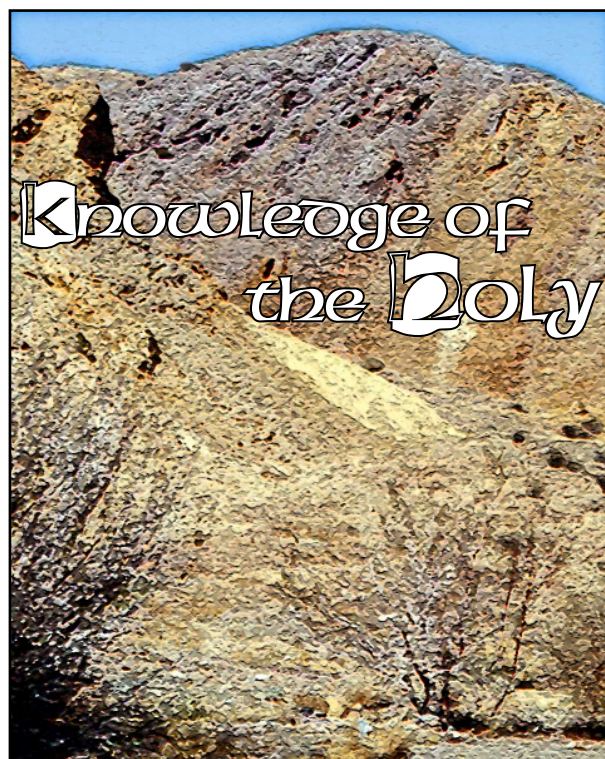


Religious types like to bandy about the word “convert,” or “conversion.” We can convert from one religion to another, or convert from having no religion at all to subscribing to one in particular. But there is yet another form of conversion.



a new creature

Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into 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 CHRISTIAN IS SOMEONE who has been converted from one type of being to another. He is born a person of the earth, trudging along day by day with dirt between his toes. The gravity of his birthplace holds him firmly within its grasp; his outlook is earthen, his perspective, at best, global. Events around him are interpreted through an earthen filter—through a mind and heart that are firmly in the grasp of their natural condition.

The point at which he believes in the saving power of Christ, however, marks his conversion from an earthly to a spiritual being—not just “spiritual,” for anyone born of man can have a spiritual bent, but *Holy* spiritual. He has been reborn, and is no longer a child of the earth, but now a child of God—who is

a spiritual being. He has been remade from flesh-kind to spirit-kind.

“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”
John 4:24

The challenge for the Christian’s senses is that, though now a new being, he still looks and sometimes acts the same as before: earthbound. His feet do not tread the clouds above, but the sod of this globe. His thoughts, behavior, desires—though changing—too often give evidence that he is still a child of the soil. On top of that, the culture in which he lives wants to pigeon-hole things of the Spirit with other mystical, mysterious, and generally unknowable things. So it falls to the individual believer to invest time and energy in get-

ting to know this sometimes enigmatic, yet eminently knowable Holy Spirit.

Where I live this month of October can be, and certainly is this year, windy. It is as if the approaching winter is getting impatient, eager to arrive, and as the lingering warmth of autumn does battle against the approaching cold, the wind is stirred, threatening to heave all of us into the next county.

When the wind comes drifting or roaring by, the first sign is the gentle and pleasant fluttering and drifting of autumn’s remaining leaves. Then follows the more troublesome waving back and forth of heretofore stationary objects: oak trees, fences, power lines—buildings. Tiny ripples begin to

move across the normally placid and benign pond, then blossom into miniature whitecaps. Doors and shuttered windows rattle in their frames, and the wind whistles eerily through the cracks. Dark, billowing clouds scoot by, as if hurrying to an appointment for which they are late.

But no matter how many indicators there are for the passing wind, we still cannot really describe it. The weather reporter will spout unintelligible babble about high pressure cold fronts, isobars and troughs, but none of it really explains precisely what the wind *is*. Can I hold it in my hand? Where does it come from—and where is it going? Draw me a picture of wind.

“The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

John 3:8

The wind is real; its existence is both felt, and observed in its effects. Yet it cannot be held in the hand. Though it is invisible, it is just as real as the tree it bends to its will, the ship it blows off course, the skin it either cools, heats, or freezes.

Even within the Christian community the Spirit is often erroneously referred to as an “it.” One’s next door neighbor is a “she”; the delivery driver is a “he”; even the second member of the Trinity, who once walked the soil of this earth, is certainly a “He.” But the Spirit—a mysterious, invisible being without what we would call a proper name—is too often called an “it.”

But the Spirit is both real and a person.

“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.”

John 16:13

The Holy Spirit is a living Person and should be treated as a person. We must never think of Him as a blind energy nor as an impersonal force. He hears and sees and feels as any person does. He speaks and hears us speak. We can please Him or grieve Him or silence Him as we can any other person. He will respond to our timid effort to know Him and will ever meet us over half the way.

A.W. Tozer

Many think of the Holy Spirit as radiant energy, and thereby find it

impossible to establish a relationship. We do not have a relationship with the electricity coursing through the walls of our house; we have relationships with the people who live in the house.

The Spirit is a person living within our corporeal house. As He fits Himself into that house, making Himself comfortable, we are to make ourselves comfortable with His ways. We are to mold our lives to His shape and dimensions. We are to accept His presence as something familiar.

His existence is both felt, and observed in its effects. Yet the Spirit cannot be held or touched. His existence is proved, first, by faith, but though invisible He is just as real as the life He bends to the Father’s will, the errant path He blows back on course, the comfort He brings to a believer’s sorrow.

The most important rule for us is to concentrate on keeping our lives open to God. Let everything else including work, clothes, and food be set aside. The busyness of things obscures our concentration on God. We must maintain a position of beholding Him, keeping our lives completely spiritual through and through. Let other things come and go as they will; let other people criticize us as they will; but never allow anything to obscure the life that “is hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3). Never let a hurried lifestyle disturb the relationship of abiding in Him. This is an easy thing to allow, but we must guard against it. The most difficult lesson of the Christian life is learning how to continue “beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord.”

Oswald Chambers

(continued...)

