December 2013

Frank W. Nelte

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT BORN AGAIN

Have you been "born again"? What do you know about being "born again"? What does the Bible teach about "born again"? Do you know? Could you explain it to a relative or to a co-worker who is a Baptist or a Methodist? While we in God's Church understand that at this time nobody is "born again", this is a major issue for millions of people outside of God's Church. The world's churches don't understand this subject at all. And after Mr. Armstrong's death some confusion about this subject even developed amongst some people in the churches of God.

So let's examine what the Bible teaches about "born again".

THE BIBLE DOESN'T USE THE EXPRESSION "BORN AGAIN"

The only reason why the expression "born again" appears in our English language translations at all is because of **a clear mistranslation**. But when the Greek NT text is translated correctly, then the Bible nowhere speaks about "born again".

The only **3 mistranslated places** where this expression "born again" appears in our English text are: **John 3:3**; **John 3:7** and **1 Peter 1:23**. When these 3 mistranslations are corrected, then the term "born again" is not found anywhere in the Bible. So let's examine these 3 places.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be **born again** (Greek "**gennethe anothen**"), he cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3)

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be **born again** (Greek "**gennethenai anothen**"). (John 3:7)

Being **born again** (Greek "**anagegennemenoi**"), not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. (1 Peter 1:23)

In John 3:3 and John 3:7 the Greek word for "**born**" is a form of the verb "**gennao**", and the word "**again**" is supposed to be a translation of the Greek adverb "**anothen**". In 1 Peter 1:23 the two words "**born again**" are presented as the translation of a form of the Greek verb "**anagennao**". This Greek verb "anagennao" is made up of the prefix "**ana**" and the verb "**gennao**".

There are **two things** here to take note of:

1) In all 3 verses the word "**born**" is a translation of the Greek verb "**gennao**". So this Greek verb holds the most important key for us to correctly understand this subject, which is incorrectly referred to as "born again".

2) In these three verses the word "**again**" is either based on the Greek word "**anothen**", or it is based on the Greek prefix "**ana**". But neither "anothen" nor the prefix "ana" means "again". Therefore it is a mistranslation to use the word "again" in translating these three verses into English.

Let's examine the facts in this matter.

THE GREEK WORD "ANOTHEN"

The word "anothen" is an adverb which is formed from the two parts "**ano**" (meaning "**above**, **upwards**") + "**then**" (meaning "**from**"). It is used 13 times in the New Testament. The only two times it is rendered as "again" are in John 3:3, 7.

Here is a quotation from the "**Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament**" (TDNT), from the section that discusses "anothen".

"Both outside and in the NT *anothen* is an adverb of place meaning "from above"... **In John 3:3,7 the original usage inclines in favor of "from above"**, which alone links with Job 3:4 and James 1:17 to suggest "of God". **John** uses *anothen* elsewhere in the sense "from above" (John 3:31; John 19:11; John 19:23) and **always describes birth in terms of origin** (John 1:13; 1 John 2:29; 1 John 3:9; 1 John 4:7; 1 John 5:18; John 3:5-6)." (TDNT, page 63, 2003 reprinted edition, bold text is my emphasis)

This word "anothen" really means "from above", as is acknowledged in the TDNT quotation. **It does NOT mean "AGAIN"!** The only reason dictionaries will tell you that it means "again" is because this word is used in John 3:3, 7; and **their religious bias** towards believing that people are already "born again" requires them to assign the meaning of "again" to this word "anothen".

If we acknowledge that in John 3:3, 7 this word should be translated as "**from above**", then there is not the minutest shred of evidence left anywhere in the NT that this word "anothen" could possibly mean "again". The prefix "ano" means "above, upwards" ... and that has nothing at all to do with "again"!

Let's examine the places where the word "**anothen**" is used in the New Testament. This should make clear that it never means "again". So notice:

In **five** places "anothen" is translated as "**from above**". Here they are:

He that cometh **from above** is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. (**John 3:31**)

Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power [at all] against me, except it were given thee **from above**: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin. (**John 19:11**)

Every good gift and every perfect gift is **from above**, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. (**James 1:17**)

This wisdom descendeth not **from above**, but [is] earthly, sensual, devilish. (**James 3:15**)

But the wisdom that is **from above** is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, [and] easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. (**James 3:17**)

As can be readily seen from these verses, to have translated "anothen" as "again" in these five verses would not have made any sense. It would be absurd to translate "anothen" as "again" in these verses.

Then "anothen" is translated as "**from the top**" in **three** verses:

And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain **from the top** to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; (**Matthew 27:51**)

And the veil of the temple was rent in twain **from the top** to the bottom. (**Mark 15:38**)

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also [his] coat: now the coat was without seam, woven **from the top** throughout. (**John 19:23**)

In these three verses the translation of "again" would also not have made any sense.

In **one place** it is mistranslated as "**from the very first**":

It seemed good to me also, having had **perfect understanding** of all things **from the very first** ("anothen"), to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, (**Luke 1:3**)

As it stands, that translation is **utter garbage**!

