

though the truth of the union of the believer with Christ stood in a necessarily veiled form prior to the historic Incarnation, our Lord Himself bore witness to the reality of the doctrine of regeneration within the older revelation; for He countered the perplexity over the new birth that characterized the well-intentioned but still Pharisaically blinded Nicodemus with the question, "Art thou the teacher of Israel and understandest not these things?" (John 3:10). The Old Testament teaching is, per force, limited; but God had made known the doctrine of regeneration in the pages of the Old Testament. The application of its truth constituted a significant element in Israel's religious experience in the past, and the content of these pre-Christian messages remains equally relevant for God's people today.¹

Many, even of Israel's leaders, did not have the understanding of divine regeneration that they should have had (John 3:5,6). But this hardly justifies, for example, John Raven's following criticism of David's religious aspiration: "This was as noble an ambition as a man could have who had not received the gift of the Holy Spirit." Criticisms such as these indicate actually a double misapprehension: 1) They confuse the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit with His fulness; for the regenerating presence of the Spirit, David, like all born-again believers, enjoyed constantly (Ps. 143:10). 2) They minimize also the real, though confessedly temporary, fulness of the Spirit; for this charismatic blessing, men such as David are expressly declared to have possessed (cf. I Sam. 16:13).²

THE VIEWS OF VARIOUS DISPENSATIONAL WRITERS

It is both interesting and highly instructive to note the direction and the changes which have taken place among Dispensational writers on this question. At first the mood appears predominantly affirmative; then there is a shift to one predominantly negative; and most recently, one which is either pointedly neutral or affirmative. We begin, of course, with C. I. Scofield in a statement from his Plain Papers on the Holy Spirit:

¹J. Barton Payne, The Theology of the Older Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), p. 241.

²Ibid., p. 414.