

Teachings Concerning Spiritual Rebirth

Born of the Spirit

John 3:1-8

1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

3 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.

4 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?

5 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.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

8 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.

Harold B. Lee (President)

Many deductions might be taken from [the above] statement, but there are three that I want to call to your attention. In order even to see the kingdom of God, one must be born again. This suggests that to become converted, one has to have some spiritual change in order to know the gospel or to see the Church. There must be some kind of spiritual experience. And to enter into the kingdom of God—that is, to become members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—there has to be a new birth. The final deduction, knowing how this birth takes place, is as impossible to explain as to explain where the wind comes from or where it goes. In other words, one who is born of the Spirit is like the wind when it comes or when it goes. Now hold those three deductions in your mind as I call your attention to some other scriptures. (*Stand Ye in Holy Places* [1974], p.48)

The Necessity of Spiritual Rebirth

James E. Faust (First Presidency)

All of us need to be born spiritually, from 8 to 80—or even 90. When Sister Luise Wulff of the German Democratic Republic was baptized in 1989, she exclaimed, “There I was ninety-four years old and born again!” (“Born Again,” *Ensign*, May 2001, p. 54ff)

Moses 6:58-61

58 Therefore I give unto you a commandment, to teach these things freely unto your children, saying:

59 That by reason of transgression cometh the fall,

which fall bringeth death, and inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye might be sanctified from all sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory;

60 For by the water ye keep the commandment; by the Spirit ye are justified, and by the blood ye are sanctified;

61 Therefore it is given to abide in you; the record of heaven; the Comforter; the peaceable things of immortal glory; the truth of all things; that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment.

Mosiah 27:25-26

25 And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters;

26 And thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.

Alma 7:14

14 Now I say unto you that ye must repent, and be born again; for the Spirit saith if ye are not born again ye cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven; therefore come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye may be washed from your sins, that ye may have faith on the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, who is mighty to save and to cleanse from all unrighteousness.

Joseph Smith

But except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. This eternal truth settles the question of all men's religion. A man may be saved, after the judgment, in the terrestrial kingdom, or in the telestial kingdom, but he can never see the celestial kingdom of God, without being born of water and the Spirit. He may receive a glory like unto the moon, [i.e., of which the light of the moon is typical], or a star, [i.e., of which the light of the stars is typical], but he can never come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, unless he becomes as a little child, and is taught by the Spirit of God. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* [1938], p.12)

Bruce R. McConkie

Such is the plan of salvation for all men in all ages. Adam fell and brought death—both temporal death and

spiritual death—into the world. The effects of his fall passed upon all men; all die temporally, and all are subject to spiritual death. Spiritual death is to die as pertaining to the things of the Spirit, as pertaining to things of righteousness. If men are to live again as pertaining to the things of righteousness, they must receive a spiritual rebirth. (*The Mortal Messiah* [1979], 1:473)

What Is Spiritual Rebirth?

David O. McKay (President)

"Except a man be born again," said Jesus, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3.) He told Nicodemus that before he could solve the question that was troubling his mind, his spiritual vision would have to be changed by an entire revolution of his "inner man." His manner of thinking, feeling, and acting with reference to spiritual things would have to undergo a fundamental and permanent change with reference to spiritual matters. (Conference Report, April 1960, p.26)

Spencer W. Kimball (Quorum of the Twelve)

To gain eternal life there must be a rebirth, a transformation, and an unburdening self of pride, weaknesses, and prejudice. You must begin as a little child, clean, teachable. (Conference Report, April 1958, p.14).

Moses 6:64-65

64 And it came to pass, when the Lord had spoken with Adam, our father, that Adam cried unto the Lord, and he was caught away by the Spirit of the Lord, and was carried down into the water, and was laid under the water, and was brought forth out of the water.

65 And thus he was baptized, and the Spirit of God descended upon him, and thus he was born of the Spirit, and became quickened in the inner man. [The word *quicken* is defined in the Noah Webster's 1828 *An American Dictionary of the English Language* as "To become alive."]