No way did Luke have "perfect understanding of all things from the very first"! And that is not what Luke was saying! He certainly did not attempt to claim "perfect understanding", and he equally certainly did not claim to have his understanding "from the very first"!

You should be able to recognize that **this is a mistranslation**. Luke was not saying that he had perfect understanding of all things "from the very first". That should be self-evident! He was not one of the original twelve apostles, the inner circle. Luke only came on the scene at some point after Acts chapter two.

Luke was at the start of his gospel account stating that **he had circumspect understanding of all things "from above"**, i.e. from God. The Greek word mistranslated as "perfect" is "akribos", and it means "circumspect" and "diligent". The only thing Luke claimed in Luke 1:3 is that **GOD had given him a good understanding through His Spirit**, which is what **Psalm 111:10** also tells us, that those who obey God's commandments will also have a good understanding. But Luke wasn't claiming "perfect" understanding, and neither was he claiming any understanding "from the very first".

At any rate, in Luke 1:3 "anothen" very obviously also does not mean "again".

Furthermore, there is a word in NT Greek which means "again" and that is the word "**palin**". "Palin" is used 142 times in the New Testament in 138 different verses, and it is always translated as "again". The Greek word "palin" has no other meaning. The meaning of "palin" is clear and unambiguous.

So the sum of the matter is this: In John 3:3,7 the correct translation is "gennao **from above**". In these two verses "born again" is a mistranslation. (Shortly we'll examine the word "gennao".)

THE GREEK PREFIX "ANA"

The Greek word "anagennao" in 1 Peter 1:23 is made up of the verb "gennao" and the prefix "ana", which prefix is derived from the Greek adverb "**ano**". This word means "**above**" or "**to the top**", and this meaning is not disputed by anyone. This is in fact the same as "ano" in "anothen".

The point is that **"ana" never has the meaning of "again"**. So in 1 Peter 1:23 the Greek word "**anagennao**" also means "gennao **from above**", and it does not mean "born again".

Both the Apostle John and the Apostle Peter wanted to convey the idea of "gennao from above", based

on a statement which Jesus Christ had made in the Aramaic language during His ministry. The Apostle **John** chose to render this meaning into the Greek language by using the expression "**gennao anothen**", while the Apostle **Peter** conveyed the exact same meaning into Greek by using the word "**anagennao**".

So none of the three places in the NT that in English have the expression "born again" actually have a word for "again". **All three places are mistranslations** of the original Greek text!

THE ORIGIN OF "AGAIN" IN THIS CONTEXT

Now since the scholars all know that the Greek word "anothen" means "from above" and not "again", as evidenced by the TDNT quotation we have already seen, the question is: **WHY** did they then insist on translating "anothen" as "again" anyway? What prompted them all to use the word "again"?

The answer lies with the **Latin Vulgate** Translation. In John 3:3 and John 3:7 Jerome translated the **Greek** word "**anothen**" with the **Latin** adverb "**denuo**". But the Latin word "denuo" does not mean "from above". The Latin word "denuo" means: **again**, afresh, **once more**, for a second time, etc.

So the Latin Vulgate Translation twisted the meaning of John 3:3. For well over 1000 years this mistranslation was never challenged. The first translation into English was made by John Wycliffe in **1382**. Wycliffe translated the New Testament from this Latin Vulgate text. And he translated John 3:3,7 as "borun agen", i.e. "**born again**" in modern spelling. Later, in **1537** the Matthew's Bible rendered this as "boren a new", i.e. "**born anew**" in modern spelling. All subsequent English translations (i.e. the Bishops Bible, KJV, etc.) opted to retain Wycliffe's original wrong expression "born again", which was based on the mistranslated Latin Vulgate text.

Thus:

The only reason why all our English language versions of the Bible use the expression "born again" (or for that matter "born anew") is because **they rely on the Latin Vulgate** mistranslation of the Greek word "anothen". This is just one example out of hundreds, that shows the powerful influence the Latin Vulgate translation has had on all our English translations, in spite of most of them supposedly being based on the Greek NT text.

Thus if Jerome instead of mistranslating John 3:3 as "natus fuerit **denuo**" had correctly translated this as "natus fuerit **supra**", and if Jerome instead of incorrectly translating John 3:7 as "oportet vos nasci **denuo**" had correctly translated this as "oportet vos nasci **supra**", then **we would NEVER have had the expression "born again"** in our English translations! (In Latin "denuo" means "again", and "supra" means "above".) This deception in our English translations is due entirely to the Latin mistranslation.

[**COMMENT:** In 1 Peter 1:23 Jerome also mistranslated the Greek word "anagegennemenoi" into Latin as "**renati**". This Latin word is made up of the prefix "**re**" and "**natus**". The prefix "re" means "again". So in this verse the Latin Vulgate text also reads "born **again**". Thus in all three places the Latin Vulgate text has changed the focus away from "born from above" to a wrong focus on "born again".]

OUR FIRST CONCLUSION:

We have established that **the Bible never speaks about "born again"**! The use of the word "again" is nothing more than a very devious mistranslation of the Greek word that means "from above".

