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**THE PERSON AND WORK OF
THE HOLY SPIRIT**

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The Person and Work of The Holy Spirit by R. A. Torrey.

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IX. The Regenerating Work of the Holy Spirit

The Apostle Paul in Titus iii. 5, R. V., writes, “Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and *renewing of the Holy Ghost*.” In these words we are taught that *the Holy Spirit renews men, or makes men new*, and that through this renewing of the Holy Spirit, we are saved. Jesus taught the same in John iii. 3-5, “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.”

What is regeneration? *Regeneration is the impartation of life, spiritual life, to those who are dead, spiritually dead, through their trespasses and sins* (Eph. ii. 1, R. V.). It is the Holy Spirit who imparts this life. It is true that the written Word is the instrument which the Holy Spirit uses in regeneration. We read in 1 Pet. i. 23, “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the Word of God*, which liveth and abideth forever.” We read in James i. 18, “Of His own will begat He us with *the Word of truth*, that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.” These passages make it plain that the Word is the instrument used in regeneration, but it is only as the Holy Spirit uses the instrument that the new birth results. “It is the Spirit that giveth life” (John vi. 63, A. R. V.). In 2 Cor. iii. 6, we are told that “the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.”¹ This is sometimes interpreted to mean that the literal interpretation of Scripture, the interpretation that takes it in its strict grammatical sense and makes it mean what it says, kills; but that some spiritual interpretation, an interpretation that “gives the spirit of the passage,” by making it mean something it does not say, gives life; and those who insist upon Scripture meaning exactly what it says are called “deadly literalists.” This is a favourite perversion of Scripture with those who do not like to take the Bible as meaning just what it says and who find themselves driven into a corner and are looking about for some convenient way of escape. If one will read the words in their context, he will see that this thought was utterly foreign to the mind of Paul. Indeed, one who will carefully study the epistles of Paul will find that he himself was a literalist of the literalists. If literalism is deadly, then the teachings of Paul are among the most deadly ever written. Paul will build an argument upon the turn of a word, upon a number or a tense. What does the passage mean? The way to find out what any passage means is to study in their context the words used. Paul is drawing a contrast between the Word of God outside of us, written with ink upon parchment or graven on tables of stone, and the Word of God written within us in tables that are hearts of flesh with the Spirit of the living God (v. 3) and he tells us that if we merely have the Word of God outside us in a Book or on parchment or on tables of stone, that it will kill us, that it will only bring condemnation and death, but that if we have the Word of God made a living thing in our hearts, written upon our hearts by the Spirit of the living God, that it will bring us life.² No number of Bibles upon our tables or in our libraries

¹ Both the translators of the Authorized Version and the Revised Version, and even the translators of the American Revision, seem to have lost sight of the context, for while they spell “Spirit” in the third verse with a capital, in the sixth verse, in all three versions it is spelled with a small “s.”

² The ministry of many an orthodox preacher and teacher is a ministry of death. It is true that the Word of the Gospel is preached but it is preached with enticing words of man’s wisdom and not in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power (1 Cor. ii. 4). The Gospel comes in word only and not in power and in the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. i. 5).

