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## **The New Birth Is A Mystery**

I once wrote of the need of the inner witness and pointed out that the lack of it is producing a strain of feeble Christians, weak, half-hearted and pitifully unsure of themselves.

A reader wrote to say in effect that she agreed with me fully and wanted very much to experience the inner witness but did not know how to proceed. She ended her letter with the request that I write something that would make the whole thing clear to her and others.

Much as I should like to comply with this request I am, of course, unable to do so. Indeed the very notion that the things of God can be reduced to a formula is back of many of our spiritual failures. Christian workers, in their eager desire to get the seeker "through," will, it seems, stop at nothing. They try to induce faith by baiting the seeker with Bible texts, all the while smiling and "helping" by voice and gesture. The whole

performance, while undoubtedly well-intentioned, acts as a powerful suggestion to raise expectation and predispose the seeker's mind to accept whatever the worker desires that it should. Then follows a series of questions and answers, the questions carefully put in such a way as to suggest the answers, ending usually with the familiar "Well, if He doesn't cast you out, what does He do?" Of course there is only one answer to that question and the bewildered seeker gives it, "Why, He takes me in." This brings on a burst of Amen's, along with a deal of backslapping and handshaking, and another convert has been made. That such a convert lacks inward assurance is not surprising. About the intimate workings of the Holy Spirit in the human heart there is a highly personal relationship in which no third person can share. The sacred work of redemption was wrought in darkness. No strange eye could see what was taking place when the sins of the world entered

the holy soul of Christ that He might die under their weight and thus make "when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin" (Isaiah 53:10; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Matthew 27:46).

That there is a deep mystery about the new birth is plainly stated by our Lord.

*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? (John 3:8-12)*