Now let's establish the meaning of the Greek word "gennao", because all three verses speak about "gennao from above". Therefore the correct meaning of "gennao" is vital for a correct understanding of this subject.

THE GREEK VERB "GENNAO"

This verb is used 97 times in the New Testament. In the King James Version it is translated as follows:

- born = 39x - begat = 49x - bear = 2x

- gender = 2x - bring forth = 1x - miscellaneous = 3x

- be delivered = 1x

There is no question that this verb does mean "born"! That is not disputed by anyone. But it is equally clear from the way this word is used in the New Testament that **it also means "to beget"**. And this is something that some people have rejected, something that was vociferously opposed by at least one former WCG scholar.

Here we have one NT Greek word that refers to **the whole process of reproduction**, or to any one of the three major parts of that process alone! It can mean:

- **the start** of the process, i.e. conception and begettal;

- **the whole process** of gestation, i.e. the 9 months of development;

- **the conclusion** of the process, i.e. the actual birth process.

It is **always the context** in which this word is used that makes clear exactly what is meant. The word "gennao" itself does not inherently refer more to the conclusion of the process than to the start. Not at all! This is recognized and acknowledged by many highly qualified scholars of the NT Greek language. And it is substantiated very clearly by the way this word is used in the New Testament itself.

So there are the two ways for us to clearly establish the meaning of this word "gennao":

1) How God inspired the word to be used in the New Testament itself.

2) Scholars of New Testament Greek who define these meanings for us.

Since it is not disputed that "gennao" certainly also means "born", we don't need to focus on specific Scriptures that substantiate this particular meaning.

That leaves us with **two categories of Scriptures** where "gennao" is used:

A) Those places **where it clearly means "beget" or "conceive"**.

B) Those places **where theoretically either "beget" or "born" is a possibility**.

In these last places a correct understanding of **the context** is important to know which meaning is intended. This is not difficult. We simply have to carefully read what the context actually does say. There are also two additional NT Greek words that we should consider.

THE GREEK VERBS "GENNAO" AND "TIKTO" AND "APOKUEO"

Now notice the use of two different Greek verbs, "gennao" and "tikto" in Matthew chapter 1. These verses will show us how Matthew himself applied these two verbs.

But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for **that which is conceived** (Greek "**gennao**") in her is of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 1:20)

And **she shall bring forth** (Greek "texetai", a form of "**tikto**") a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21)

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and **shall bring forth** (Greek "**tikto**") a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. (Matthew 1:23)

And knew her not till **she had brought forth** (Greek "**tikto**") her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS. (Matthew 1:25)

Within the space of six verses Matthew used the verb "gennao" once and the verb "tikto" three times. Even before we look at the exact meaning of the verb "tikto", can you see what Matthew has actually done in this context?

Here is what we should note!

Matthew in fact used the verb "gennao" to refer to "conceiving a child", and he used the verb "tikto" to refer to "giving birth to a child". Can you see that?

The whole account here is **a chronological progression**: first Mary conceives, then when her pregnancy becomes apparent the angel explains the facts to Joseph. In the process the angel uses the verb "**gennao**" to mean "**to have conceived**" and the verb "**tikto**" to mean "**to give birth**". Then Joseph refrains from any sexual contact with his wife until after Jesus Christ has been born (i.e. "tikto"), and thereafter in the course of time Joseph and Mary had a number of additional children .

The word "**tikto**" is actually left out of the "Theological Dictionary of the New Testament", perhaps an oversight? However, this word still has the same meaning in modern Greek as it did in biblical Greek, that meaning being "**to give birth to**, to bring forth".

Now let's consider how James expressed this progression from conception to giving birth, although James used these terms in a figurative sense, referring to "lust" rather than the birth of a child. We'll see that James in fact introduces an additional Greek word:

Then when lust **hath conceived** (Greek "**sullambano**"), **it bringeth forth** (Greek "**tikto**") sin: and sin, when it is finished, **bringeth forth** (Greek "**apokueo**") death. (James 1:15)

Of his own will **begat he** (Greek "**apokueo**") us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. (James 1:18)

First James uses the word "**tikto**" to refer to giving birth, and in the next part of the same sentence James uses the word "**apokueo**" to refer to giving birth. A few verses later (James 1:18) James uses this word "apokueo" to refer to the concept of "begetting".

So James has used the three Greek verbs as follows: he used "**sullambano**" to refer to "conceiving", he

used "**tikto**" to refer to "giving birth", and he used "**apokueo**" to refer to both "giving birth" and "begetting". James himself never used the word "gennao" in his letter, resorting to the word "apokueo" instead.

The verb "apokueo" means "**to give birth**, **to bring forth**". It is derived from the word "**kueo**" which means "**to be pregnant**". In modern Greek "kuesis" means "gestation", and "apokuema" is commonly used to refer to "product of the imagination", i.e. what the imagination has "brought forth". So the basic meaning of the biblical Greek word "apokueo" has been more or less retained in modern Greek.