Harold B. Lee

[After quoting Moses 6:65, he said:] Now there is a definition of what it means to be born again. It means to be quickened in the inner man. That's another way of saying it. (*Stand Ye In Holy Places* [1975], p.54)

Mosiah 5:7

7 And now because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters.

Harold B. Lee

[After quoting Mosiah 5:7, he said:] There's another explanation: when our hearts are changed through faith on his name, we are born again. (*Stand Ye In Holy Places* [1974], p.55)

Mosiah 27:25-29

25 And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state

of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters;

26 And thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God

27 I say unto you, unless this be the case, they must be cast off; and this I know, because I was like to be cast off.

28 Nevertheless, after wandering through much tribulation, repenting nigh unto death, the Lord in mercy hath seen fit to snatch me out of an everlasting burning, and I am born of God.

29 My soul hath been redeemed from the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God. My soul was racked with eternal torment; but I am snatched, and my soul is pained no more.

Alma 5:14

14 And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?

Bruce R. McConkie

There is a natural birth, and there is a spiritual birth. The natural birth is to die as pertaining to premortal life, to leave the heavenly realms where all spirits dwell in the Divine Presence, and to begin a new life, a mortal life, a life here on earth. The natural birth creates a natural man, and the natural man is an enemy to God. In his fallen state he is carnal, sensual, and devilish by nature. Appetites and passions govern his life and he is alive—acutely so—to all that is evil and wicked in the world.

The spiritual birth comes after the natural birth. It is to die as pertaining to worldliness and carnality and to become a new creature by the power of the Spirit. It is to begin a new life, a life in which we bridle our passions and control our appetites, a life of righteousness, a spiritual life. Whereas we were in a deep abyss of darkness, now we are alive in Christ and bask in the shining rays of his everlasting light. Such is the new birth the second birth, the birth into the household of Christ. (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [1985], p.282)

Spiritual Rebirth Comes Through Ordinances: Baptism and Confirmation

Joseph Smith

Being born again, comes by the Spirit of God through ordinances. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* [1938], p.162)

Marion G. Romney (First Presidency)

One is born again by actually receiving and experiencing the light and power inherent in the gift of the Holy Ghost. ("The Light of Christ," *Ensign*, May 1977, p. 44.)

John 3:5

5 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.

Harold B. Lee (President)

The Master's admonition to Nicodemus, who came

confessing Jesus as a teacher come of God, and undoubtedly seeking to know, like so many others who are true seekers after truth, just what he must do to be saved. He was told that he must be born again if he would see the kingdom of God. This statement, the Master clarified, when he explained, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5.)

This new birth, then, was to be accomplished through the medium of baptism by immersion and by the laying on of hands for the conferring of the Holy Ghost, as the disciples, thereafter as they went out among the people, administered these sacred ordinances. (Conference Report, April 1961, p.32)

Moses 6:64-65

64 And it came to pass, when the Lord had spoken with Adam, our father, that Adam cried unto the Lord, and he was caught away by the Spirit of the Lord, and was carried down into the water, and was laid under the water, and was brought forth out of the water.

65 And thus he was baptized, and the Spirit of God descended upon him, and thus he was born of the Spirit, and became quickened in the inner man.

James E. Faust (First Presidency)

Our first birth takes place when we are born into mortality. Our second birth begins when we are baptized by water by one holding the priesthood of God and is completed when we are confirmed, and "then cometh a remission of [our] sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost." (2 Nephi 31:17). [From "Born Again," *Ensign*, May 2001, p. 54ff]

Joseph Fielding Smith (President)

