

**MANUALS OF FAITH
AND DUTY. NO. VI. THE
BIRTH FROM ABOVE**

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Manuals of Faith and Duty. No. VI. The Birth from Above by Charles Follen Lee

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CHARLES FOLLEN LEE

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Manuals of Faith and Duty.

No. VI.

THE

BIRTH FROM ABOVE.

BY

REV. CHARLES FOLLEN LEE.

EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN (OR FROM ABOVE) HE CANNOT
SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

JOHN III. 3.

BOSTON:

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© Source of uncreated light,
The Father's promised Paraclete!
Thrice holy fount, thrice holy fire,
Our hearts with heavenly love inspire;
Come, and Thy sacred unction bring
To sanctify us, while we sing.

Plenteous of grace, descend from high,
Rich in Thy seven-fold energy!
Thou strength of His Almighty hand,
Whose power does heaven and earth command;
Proceeding Spirit, our defence,
Who dost the gift of tongues dispense,
And crown'st Thy gift with eloquence,

Make us eternal truths receive,
And practise all that we believe:
Hide us Thyself, that we may see
The Father and the Son by Thee.

From the *Veni, Creator Spiritus*, commonly ascribed
to Gregory the Great. — *Dryden's Paraphrase*.

THE BIRTH FROM ABOVE.



INTRODUCTORY.

THE phrase "New Birth" is one with which the reader is doubtless familiar; for the subject to which it relates is one of the most important with which the Gospel deals, one that from the days of the Infant Church has called forth innumerable treatises and sermons, and consequently one upon which Christian conversation is very apt to turn. It was, then, both natural and desirable that this subject should be discussed in the series of manuals to which this little book belongs, and it is the writer's hope and prayer that what follows may be found useful by all who favor him with their attention.

It will no doubt be asked by some, "Why was not this manual entitled *The New Birth?*" The answer is, because *The Birth from Above*

was considered a more comprehensive and suggestive title. We have no quarrel with the phrase "New Birth," but we are satisfied that the one we shall substitute for it deserves the preference. In the Scriptural passage most often cited in connection with the subject of which we are to treat, it has the sanction of the original, as the marginal reading, both in the Common Version and in the Revision, bears witness; and we feel that upon due reflection our choice of a title will commend itself to all. Thus the Greek word rendered *again* in the Common Version and *anew* in the Revision, may, with equal correctness, be rendered *from above*.¹ The reader will perceive, then, that to say a man must be "born from above," if he would "see," or "enter into," the Kingdom of God, means, not only that he must be *born again* or *anew*, but that, as our Lord teaches, his re-birth involves heavenly agencies, or the operations of the Holy Spirit.

¹ John iii. 3, 7.

I. — CHRIST AND NICODEMUS. — A STARTLING
DECLARATION.

Let us turn to one of the most impressive and fruitful chapters in the Evangelical Narratives, — that recording the conversation of our Lord with Nicodemus the Pharisee, “a ruler of the Jews,” that is to say, a member of the Sanhedrim, or High Council of the Jewish nation.¹ It is night, an hour that the Pharisee may have chosen, not merely for prudential reasons, but also because it offers the most favorable opportunity for an interview with the “Teacher” whom he believes to have “come from God.” The labors, heat, and turmoil of the day are over, and amid the ensuing calm and silence, so grateful to meditation, the body allows the soul to enjoy its sovereignty undisturbed. So, seated by the Master, a little apart, we may believe, from the disciples, Nicodemus opens a conversation that is to be handed down by Saint John through all succeeding time. Never has Nicodemus been so stirred; never has the solemn night awakened within him such searching questions; never has he been so mightily

¹ John iii. 1-21.