One thing we should notice in all these biblical references: when offered the choice of the words "gennao" and "tikto" and "apokueo", then **neither Matthew chapter 1 nor the Book of James used the word "gennao" to mean "to give birth"**. Both Matthew and James used other words (i.e. "tikto" and "apokueo") to refer to "giving birth" or to "bringing forth", rather than using the word "gennao". But Matthew did use "gennao" to refer to the begettal/conception phase of the reproduction process.

To get back to Matthew 1:20.

Matthew 1:20 is clearly referring to something that **had already taken place**! But equally clearly Jesus Christ had **not yet been born**! Therefore **in this context** the aorist passive participle "gennethen" **cannot mean "born"**. It is self-evident that Jesus had not yet been born! The context is talking about something that is "in her" ("en aute"), not something that had already come "out of her"! The translators were clearly correct in rendering this here as "is conceived", perhaps even better would be "**has been conceived**" ... a fairly common way to translate the aorist tense.

This use of "gennao" in Matthew 1:20 all by itself proves beyond any shadow of doubt that this Greek word also means "to conceive", and when applied to the man it means "to beget"! At that point in time nothing had yet been "born" and no birth is referred to or implied as having occurred. **The conception process is specifically pinpointed** in this particular verse by the Greek word "gennao".

Next, when the father's name is mentioned with the verb "gennao", then it refers to something the father does or has done! "**Gennao**" is a verb ... a doing word! It refers to action! **It refers to what somebody is doing or has done or will do!** That is the function of verbs.

So when a man's name is used with "gennao", then it refers to the man's part in the process, which is to beget a child. When a woman's name is used with "gennao" then it refers to the woman's part in the process, i.e. to conceive, or to give birth, or to the whole process from having conceived right up to and including giving birth. The context is always the key to the intended meaning.

Keep in mind that "gennao" is a verb and it refers to action! It is because the woman's part in the process spans a period of nine months (from conceiving to giving birth) that this verb can apply to the start or to the end of the process, when applied to a woman. But the man's part is limited to the start of the process; that is the only time the man "does" something towards producing a birth. For this reason the verb "gennao" when applied to a man always refers to the begettal, the start of the process. The man is not doing anything when the birth takes place nine months later.

Verbs describe what people do (active voice) or what is done to them (passive voice). A man does not give birth and for this reason the verb "gennao" always refers to "begetting" when applied to a man.

The translators obviously understood this very clearly and that is why they translated "gennao" 49 times as "begat", mostly places where it refers to the man's part in the process of reproduction.

In the 15 verses from Matthew 1:2-16 alone the verb "gennao" is used 39 times in the active voice and

with the indicative mood. When it says that ... "Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat ...", etc., it is always a verb in the active voice; this refers to what the man had **done**! It is not a reference to what the woman did nine months later (i.e. give birth to a child) as a direct consequence to what the man had done . The emphasis in these 15 verses is always on what **the man** had done, which was to beget a child! It is the active voice that is used with the man's name.

So the New Testament uses of the word "gennao" make quite clear that this word **does** also mean "to conceive" (applied to a woman) and "to beget" (applied to a man).

The translators understood this, and so half the time this verb is used in the NT, they translated it appropriately as "begat".

Before proceeding with "gennao" we might also ask about the NT Greek words for "to conceive".

NEW TESTAMENT GREEK WORDS FOR "TO CONCEIVE"

Here is a problem we may sometimes encounter. People who speak Greek will sometimes attempt to discredit the point that "gennao" means "to beget" and "to conceive"; and they will tell you that Greek has a perfectly good word which means "to conceive", and that is the word "sullambano", the word we have already seen in James 1:15.

So let's consider the facts in this regard.

In modern Greek the verb "genno" (modern Greek doesn't use the form "gennao", modern Greek has shortened this verb to "genno") is used to mean "to give birth, to bear". Only in a figurative sense is this verb "genno" used to mean "to cause, to engender". But in literal applications it is basically restricted to the meaning "to give birth". So it is not surprising when Greek-speaking people sometimes reject the idea that "gennao" also means "to conceive" and "to beget", because that flies in the face of their own understanding of their own language, the way Greek is spoken today.

Further, in modern Greek the word "sullambano" means first of all "to catch, to seize, to arrest", etc., and then "to conceive" (a child or even an idea). The point is that even in modern Greek "sullambano" has a range of meanings, which range happens to include the idea of a woman "conceiving a child". However, a Greek speaker today would almost certainly use the word "sullambano" to refer to a woman conceiving a child, rather than using the word "genno" (i.e. gennao).

However, in the modern Greek language words don't always necessarily convey the exact same meanings that they conveyed 2000 years ago in the Greek language of the New Testament, much like some words in modern English having different meanings from the English that was spoken 500 and more years ago. So let's look at the New Testament to see how the idea of conception was expressed. Let's start by looking at this word "sullambano".

"SULLAMBANO" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

This word is used 16 times in the NT. In about two thirds of those places (i.e. 11 times) this word does NOT mean "to conceive", while in almost a third of those places (i.e. 5 times) it is translated as "to conceive".