- We must receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; we must be born again; we must have sin and iniquity burned out of our souls as though by fire; we must gain a new creation by the power of the Holy Ghost. ("The Plan of Salvation," *Ensign*, Nov. 1971, p. 5)
- This second death is not, then, the dissolution or annihilation of both spirit and body, but banishment from the presence of God and from partaking of the things of righteousness. In speaking of the transgression of Adam, the Lord has said: "Wherefore, I, the Lord God, caused that he should be cast out from the Garden of Eden, from my presence, because of his transgression, wherein he became spiritually dead, which is the first death, even that same death which is the last death, which is spiritual, which shall be pronounced upon the wicked when I shall say: Depart, ye cursed." The second death is spiritual; it is banishment from the presence of the Lord. It is similar to the first spiritual death, which has passed upon all men who have remained unrepentant and who have not received the gospel. Those who have suffered the first spiritual death or departure, which is a shutting out from the presence of God, have the privilege of being redeemed from this death through obedience to the principles of the gospel. Through baptism and confirmation they are born again and thus come back into spiritual life, and through their continued obedience to the end, they shall be made partakers of the blessings of eternal life in the celestial kingdom of God. (*Doctrines of Salvation* [1955], 2:222)

Mark E. Petersen (Quorum of the Twelve)

We receive confirmation by the laying on of hands and are given the gift of the Holy Ghost. But we must remember that in that ordinance we also receive a newness of life. If we are sincere, we are literally born again. In a very real sense we become different and better persons. We receive a new heart. We put away the man of sin, as Paul describes it, and take upon ourselves the name and the image of Christ (see Col. 3:9-10). ["The Image of a Church Leader," *Ensign*, Aug. 1980, p. 5]

Bruce R. McConkie (Quorum of the Twelve)

- The first death, in point of time, was spiritual. Spiritual death is to die as pertaining to the things of the Spirit; it is to die as pertaining to the things of righteousness; it is to be cast out of the presence of the Lord, in which presence spirituality and righteousness abound. Adam died this death when he left Eden, and he remained dead until he was born again by the power of the Spirit following his baptism. (*The Promised Messiah*, p.224)
- If a man "yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord" (Mosiah 3:19), then he is born again. His spiritual death ceases. He becomes alive to the things of the Spirit; he returns to the presence of God because he receives the gift of the Holy Ghost; and he is alive to the things of righteousness. He crucifies the old man of sin, becomes a new creature of the Holy Ghost, and walks in a newness of life. This is what is meant by being born again. (*The Promised Messiah* [1978], p.350)

Spiritual Rebirth is a Process –Most Often Gradual

D. Todd Christofferson (Quorum of the Twelve)

As we reflect on these examples and other scriptures, it becomes clear that spiritual rebirth originates with faith in Jesus Christ, by whose grace we are changed. More specifically, it is faith in Christ as the Atoning One, the Redeemer, who can cleanse from sin and make holy (see Mosiah 4:2–3).

When this true faith takes root in a person, it inevitably leads to repentance. Amulek taught that the Savior's sacrifice would "bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men *that they may have faith unto repentance*" (Alma 34:15; emphasis added).

To be complete, however, repentance requires a covenant of obedience. This is the covenant expressed by Benjamin's people "to do [God's] will, and to be obedient to his commandments" (Mosiah 5:5). This is the covenant witnessed by baptism in water (see Mosiah 18:10), sometimes referred to in the scriptures as the "baptism of repentance" or "baptism unto repentance," inasmuch as it is the culminating step, the capstone of our repentance (see, for example, Acts 19:4; Alma 7:14; 9:27; D&C 107:20).

Then, as promised, the Lord baptizes us "with fire and with the Holy Ghost" (3 Nephi 9:20). Nephi phrased it this way: "For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of

your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost" (2 Nephi 31:17). Having thus relied "upon the merits of him who is mighty to save" (2 Nephi 31:19), we are "quickened in the inner man" (Moses 6:65) and, if not yet fully born again, then certainly well into the path of spiritual rebirth.

Now, the Lord cautions us to take heed since "there is a possibility that man may fall from grace" (D&C 20:32), even those who are sanctified (see vv. 32–34). As Nephi counseled: "Ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:20).

You may ask, Why doesn't this mighty change happen more quickly with me? You should remember that the remarkable examples of King Benjamin's people, Alma, and some others in scripture are just that—remarkable and not typical. For most of us, the changes are more gradual and occur over time. Being born again, unlike our physical birth, is more a process than an event. And engaging in that process is the central purpose of mortality.

