

## The Two Musts.

John 3.

C. H. Mackintosh.

In our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus He twice makes use of the word "must" — a word of immense depth and moral power in both cases. Let us ponder it for a few moments; for, though but a word of one syllable, it contains a volume of most precious evangelical truth in whichever light we view it.

1. And first, then, we read, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." Here we have the total setting aside of man in his very best estate. If I must be born again, if I must have a new life, a new nature then it matters not in the smallest degree what I can or cannot boast of. Man, as born of a woman, enters this world with the image of his fallen parent stamped upon him. Man, as he came from the hand of his Creator, was made in the "image of God." Man, as he issues from the womb of his mother, bears the image and likeness of a fallen creature. Hence the force of our Lord's expression, "Ye *must* be born again." It is not said, Ye must mend, ye must try and be better, ye must alter your mode of living, ye must turn over a new leaf. Had it been thus, Nicodemus would never have asked, "How can these things be?" A man of the Pharisees would have understood any or all of these things. A change of conduct, a change of character, any moral reform, any self-improvement, is perfectly intelligible to a Pharisee of every age; but to be told "Ye *must* be *born* again" can only be understood by one who has reached the end of himself and his doings; who has been brought to see that in him, that is in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing; who sees himself as a thorough bankrupt without a certificate, who can never again set up on his own account. He must get a new life to which the verdict of bankruptcy cannot apply, and he must trade in the wealth of another, on which creditors have no possible claim.

There is immense power in this little word "*must*." It bears upon all alike. It speaks to the drunkard, and says, "You must be born again." It addresses the most rigid teetotaller, and says, "You must be born again." It speaks to every class, to every condition, to every grade and shade of character, to man in every rank and every clime, to every creed and every denomination, in its own clear, emphatic, sweeping style, and says, "You *must* be born again." It bears down with far more weight upon the conscience than any appeal that could be made on the ground of moral conduct. It does not interfere in the least with the question of moral reform, in any one of its many phases. It allows as broad a margin as any philanthropist or moral reformer may desire. It does not disturb the various distinctions which society, public opinion, law or equity has established. It leaves all these things perfectly untouched, but it raises its clear and commanding voice above them all, and says to the sinner — to man as born of a woman — to the worst and to the best of men, "You *must* be born again." It demands not reformation, but regeneration; not amendment, but a new life.

2. What then, it may be asked, are we to do? Whither are we to turn? How are we to get this new life? Our Lord's second "must" furnishes the reply. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so *must* the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever *believeth* in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." This makes all plain. A second Man has entered the scene. There are two *men* and two *musts*. As to the first man, he must be born again, and as to the second Man, He must be lifted up. In a word, the Cross is the grand solution of the difficulty, the divine answer to the "How?" Am I completely struck down by the first "must"? Am I overwhelmed by the insuperable difficulty which it proposes to me? Am I on the very verge of despair as I contemplate the apparent impossibility of what,

nevertheless, *must* be? Oh then, with what power does the second "must" fall on my heart! "The Son of man must be lifted up." Why must He? Because I must have new life, and this life is in the Son, but it could only be mine through His death. The death of the second Man is the only ground of life to the first — life to *me*. One look at Christ, as lifted up for me, is life eternal. The soul that simply believes on the Son of God, as dead and risen, is "born of water and of the Spirit;" he *hath* everlasting life — he *is* passed from death unto life, from the old creation into the new, from the first man to the Second, from guilt to righteousness, from condemnation to favour, from darkness to light, from Satan to God. May God the Spirit unfold to the reader's heart the beauty and power, the depth, the comprehensiveness, and moral glory of the two "musts."

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3: 5-7).