The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT) says the following about "sullambano":

"1. This word means '**to bring together**', '**to gather**', '**to seize**', '**to snatch**', '**to arrest**', and **in a transferred sense** 'to acquire' (e.g. a language), '**to conceive**' (**ideas**), 'to help', 'to take up the cause of someone'.

2. The term occurs **in the LXX** for different words in the senses 'to seize', 'to trap', 'to capture', **and also** 'to conceive'.

3.a. **In the NT** we find the sense 'to catch in a net' in Luke 5:9 and 'to take or arrest' in Mark 14:48 and in Acts 23:27.

3.b. The sense 'to conceive' occurs in Luke 1:24, 31, 36. ..." (TDNT, 2003 Reprinted Edition, page 1101, my emphasis in bold type)

While this word was used in the NT to convey the idea of "to conceive", a precedent that had been set by the LXX, it should be abundantly clear that "to conceive" is by no means the primary meaning of this word "sullambano". The word "sullambano" in the NT text has primarily meanings and uses that have nothing at all to do with the conception of a child! As TDNT points out, it is only "in a transferred sense" that this word can mean "to conceive".

I could present ten NT Scriptures to demonstrate that the primary NT meaning of "sullambano" is NOT "to conceive". But the above quotation from TDNT should suffice to make that same point.

The word "sullambano" is in fact only used four times in the whole New Testament with the meaning "to conceive a child". And all four of those places are in the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:24; Luke 1:31; Luke 1:36; Luke 2:21). The only other time "sullambano" is translated as "conceive" is the reference to "when **lust** has conceived" (James 1:15), which we have already looked at, and which obviously does not refer to the literal conception of a child.

So the four times Luke used "sullambano" to refer to "conceive" are balanced by four other Greek words being used once each with the meaning "to conceive". Those four NT Greek words are: "gennao" in Matthew 1:20, "katabole" in Hebrews 11:11, "koite" in Romans 9:10 and "tithemi" in Acts 5:4.

Thus **Matthew** used the word "**gennao**", and **Paul** used the words "**koite**" and "**katabole**", and **Luke** used the word "**sullambano**" to refer to literally conceiving. In addition James used the word "sullambano" and Luke used the word "**tithemi**" to refer to **figuratively** conceiving.

[**COMMENT:** Luke was not a Jew and it is unlikely that he could speak Hebrew. So Luke would very likely have read some of the Greek translations of various books of the Old Testament, Greek translations that later were put together as the LXX version. So Luke very likely got his understanding that "sullambano" also means "to conceive" from those Greek texts that became the LXX. Matthew and Paul, on the other hand, would have been familiar with the Hebrew scrolls of the Old Testament, and very likely unfamiliar with the fact that the LXX used the word "sullambano" to express the concept "to conceive". So Matthew and Paul figured out their own ways to express the concept "to conceive" in the Greek language; and thus they opted for the words "gennao" and "koite" and "katabole". I personally believe that **if** the Greek LXX text had **not** used the word "sullambano" to mean "to conceive", **then** very likely this word "sullambano" would **never** have acquired the meaning of "to conceive a child". It is explicitly because the LXX assigned the meaning "to conceive" to the word "sullambano" (which meaning Luke then copied and further entrenched in the Greek language) that today in modern Greek the word "sullambano" still includes this meaning "to conceive". Give this some thought.]

What this use of four different Greek words for "to conceive" tells us is that New Testament Greek simply did not have one specific word that had the exclusive meaning of "to conceive". For all these words the concept of "to conceive" is arrived at by extension of the primary meanings of these words. And in this New Testament context "gennao" was just as valid a word for "to conceive" as any of the other three words (i.e. koite, katabole, and sullambano). So don't let people tell you that "gennao" can't possibly mean "to conceive" because the NT Greek word for "to conceive" is supposedly "sullambano". That line of reasoning is simply not correct.

Anyway ...

We have thus established the following for this verb "gennao":

1) Applied to **a man** this word always means "**to beget**".

2) Applied to **a woman** this word can mean either "**to conceive**" or "**to give birth**", and in each case it is the context which will identify the intended meaning.

This means that our three mistranslated "born again" Scriptures could theoretically mean "**begotten from above**" or they could mean "**born from above**", and that is just another way of saying either "**begotten by God's Spirit**" or "**born by God's Spirit**". But in these expressions it is God's Spirit that is involved in the action of "gennao" and not any man.

So the question now is:

What meaning does "gennao" have when it is applied to God?

When God is the One who is involved in the process, then this word "gennao" can refer to both parts of the process: the initial begettal and also the ultimate birth. Both, men and women are created in the image of God, and **God performs both functions in the process of creating**, even though on the human level these two functions (begettal and birth) require both, a man and a woman, to accomplish.

So let's look at a passage that applies the word "gennao" to what God is doing.

1 JOHN CHAPTER 3

Let's notice how this word "gennao" is used in reference to God. A careful examination of the context will make clear whether "begotten" or "born" is the intended meaning.

Here is what the Apostle John explained in his first epistle.

Beloved, **NOW ARE WE THE SONS OF GOD, AND IT DOTH NOT YET APPEAR WHAT WE SHALL BE**: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2)

In this verse John is contrasting **two different states**:

- what we converted Christians are **right now**;

- and what we shall be **in the future**.