At the same time, let us not justify ourselves in a casual effort. Let us not be content to retain some disposition to do evil. Let us worthily partake of the sacrament each week and continue to draw upon the Holy Spirit to root out the last vestiges of impurity within us. I testify that as you continue in the path of spiritual rebirth, the atoning grace of Jesus Christ will take away your sins and the stain of those sins in you, temptations will lose their appeal, and through Christ you will become holy, as He and our Father are holy. ("Born Again," *Ensign*, May 2008, pp. 76–79)

Bruce R. McConkie (Quorum of the Twelve)

- Sometimes men are born again miraculously and suddenly, as was Alma. They become alive to the things of the Spirit and completely reverse the whole course of their life almost in an instant. But for most members of the Church the spiritual rebirth is a process that goes on gradually. (*The Promised Messiah* [1978], p.351)
- Except in miraculous and unusual circumstances, as with Alma (Mosiah 27), spiritual rebirth is a process. It does not occur instantaneously. It comes to pass by degrees. Repentant persons become alive to one spiritual reality after another, until they are wholly alive in Christ and are qualified to dwell in his presence forever. Similarly, conversion is a process and sanctification is a process. They increase in the hearts of the obedient in process of time as they more fully keep the commandments and seek the Lord. Spiritual rebirth begins and ends with belief in Christ. When repentant souls turn to Christ and seek a new life with him, the processes of rebirth commence. When their belief in the Lord increases until they are able to do the works that he does, "and greater works than these" (John 14:12), their rebirth is perfect, and they are prepared for salvation with him. (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* [1973], 3:402)

Merrill J. Bateman (Seventy)

For most of us, trying to be Christlike is a lifelong process and comes "line upon line, precept upon precept" (2 Ne. 28:30). Most of us, if faithful, are baptized "with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites ... were baptized ... and they knew it not" (3 Ne. 9:20). In

other words, spiritual rebirth is a gradual process for most individuals. At any point in time the changes are almost imperceptible; indeed, many of us worry that we are not becoming more Christlike even though we are. ("Living a Christ-Centered Life," *Ensign*, Jan. 1999, p. 7)

Spiritually Born Again in the Fullest Sense

[It has been seen that spiritual rebirth comes when one receives the Gift of the Holy Ghost. However, the scriptures also speak of growing up and receiving a fulness of the Holy Ghost—or a fulness of spiritual rebirth.]

D&C 109:14-15

14 And do thou grant, Holy Father, that all those who shall worship in this house may be taught words of wisdom out of the best books, and that they may seek learning even by study, and also by faith, as thou hast said;

And that they may grow up in thee, and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost, and be organized according to thy laws, and be prepared to obtain every needful thing;

David A. Bednar (Quorum of the Twelve)

Preparing and Cleaning

Just as a cucumber must be prepared and cleaned before it can be changed into a pickle, so you and I can be prepared with "the words of faith and of good doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:6) and initially cleansed through the ordinances and covenants administered by the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood.

"And the lesser priesthood continued, which priesthood holdeth the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel;

"Which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins" (D&C 84:26–27).

And the Lord has established a high standard of cleanliness.

"Wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence" (Moses 6:57)

Proper preparing and cleaning are the first basic steps in the process of being born again.

Immersing and Saturating

Just as a cucumber is transformed into a pickle as it is immersed in and saturated with salt brine, so you and I are born again as we are absorbed by and in the gospel of Jesus Christ. As we honor and "observe the covenants" (D&C 42:13) into which we have entered, as we "feast upon the words of Christ" (2 Nephi 32:3), as we "pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart" (Moroni 7:48), and as we "serve [God] with all [of our] heart, might, mind and strength" (D&C 4:2), then:

"Because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters" (Mosiah 5:7).

The spiritual rebirth described in this verse typically does not occur quickly or all at once; it is an ongoing process—not a single event. Line upon line and

precept upon precept, gradually and almost imperceptibly, our motives, our thoughts, our words, and our deeds become aligned with the will of God. This phase of the transformation process requires time, persistence, and patience.

