the new life that we have received by regeneration. From this it follows that our baptism in Christ is identical to our baptism in Holy Spirit and that baptism in water is a type of both. We already discussed the connection between Christ, the Holy Spirit and water in the chapter "Water and Spirit". The above exactly corresponds to what is stated in the seventh and last verse, in which 'baptism' and 'Holy Spirit' are mentioned in connection with each other.

This brings us to 1 Corinthians 12, where Paul explains in detail that all believers have come to share one Spirit. And because of that fact, all believers form one body. Since that 'one Spirit' is also called 'the Spirit of Christ', that 'one body', formed by all believers of this dispensation, is the 'Body of Christ'.

“But one and the same Spirit works all these things [...]. For as the body is one [...] so also is *[the Body of] Christ* [...]. Now you are the body of Christ [...].” (1 Corinthians 12 : 11, 12, 27)

In this context, the apostle then says in verse 13: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body [...]" and "we have been all made to drink into one Spirit." First of all, we need to focus on the preposition that has been translated as 'into' here. It is the Greek preposition 'eis', that is sometimes translated as 'into', sometimes as 'unto' and sometimes as 'to'. 'Eis' expresses the movement in the direction of a certain object, with the goal of reaching that object or touching it. The best translations are then indeed the words 'into' or 'unto'. Here in verse 13 it says that one Spirit baptized us 'into' one body, the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit was the person and power, who baptized us into the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit made us members of the Body of Christ. It goes without saying that regeneration is the subject here. After all, we have become a part of the Body of Christ because we have received Christ's life through our regeneration.

In the first part of this verse, discussed just now, 'baptism with Holy Spirit' is not yet mentioned, but baptism 'by one Spirit'. The Spirit which is meant here, is thus the Begetter of the new life, the one who has placed us in (the Body of) Christ. We find baptism with or in Holy Spirit in the second part of this verse: "[...] and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." This sentence formally allows two different explanations, which in reality are not different at all. The first meaning of this passage is that we all 'drink of' one Spirit. Such a view is linguistically absolutely permissible and also biblically completely correct. For the Lord Himself indeed depicted the Holy Spirit as the well from which one must drink so as to never thirst again (John 4). When we have drunk from that, we have become part of that Spirit and therefore also of the Body of Christ. This was also the content of the first half of this verse. The other also linguistically permissible reading is that we were submerged 'into' one Spirit, that is to say: immersed, baptized. That, too, is perfectly correct, because that is the literal meaning of being baptized with or in Holy Spirit.

The term 'baptism with (or in) Holy Spirit' thus means that there is Holy Spirit in the believer, but also that the believer is in the Spirit. This baptism with Holy Spirit has the effect that we are also baptized in Christ; that is, we are in Christ and Christ is in us. The baptism in (the Body of) Christ and the baptism with or through the Holy Spirit are therefore not two different things, but only different expressions for the same truth, which cast a different light on it. Of course, this also means that it is impossible to be baptized in Christ without being baptized in Holy Spirit. This may be needless to say, but when we are baptized with Holy Spirit, we are baptized in Christ, because Christ and the Holy Spirit are in essence one. This truth is confirmed by the Biblical concept that the believer is in Christ and Christ is in the believer, while entirely parallel to this the believer is (baptized) in the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is in the believer.

8. The baptism in Moses

A great explanation of what it means 'to be baptized in' is found in 1 Corinthians 10:

“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were bap-

tized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.” (1 Corinthians 10 : 1-4)

“Now these things became our examples [...]” (1 Corinthians 10 : 6)

“Now all these things happened to them as examples [...]” (1 Corinthians 10 : 11)

Paul says that the people of Israel were baptized into Moses at the time of the Exodus. Just as the baptism in Christ and the Holy Spirit, the baptism into Moses is not the same as the baptism in water. The fact that Israel was baptized into Moses meant that they were inextricably linked to him. Where Moses went, Israel went. What Moses ate, Israel ate. What Moses drank, Israel drank. Moses and Israel thus formed a unity. It is abundantly clear what this illustrates. The baptism into Moses is regarded here as a type (= example) of our baptism in Christ. By the Holy Spirit we have been baptized in Christ and are therefore linked to Him. We 'passed through the sea' with Him, which is an image of regeneration. We are on our way to the Promised Land with Him, a type of heaven, which we will possess. Our journey under His leadership leads directly through the desert, a type of this world, where we do not belong, but where we will gain the victory. We also receive the same food, the manna, a type of the Word of God. For "Man shall not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord." (Deuteronomy 8 : 3; Matthew 4 : 4) We also drink from the same spiritual rock, a type of Christ, who brings forth the living water, which of course is also a type of the Holy Spirit.

All the blessings that Christ has received are also our blessings by grace, because we have been baptized in Him. That is not just the basis for our justification, but also for our future hope. Because we are united in Him, we shall "ever be with the Lord," (1 Thessalonians 4 : 17) and we shall forever be where He is (John 14 : 3).

“And if children (of God), then heirs - heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ[...].” (Romans 8 : 17)

Only when we are aware of our blessed position in Christ, will our life become a life of victory. Then we will be strong enough for our pilgrimage through the desert on our way to our eternal home. Then, in our condemned, old nature, life may bring:

“[...] tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword.” (Romans 8 : 35)

But:

“[...] in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8 : 37-39)

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Bible Study Series 'Regeneration'

'Regeneration' is the great theme of the Bible. The Biblical message is not only that Jesus, as the Lamb of God, died for the sins of the world and thus satisfied the righteousness of God.



If one died for all, they all died. (2 Corinthians 5 : 14) And when all, whether believing or not believing, are dead, then all have perished. (1 Corinthians 15 : 18) But the story does not end at the cross! On the contrary.

According to the Bible, God's work encompasses the forming of a new creation from the old, current one. He is forming a new man from the old man, a new Israel from the old Israel, a new creation from the old one. In reference to mankind this is called, among other things, 'regeneration' or 'resurrection'. However, many other expressions are used for that same work of the Creator, who said, "Behold, I make all things new."

Unfortunately, it is often thought that God, just like man, is interested in an improvement of the old. Many Biblical truths have fallen into oblivion, among which also the truth that He, the Creator, is busy bringing about a new definite humanity and world, in which regenerated believers, are already partaking. May these pages serve to remind you of this forgotten truth.