What we "are" is a fact, but **what we "shall be" we have to hope for**, because it is still future! In the next verse John continues as follows:

And every man that hath **this hope** in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure. (1 John 3:3)

"The hope" John is speaking about is **the hope of "what we shall be" in the future**. In order to make that hope a reality we Christians have to "purify ourselves". How do we do that ... purify ourselves? The answer is that we determine to stop sinning, i.e. we determine to conscientiously live by all of God's laws.

That is precisely **what John then proceeds to explain** in the next 5 verses (verses 4-8). People have often quoted 1 John 3:4 out of context in order to define sin (i.e. "sin is the transgression of the law"). But the context is important. He defines sin for us **because** he has just told us that we need to "purify ourselves". And we are to purify ourselves in order to attain unto the hope of becoming something that we are not yet, **even though we are already called "the sons of God"**!

Do you understand? John is telling us that if we don't sin, **then** we will be changed into something that does not yet appear, something we can at this stage only "hope" for.

Then we come to verse 9.

Whosoever is **BORN** (gegennemenos) **OF GOD doth not commit sin**; for his seed remaineth in him: and **he cannot sin**, because he is **BORN** (gegennetai) **OF GOD**. (1 John 3:9)

Remember that John started this section by **contrasting two different states of being** in verse 2. Earlier, already in chapter 1, he had told us that we **converted Christians still DO sin** (see 1 John 1:8-9). So he has not suddenly changed his mind and somehow intends for us to now believe that converted Christians supposedly cannot sin.

Now notice the following things about this verse:

1) John here **twice** uses the word "gennao" to refer to **THE BIRTH**, not to the begettal.

2) By "**His seed**" John means "**the Holy Spirit of God**".

3) In this verse John makes **two separate claims** for those who are "**born**" of God:

- firstly, they "do not commit sin";

- and secondly, they "cannot sin".

4) **The reason** John gives why those who are **born** of God **do not commit sins** is that God's Spirit "remains in them", and John means permanently.

5) **The reason** John gives why those who are **born** of God **cannot sin** is precisely because they are **born** of God.

6) In New Testament Greek there are different particles to express negation. There is one particle (i.e. "**me**") which is used to express a **qualified negation**; i.e. something is denied subjectively or conditionally. There is another particle of negation (i.e. "**ou**") which is an **absolute negation;** i.e. something is denied absolutely and categorically. These distinctions are clearly explained in Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament.

7) In **1 John 3:9** the particle "ou" is used twice, expressing **absolute denial**. In plain English, this verse tells us about those who are born of God:

A) they **absolutely do not** commit sin;

B) they **absolutely cannot** sin.

8) These two statements must **refer to the future state** we still hope for, as per verse 3. It would be ridiculous to say that we who today have God's Spirit are being spoken about in this verse, that supposedly we absolutely cannot sin. That would also flatly contradict what John had said in the first chapter, that we still do sin.

9) Therefore in this verse the term "born of God" must refer to **the future state** we still hope for, when we shall be "like Christ" (see again verse 2).

So here is the point:

1) According to verse 2 we **already** are "the sons of God".

2) But the term "**born** of God" nevertheless refers to the future.

There is only one way to reconcile all these statements in this epistle!

It is **exactly as Mr. Armstrong used to explain this**. Upon repentance and baptism we receive God's Holy Spirit. Thereby we become the **begotten sons** of God. During our period of "gestation" (i.e. between the time we receive God's Spirit and the time when we are changed into spirit beings) we can and do still sin, though as a way of life we are striving to live in submission to God's laws. **At the resurrection** we are changed into spirit beings, thereby becoming the **born sons** of God. From then onwards it will be impossible for us to sin.

It is the context that makes clear that in 1 John 3:9 the verb "gennao" should be translated as "born" rather than as "begotten". The key is always found in what a given verse actually says!

Now let’s look at the two places in the Gospel of John where we find the mistranslation "born again".

JOHN CHAPTER 3

Notice verse 3.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again (gennethe anothen), **he cannot see the kingdom of God**. (John 3:3)

Here the word "gennao" is also correctly translated as "born". Except for the word "again", which should be translated as "**from above**", this verse means exactly what it says. Those who are born from above (i.e. of God) really **can** (i.e. will be able to do so) **see the kingdom of God**: they will clearly see **its ruler**, who is God, and **its inhabitants**, who to start with will be the people in the first resurrection, and **its territory**, which will be all of God’s creation. **They will see God’s kingdom.**

This is not some "analogy" Christ was using! Christ meant exactly what He said! Today nobody can "**see**" the kingdom of God. Anybody who tells you that he can see the kingdom of God is a liar! This

verse was written by the same John who tells us that it is impossible for anyone who is born of God to still sin. Those who are "born of God" are the ones who are born "from above".

Those who believe they are already "born again" obviously don't believe what this verse tells them! But let's move on.

The next verse shows that Nicodemus understood this to refer to literally being "born" a second time. But he realized that it was not possible to be physically born again. As he put it:

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? (John 3:4)

Notice Christ's answer to this question.