A cucumber only becomes a pickle through steady, sustained, and complete immersion in salt brine. Significantly, salt is the key ingredient in the recipe. Salt frequently is used in the scriptures as a symbol both of a covenant and of a covenant people. And just as salt is essential in transforming a cucumber into a pickle, so covenants are central to our spiritual rebirth.

We begin the process of being born again through exercising faith in Christ, repenting of our sins, and being baptized by immersion for the remission of sins by one having priesthood authority.

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

And after we come out of the waters of baptism, our souls need to be continuously immersed in and saturated with the truth and the light of the Savior's gospel. Sporadic and shallow dipping in the doctrine of Christ and partial participation in His restored Church cannot produce the spiritual transformation that enables us to walk in a newness of life. Rather, fidelity to covenants, constancy of commitment, and offering our whole soul unto God are required if we are to receive the blessings of eternity.

"I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved" (Omni 1:26).

Total immersion in and saturation with the Savior's gospel are essential steps in the process of being born again.

Purifying and Sealing

Cured cucumbers are packed into sterilized jars and heat processed in order to remove impurities and to seal the containers from external contaminants. The boiling-water-bath procedure enables the pickles to be both protected and preserved over a long period of time. In a similar way, we progressively become purified and sanctified as you and I are washed in the blood of the Lamb, are born again, and receive the ordinances and honor the covenants that are administered by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

"Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God" (Helaman 3:35).

The word *sealing* in my message today does not refer exclusively to the ordinance of eternal marriage performed in the house of the Lord. Rather, I am using this particular word as explained in the 76th section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

"This is the testimony of the gospel of Christ concerning them who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just—

"They are they who received the testimony of Jesus,

and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, and this according to the commandment which he has given—

"That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power;

"And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true" (vv. 50–53).

The Holy Spirit of Promise is the ratifying power of the Holy Ghost. When sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, an ordinance, vow, or covenant is binding on earth and in heaven. (See D&C 132:7.) Receiving this "stamp of approval" from the Holy Ghost is the result of faithfulness, integrity, and steadfastness in honoring gospel covenants "in [the] process of time" (Moses 7:21). However, this sealing can be forfeited through unrighteousness and transgression.

Purifying and sealing by the Holy Spirit of Promise constitute the culminating steps in the process of being born again. ("Ye Must Be Born Again," *Ensign*, May 2007, pp. 19–22)

What Are the Signs of Spiritual Rebirth?

Also see above: "What Is Spiritual Rebirth?"

George Q. Cannon (First Presidency)

We need to be born again, and have new hearts put in us. There is too much of the old leaven about us. We are not born again as we should be. Do you not believe that we ought to be born again? Do you not believe that we should become new creatures in Christ Jesus, under the influence of the Gospel? All will say, yes, who understand the Gospel. You must be born again. You must have new desires, new hearts, so to speak, in you. But what do we see? We see men following the ways of the world just as much as though they made no pretensions to being Latter-day Saints. Hundreds of people who are called Latter-day Saints you could not distinguish from the world. They have the same desires, the same feelings, the same aspirations, the same passions as the rest of the world. Is this how God wants us to be? No; He wants us to have new hearts, new desires. He wants us to be a changed people when we embrace His Gospel, and to be animated by entirely new motives, and have a faith that will lay hold of the promises of God. (*Conference Report*, October 1899, p.50)

Marion G. Romney (First Presidency)

- The experience of each individual who is really born again is similar to this experience of Alma and the sons of Mosiah, although it may not be so dramatic. The effect upon each person's life is likewise similar. No person whose soul is illuminated by the burning Spirit of God can in this world of sin and dense darkness remain passive. He is driven by an irresistible urge to fit himself to be an active agent of God in furthering righteousness and in freeing the lives and minds of men from the bondage of sin. (*Conference Report*, October 1941, p.89)
- Webster says the verb convert means "to turn from one belief or course to another," that conversion is "a spiritual and moral change attending a change of belief with conviction." As used in the scriptures,

converted generally implies not merely mental acceptance of Jesus and his teachings, but also a motivating faith in him and in his gospel, a faith which works a transformation, an actual change in one's understanding of life's meaning and in one's allegiance to God-in interest, in thought, and in conduct. While conversion may be accomplished in stages, one is not really converted in the full sense of the term unless and until he is at heart a new person. Born again is the scriptural term.

