

scend as it enters the pot. The Savara knows nothing of good spirit, but is taught to dread evil ones. All disease is caused by evil spirits, and hence instead of medicine, offerings to the spirits are beneficial.

The dead Savara is burned with his head to the West. At the funeral there is much drum beating, dancing and drinking. The ashes are gathered together and put into a pit on which a stone is placed; and turmeric paste is smeared upon the stone. Liquor and oil are also poured over the stone and often rice, liquor, etc., are left for the spirit to feed upon.

For the temporal and spiritual welfare of this host of our fellow creatures little of nothing is being done. But the return for what little labor has been expended upon them is sufficient to indicate the importance of doing vastly more for them. My friend Mr. G. V. Ramasurti, Assistant Principal of the Rajah's High School in Parlakemidi, a Brahman, has taken a most commendable interest in the Savaras. For some years he has been learning all he could about the tribe, and I am indebted to him chiefly for my knowledge of them. He has picked up their language and has made a dictionary and grammar which are in manuscript form. Recently he urged the Government to do something more for the education and civilization of the Savaras. At present the schools to which these people are admitted are of such a nature that the Savaras have not attended them at all. Mr. Ramasurti recommends separate schools for them conducted upon a very simple basis. It is a matter of regret that the Government did not take up Mr. Ramasurti's suggestions. It was objected that in their semi-barbarous state the Savaras are contented and that they should not be disturbed. Certainly this hill tribe should have a missionary. The Baptist missionaries of the Maritime Provinces of Canada are working among the Telugus right up to these hills, and they have been hoping some time or other to have a missionary for the Savaras. That hope does not seem likely to be realized very soon. However, the missionaries at Parlakemidi and Chicacole have in their employ two Savara evangelists who are doing a little for their own tribes. A family of Kampu Savaras living at the foot of the hills near Tekkall, came under the influence of a man called Gurahuti, a leper belonging to the mission. He taught them the way of life and one after another became Christians until eight or more have confessed Christ. One of these preachers is living in Parlakemidi, and I can speak most highly of his godly life. Every Saturday when several scores of hill Savaras come to market, I have this preacher meet them and do all he can by public address and private conversation to enlighten their dark, superstitious minds. Occasionally Mr. Archibald's Savara helper joins mine in a short tour over the hills. Enough has been gathered out from these interesting aborigines to form the nucleus of a church. Oh that some missionary might have it laid upon his heart to lead this handful forward to the evangelization of the tribe! Just in the very centre of the work is a Sanitarian hill (Derdangar) which is 4,500 feet high. Several of our missionaries have spent most delightful vacations up there during the hot season. Here is a harvest field. May the Lord of the harvest send forth the laborers to gather in the grains.—Baptist Missionary Review.

### What is the Mystery of the New Birth?

E. W. JOHNSON.

The spread of Plymouth Brethren ideas has made it necessary for other Christians to consider what they mean by their ordinary and familiar phrases. The Plymouth Brethren ideas have been spread by their commentaries, and through some of the evangelists who have to an almost startling extent accepted these ideas. It is really necessary to think what we mean by our familiar terms, because it is by giving a seemingly innocent, but really harmful, meaning to these terms that the peculiar notions of the Brethren have obtained so ready an acceptance. The harm so done is not merely to soundness of faith, but illustrates the practical importance of a sound faith. The Plymouth notions are in large part about the Holy Spirit. Because the work of the Holy Spirit is mysterious, wrong ideas are the more likely to arise, the harder to correct; and because the relation to us of the Spirit is of boundless importance, error with regard to it is of grave practical moment. For example, some of the Brethren, taking the promise to lead the disciples into all the truth as applicable not to the several apostles alone, nor only to the church as a whole, but to every Christian, regard themselves each and all as infallible interpreters of the Bible, with the result of exhibiting an arrogance and a contentiousness which might have been expected from so many little popes, no one of which is held under any restraints of conclave or due formality in utterance. This divisive tendency not only among ourselves, but in the churches and mission fields which they penetrate is greatly aggravated by another notion of theirs, the so-called "presidency of the Spirit," the doctrine that the church should not have ordained ministers, but is to be presided over by the Holy Spirit.