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. (John 3:5)

There are several things to take note of in this verse.

1) Christ's reply focuses on the time when a person can "**enter** into the kingdom of God". At repentance and baptism we do not "enter" the kingdom of God in a way where we will be able to "see" it. So in this verse Christ was not speaking about the time of baptism.

2) The Scriptures make clear that **the kingdom of God is not yet here**; that now it is only being "preached", but that the reality will come later. The clearest Scripture in this regard is probably 1 Corinthians 15:50, which says:

Now this I say, brethren, that **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God**; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. (1 Corinthians 15:50)

[The Greek word for "cannot" here is again "ou", **the absolute denial**.]

The kingdom of God is simply not for flesh and blood! God is a spirit being and His kingdom is for spirit beings, not for mortal human beings who are still capable of sinning!

3) The whole idea that physical, mortal human beings who still can and do sin, can enter into the Kingdom of the Almighty God is preposterous! It implies that some of those who are in the kingdom of God still commit sins! The kingdom of God will **never**, in any way, be contaminated by "sins"! Think about this!

4) Notice that **Jesus Christ referred to two steps** which are required before anyone can enter into the kingdom of God.

Step 1 is to be "**BORN**" OF **WATER**.

Step 2 is to be "**BORN**" OF **SPIRIT**.

The expression "be born of water and of the Spirit" is translated from the Greek text "gennethe ex hudatos kai pneumatos".

There are two things to notice in this short expression. Firstly, there is **no definite article before "spirit"** (i.e. before "pneumatos"). This means that Jesus Christ said "born of spirit"; He did not say "born of **the**

Spirit".

Do you grasp **the huge difference** that the subtle addition of the definite article makes in this expression? With the definite article and by capitalizing the word "Spirit" (born of **the** Spirit), **it implies something the Holy Spirit will do to us or for us**. But **without the definite article** and without capitalizing the word "spirit" (born of spirit), it is a reference to **the substance we have to be born of**, which is spirit!

Secondly, the Greek preposition **"ex" does NOT mean "of"** (i.e. as in "**of** water"). According to Thayer's Lexicon, this preposition denotes "exit or emission **out of**, as separation from **something with which there has been close connection"**. It is **the opposite of the Greek prepositions for "in" and "into"**.

With this information in mind, the expression "gennethe ex hudatos kai pneumatos" should really be translated as "**be born OUT OF water and spirit**".

Now what did Jesus Christ mean by this expression? And **how has there been "a close connection" to water and spirit in the process of being born?** The rest of Christ's statement should make this clear. Without these two things nobody can enter into the kingdom of God!

The meaning of the word "enter" is quite clear and not in dispute. Enter means enter, the opposite of going out, the opposite of "ex". Let's now look at **the Greek for the last part of this sentence**.

The expression "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" is translated from "**ou dunatai eiselthein eis ten basileian tou theou**". Here we have:

- "ou" as the absolute denial;

- "dunatai" means "to be able";

- "eiselthein" is formed from the two words "eis" and "erchomai"

  and thus literally means "to come into";

- "eis" is the preposition meaning "into", the opposite of "ex";

- "ten basileian tou theou" means "the kingdom of (the) God".

The use of the two prepositions "ex ... eis" creates a contrast. Jesus Christ was saying: "**unless we come OUT OF something we cannot go INTO something else**"! In the Greek the "coming into" conveys the idea of **participation**, i.e. coming into the kingdom of God with the idea of **participating in it** in a meaningful way!

So now let's try to put Christ's whole statement in John 3:5 together:

"Unless a man be ‘born’ (Greek "gennethe") **out of** water and spirit, he absolutely is not able to come **into** the kingdom of God to participate in it in a meaningful way."

A key to correctly understanding this statement is to recognize that "**out of water and spirit**" does not refer to one event, but to **two separate events**. Christ was referring to **the process we must go through** in order to enter the kingdom of God.

Step 1 is **to be baptized**. This is referred to as "**BEGOTTEN out of water**". When a truly repentant

person comes out of the water of baptism, that person becomes a begotten son of God with the laying on of hands and God imparting His Spirit to that person. That whole event is one ceremony, as explained in Acts 2:38.

Step 2 is **to be resurrected** (or to be changed into a spirit being) at Christ's second coming. This is referred to as "**BORN out of spirit**". The next verse makes this meaning very clear.

Here Jesus Christ used the word "**gennao**" with its full meaning. As we saw earlier, this word "gennao" covers the whole process which is **STARTED with conception** and which is **CONCLUDED with the actual birth**. And so this statement links the word "gennao" to the two things which start and conclude the process. The begettal or conception of a son of God takes place with water baptism and the birth is achieved when we are born as spirit beings, composed of spirit, at the time of the resurrection. All those who go through this process will then enter the kingdom of God. The "**water**" is essential to start the process, and the "**spirit**" is essential to complete the process of becoming a spirit being.