In one who is wholly converted, desire for things inimical to the gospel of Jesus Christ has actually died, and substituted therefor is a love of God, with a fixed and controlling determination to keep his commandments. Paul told the Romans that such a one would walk in newness of life. ("According to the Covenants," *Ensign*, November 1975, p.71)

Dallin H. Oaks (Quorum of the Twelve)

How can we measure our progress? The scriptures suggest various ways. I will mention only two.

After King Benjamin's great sermon, many of his hearers cried out that the Spirit of the Lord "has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually" (Mosiah 5:2). If we are losing our desire to do evil, we are progressing toward our heavenly goal.

The Apostle Paul said that persons who have received the Spirit of God "have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16). I understand this to mean that persons who are proceeding toward the needed conversion are beginning to see things as our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, see them. They are hearing His voice instead of the voice of the world, and they are doing things in His way instead of by the ways of the world. ("The Challenge to Become," *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, pp. 32-34)

J. Richard Clarke (First Presidency)

From the pages of our missionary journal comes an event repeated often throughout the missions of the Church. John and Shirley Withers were successful advertising executives. They were on the fast track, indulging themselves in worldly pleasures. When contacted by our missionaries, they were impressed by their clean, sparkling countenances so unlike other young men they had known.

Previous behavior became incompatible with gospel principles. A new set of priorities and values replaced worldly interests. Alcohol and tobacco habits became expendable, although with great effort. Modesty became the dress standard. Prayer, scripture study, Relief Society and priesthood service became the focus. They were baptized and received the Holy Ghost.

As Sister Clarke and I, with some of our missionaries, assembled in the Salt Lake Temple, John and Shirley Withers, with their children, were sealed together as an eternal family. Their countenances reflected the resplendent beauty of the emancipation of the soul. We witnessed a spiritual rebirth as if from the grave. ("The Lord of Life," *Ensign*, May 1993, 9)

Dramatic Spiritual Manifestations Not Necessary in Spiritual Rebirth

Harold B. Lee (President)

The question, then, that sometimes we wrestle with is: Must there always be a visible, spiritual manifestation

before one might be said to be born of the Spirit? We have some very dramatic incidents in which this is illustrated including the Apostle Paul's theophany, when he heard and he saw, in his conversion. And perhaps that experience is only matched by the great conversion of younger Alma. [Quotes Alma's experience in Alma 36:20-24]

There are some of us who think that that same kind of experience has to be experienced by everybody, or he can't be saved. I once ran into a very serious situation where one of our teachers had inflamed some women, in a class he was teaching, until they almost had the kind of feeling that they had to have some kind of demonstration or else they hadn't been born of the Spirit.

Another story that some people who support that idea recite is the conversion of Lorenzo Snow. President Snow had been a young college student; when he finally had an intellectual conviction of the truth, he sought for a deep-seated testimony, which he had not had at his baptism. And so, he reported, he went out one night to pray. This is how he describes the experience:

"It was a complete baptism, a tangible immersion in the heavenly principle or element, the Holy Ghost, and even more real and physical in its effect upon my system, than the immersion of water. Dispelling forever, as long as reason and memory last, all possibility of doubt and fear in relation to the fact handed down to us historically, that the babe of Bethlehem is truly the Son of God; also communicating knowledge, the same as in apostolic times."