The evil of their errors culminates in their singular and most mischievous notion about regeneration. I do

not ascribe this or any other notion to them all, for nowhere is more variety of opinion to be looked for than among the Brethren; but it is a characteristic notion. Accepting without any qualification John's statement, they hold that the regenerate man, being born of God, does not and cannot sin. Accepting Paul's saying literally, "It is no more I, but sin that dwelleth in me," they hold that the man newly born of God is the real person, and that the sins committed apparently by that person are committed only by the "old man," who still abides until destroyed at death or at the Lord's coming, but who is no longer the self. This notion that a regenerate man is an absolutely new substance which did not exist before regeneration, "a new creation," as Paul has it, and that personality is transferred from the old and irredeemably corrupt soul, which still exists, to this newly created entity, is not only an almost inconceivable absurdity from the point of view of study of the human mind, but what is worse, involves that very error of denying that the self commits sins which John's first epistle denounced in terms so strong. "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." It has been said by enemies of our faith that the doctrine of free forgiveness for Christ's sake, of justification by faith, encourages believers to practice sin by assuring them that they are safe, whatever they do; but how much more pernicious the notion that they do not actually sin, whatever they do?

As to all these ideas the first thing to be said, and the hardest to get due recognition for, is that in all languages all the terms which refer to the soul or its operations are figurative. They are all derived from the names or the acts of physical things. This being the case it is impossible for the Bible to describe the operations of the Holy Spirit in any but figurative terms, and no error could be more radical and pervasive than so far to overlook this fact as not to be incessantly on guard against taking the Scripture's account of the matter literally. From the nature of the case, I say, it is impossible that a literal understanding of the Scripture's account can be correct. To imagine for a moment that it can be correct is to overlook the impossibility of stating spiritual facts in any but figurative terms. To this necessity arising from the nature of language must be added the marked tendency of the Hebrews to use the figure of speech which we call hyperbole. It is the figure which states more than one means. It is used continually in both Testaments, and by our Lord as freely as by Paul and John, with both of whom it is a marked characteristic. An example from the great Teacher and from the great Apostle will not only illustrate the fact that hyperbole is employed, but will illustrate also its immense, even indispensable, value. When Jesus said, "Resist not evil," he used language which it would be horrible to take literally. If taken literally, not only would a man have to accept the spoiling of his goods, but the theft of his children and the rape of his wife and daughters. Indeed, Christian women would be forbidden to resist the extremest outrage to themselves. I do not stop to explain what our Lord meant; but it is clear that he spoke in hyperbole. And so did Paul when he said, "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ liveth in me." Literally understood the regeneration of Paul was the annihilation of his soul, and the incarnation of Jesus in his body. If the literal interpretation is intolerable and frightfully irreverent in either case, the figure is none the less important. Let any one try to put in set terms just what Jesus meant to teach with regard to acceptance of injuries, and how feeble the statement. As Dr. Broadus well said in his "Jesus of Nazareth," whatever the difficulties of interpreting such sayings of our Lord, these sayings can never be forgotten. Or let the attempt be made to phrase exactly Paul's meaning in the passage quoted, and the result will be a recognition not only of the repulsive formality of any statement in any degree accurate, but, what is more, the impossibility of any accurate statement. We do not know, presumably Paul did not know, exactly how Christ is related to "the life which we now live in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God."

Now the New Testament does not afford a more striking instance of figurative language than in its account of what we ordinarily call "the new birth." In so calling it we have but selected one of the figures, and have used it so steadily that we have forgotten its essentially figurative character. To speak summarily, John calls the change a begetting; Jesus, John, James, and Peter, call it a new birth; John and Paul designate it as a passing from death to life, a resurrection; Paul, however, once speaks of it as a painful dying, but his ordinary term for it is a creation or re-creation; both Paul and our Lord speaking of it as an emancipation; and in the well loved invitation to come to him the Teacher refers to it as an enlightenment; while to James in one instance it is but an engraving of the word. Only a moment's reflection is required to make plain that it cannot literally be any two of these. It cannot be both a begetting and a birth, a dying and a resurrection, a creation and an emancipation, an engraving and an illumination. But it must be a change of prodigious importance which can be hinted at only by the ineffectual struggle of these bold figures.