Now, I repeat, because of some of these dramatic experiences, some of our teachers jump to the conclusion that one isn't born of the Spirit until he has had some such dramatic experience. (*Stand Ye In Holy Places* [1974], pp.59-60)

Bruce R. McConkie (Quorum of the Twelve)

Though there may be miraculous manifestations attending specific instances of spiritual rebirth, such are in addition to the actual fact of being "born of the Spirit." When the Holy Ghost falls upon a worthy recipient, it has the effect of pouring out pure intelligence upon him; all is calm and serene; the still small voice speaks peace to the spirit within man; and the sanctifying, cleansing power of the Spirit begins to manifest itself. (*Teachings*, pp. 149-150.) [From *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* [1973], 1:142]

The Spiritually Reborn Have Overcome the World

Bruce R. McConkie (Quorum of the Twelve)

Those who are born of the Spirit thereby—that is, by virtue of their spiritual rebirth—overcome the world. They die as to carnality and evil; they live as to spirituality and godliness. And it all comes to pass because they have faith in Christ. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God," John says. Those who are born anew love the Lord and keep his commandments. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. ... For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." There is no way to overcome the world except by turning to Christ and his gospel. It is by living the gospel that men forsake the world and are born again. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [1985], p.289)

The Spiritual Born Again Become the Sons and Daughters of Christ

Mosiah 5:7

7 And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters.

Bruce R. McConkie (Quorum of the Twelve)

Those who are born again not only live a new life, but they also have a new father. Their new life is one of righteousness, and their new father is God. They become the sons of God; or, more particularly, they become the sons and daughters of Jesus Christ. They bear, ever thereafter, the name of their new parent; that is, they take upon themselves the name of Christ and become Christians, not only in word but in very deed. They become by adoption the seed or offspring of Christ, the children in his family, the members of his household which is the perfect household of perfect faith. And further: Having become the sons of God (Christ), they also become joint-heirs with him of the fulness of the glory of the Father, thus becoming by adoption the sons of God the Father.

John tells us that the Lord Jesus, who came in time's meridian unto his own, was rejected by them. "But as many as received him as their Messiah and Savior, "to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. (John 1:12.) Speaking of that same meridian day, the same Lord said in our day: "To as many as received me, gave I power to become my sons." Be it noted that true believers are not automatically born to a newness of life by the mere fact of belief alone. That belief and that acceptance of the Savior gives them power to become the sons of God. And in our day the divine word continues: "Even so will I give unto as many as will receive me, power to become my sons." And how are those who receive the Lord identified? By way of answer, he tells us: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that receiveth my gospel receiveth me; and he that receiveth not my gospel receiveth not me." (D&C 39:4-5.) Those who have accepted the fulness of the everlasting gospel as it has come again in our day through the instrumentality of Joseph Smith have power to become the sons of God; those who reject this heaven-sent message of salvation reject that Lord whose message it is and remain outside the Lord's family.

In addressing a congregation of contrite and penitent Nephites, King Benjamin, using that simplicity of speech and clarity of expression in which Book of Mormon prophets so excel, said to his fellow saints: "Because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters." They thus gain a new father, and he gains new children. "For behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you." Their new birth is not a natural but a spiritual birth. "For ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters."

Thus it is that the saints are born of Christ because they have been born of the Spirit; they are alive in Christ because they enjoy the companionship of the Spirit, and they are members of his family because they are clean

as he is clean. "And under this head ye are made free"—being in Christ, they are free from the bondage of sin—"and there is no other head [other than Christ our Head] whereby ye can be made free." Only those who accept Christ and receive the Spirit can free themselves from the sins of the world. "There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives." (Mosiah 5:7-8.) [From *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [1985], pp. 284-287]

Spiritual Rebith is the Beginning of Righteousness

Bruce R. McConkie (Quorum of the Twelve)

"How can these things be?" Nicodemus asked. 'How can the water of baptism, and the Spirit of the Lord, and the blood of the Only Begotten, constitute a birth into the kingdom of heaven? How can the serene and calm influence of the Spirit--the still small voice, as it were--descend, as from nowhere, upon a human soul?'

"Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" comes the reply. 'Art thou an appointed teacher, a guide and a light to the people, a member of the Great Sanhedrin itself, and thou knowest not that spiritual rebirth is the very beginning of righteousness, and that until men are born again they are not so much as on the path leading to eternal life?' Was there just a touch of irony in our Lord's response? (*The Mortal Messiah* [1979], 1:475)