And no reason can be found for taking one of them, as literally descriptive and rejecting all the rest.

What then is this mysterious change? This may be inferred in part from the known need of the change. The need was so obvious that when Nicodemus stumbled at our Saviour's term for it, Jesus reproached Nicodemus for not seeing in earthly experience the necessity for the change. What then is that "earthly thing," the need for regeneration? It is the existence of *jaborn* proclivity of every man to sin. We sometimes call it natural depravity. And this is the evil fruit of the fall. Had man never fallen, he would need no regeneration. Its need is precisely to undo the mischief which the fall did, and what at bottom is that mischief except the fact that man's self-will rejects God's holy will? We all find that when the issue is drawn we do not love God supremely, and without supreme love to God we violate the whole law in the essence of violation.

Regeneration then, is such a change as makes it natural to love God supremely. The change of our love is our inward conversion; while the regeneration is the Holy Spirit's operation whereby the conversion of our love becomes possible. The aim is moral in the large and adequate sense of the term "moral." It is not reformation, but a provision for radical obedience in the very springs of action. It may be called spiritual, but not at all to the exclusion of the term moral in the sense here given to it. Morality, or duty, includes the obligation to love God supremely. The moral includes the spiritual, precisely as the spiritual enforces the moral. In other words, we ought to love God with all our hearts, and to love God with all our hearts will alone secure the performance of all duty.

If any one then says the change is vital, he must mean that it is either the addition of a principle of life, a spiritual substance, which did not exist in the soul before regeneration, or he must mean only that the change is fundamental, taking hold of the springs of living. This latter meaning is valid. The former would indicate that regeneration is a change in the quantity of the soul, not in its quality. No one can give any sufficient reason for this opinion unless he proves that one of the Bible names must be taken literally to the exclusion of the others, or unless he can show that some part of the substance of the soul perished at the fall and is replaced by the new birth. For the latter notion there is not a word in Scripture, nor any evidence of any sort.

There is one fancy on this subject which is peculiarly presumptuous, even profane and sacrilegious. I refer to the fancy that Christ Himself becomes literally our life. This phrase should mean only that in some mysterious way Christ is related to the support of the new life, as confessedly he is to the conservation of all things, including our physical life—a meaning entirely appropriate and Scriptural, not to say sane; or else it is held to mean that Christ has become part of the substance of our souls. This would be making us little God-men. No opinion could be more shocking and irreverent. We are his brethren, we are not himself. He was incarnated once for all; he does not become incarnated with every regeneration. He is the all Holy One; he cannot be a part of the substance of us sinners.

What, then, is the mystery of regeneration? It is that we do not know by so much as the smallest approximation to knowledge what sort of change is wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit when it turns the prevailing affection toward God; and we do not know, nor, according to Christ, cannot know, how the Holy Spirit works this mysterious change. What do we know about regeneration? That it is a radical change in the moral nature, including all duty under this term "moral." The disposition to insist upon this or that theory of the nature of the change really transfers the emphasis from the moral and spiritual importance of the change, from its real and only object, to a metaphysical speculation, where metaphysical knowledge is impossible, and where every futile attempt at it is dangerous.—Commonwealth.

### "The Foreshadowings of the Christ"

is the subject of a course of Bible study, which has been issued by the Institute of Sacred Literature of Chicago. It is a nine months' course and each student is furnished with as many sheets, outlining the course for each month. On these sheets the passages to be studied day by day are cited, with directions and suggestions helpful to the student in his work. A question sheet also is furnished each month, by which the student's knowledge of the ground gone over is tested. So far as we have been able to examine the Course outline, it seems to be of a very excellent character. It has the advantage of being in line with the work now being pursued in the S. L. Course of the B. Y. P. U., though it has not been prepared with any view to making it a substitute for that course.

The work, it is said, requires not more than fifteen minutes a day, covers history and prophecy contemporaneously, and gives an inductive study of the biblical material alone. No reference books are required. To ministers who will distribute a certain number of announcements among their people, the Institute is making temporarily an offer of the material of the Course free of charge. This is a good opportunity for our pastors to acquaint themselves with this course, and also with the wide scope of the American Institute, with the work of which some of the leading teachers of our denomination are identified.