Let's move on to the next verse. It reads as follows:

That which is **born** (gegennemenon) of the flesh **is flesh**; and that which is **born** (gegennemenon) of the spirit **is spirit**. (John 3:6)

Christ said this in order to explain His statement in the previous verse. Notice that **Christ did NOT say: "that which is born of WATER is WATER"**! One reason is because **"the water" did NOT produce "a birth"**; "the water" only produced a begettal. And so Christ said: "that which is born of the flesh is flesh".

The Greek text translated as "of the flesh" is "**ek tes sarkos**", and the Greek text translated as "of the spirit" is "**ek tou pneumatos**". In this sentence the Greek preposition "ek" (i.e. "ex") is used twice. This preposition "ek" refers to "**motion from the interior**". So this sentence should correctly read as follows:

"That which is born **out from the flesh** is flesh; and that which is born **out from the spirit** is spirit."

A human birth involves literally "coming out from the womb", and the Greek preposition "ek" highlights that process of "motion out from the interior". But Jesus Christ also made clear that the birth of a spirit being likewise involves "coming out" from the spirit. That coming out process occurs when **we become separate and distinct individual immortal spirit beings** at the time of the resurrection.

The statement "that which is born out from the spirit **is** spirit" is as clear as it could possibly be stated! There is no way around that! **Those who are born out from the spirit are composed of spirit**; they are spirit beings! This verse makes clear that nobody, apart from Jesus Christ, has thus far been "**born** out from the spirit". The people who claim that they are already "born again" don't believe this verse, and they try to use other verses to somehow do away with this plain, clear statement by Jesus Christ Himself.

In this verse Jesus Christ very clearly delineates **the two "births"** that we have to go through before we can enter the kingdom of God. The **first birth** is to a physical existence as fleshly, mortal beings ... it is **out from the flesh**. The **second birth** is to an existence as immortal spirit beings ... it will be **out from the spirit**.

Jesus Christ knew that **this was a difficult concept for Nicodemus**, who was in fact an educated man, to understand. That is why Christ elaborated further in the next two verses. Notice first verse 7.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be "born from above" (i.e. gennethenai anothen). (John 3:7)

Here Christ said: "Don't be surprised that I am telling you that **you must be born from above**". Christ was referring to something that would occur **in the future**, i.e. "you **must**, at the time of My second coming (or at the end of the 100-years of the second resurrection period), be born from above".

When we carefully compare these verses, we should see that Christ used the terms "born out from the spirit" and "born from above" as interchangeable synonymous expressions. In the next verse, verse 8, He again said "born out from the spirit" (with the preposition "ek").

The next verse reads:

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 (out from) the spirit**. (John 3:8)

Now ask yourself: WHY did Christ say this? **What is the purpose of this statement?** The answer is: **to explain what it is like to be "born from above"** or, as it is also referred to, **"born out from the spirit"**!

This is exactly the same point as the one in verse 6. A person who is "born of the spirit" **is** a spirit being. And, from a human perspective, **spirit beings are like wind**, invisible to human eyes. The people who claim to already be "born again" don't believe this verse either.

Christ's statements in verses 6 and 8 are quite clear and unambiguous! They mean exactly what they say. But some people don't want to accept these clear statements, and so they try to spiritualize away these plain statements.

The whole false teaching about "born again" is based on a false explanation of these verses here in John chapter 3! Every other Scripture that is presented in an effort to support this false teaching is only a distraction, presented for the explicit purpose of confusing the real issue!

Now let’s examine 1 Peter chapter 1.

1 PETER CHAPTER 1

Let’s start with verses 3-4.

Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy **hath begotten us again** (Greek "anagennesas") unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, **reserved in heaven for you**, (1 Peter 1:3-4)

The prefix "ana" (in the verb "anagennesas") is the opposite of the prefix "kata". "**Ana**" means "**up**, **upwards**" and "**kata**" means "**down**". This is illustrated by many Greek words in the N.T. Here are a few examples:

ANABAINO means: to go up, to a higher place;

KATABAINO means: to go down, descend;

ANABALLO means: to throw up;

KATABALLO means: to throw down;

ANAKALUPTO means: to uncover;

KATAKALUPTO means: to hide;

ANATHEMA means: a thing set up;

KATATHEMA means: a curse;

ANAGINOSKO means: to distinguish between, to recognize;

KATAGINOSKO means: to find fault with;

The point is that "ana" in Biblical Greek meant "up" or "upwards" and not "again".

So the word "**anagennao**", which is only used twice in the whole N.T., both instances being here in 1 Peter chapter 1, does NOT mean "born again" or even "begotten again" really means: "**born or begotten upwards**"!

When Peter used this prefix "ana" before "gennao", Peter was trying to convey the concept of a begettal or birth that involved God! "Upward" is Peter's way of bringing God into the process.

Now let's notice what these 2 verses (1 Peter 1:3-4) actually tell us. We need to determine **whether** these verses speak about **an "upward birth" or an "upward begettal"**. The King James translation says "begotten". But let's examine whether this is correct or whether it really should be "born".

A) We have been **begotten or born** upwards **unto a lively hope**. Is that a begettal or birth?

B) We have been **begotten or born** upwards **by the resurrection of Jesus Christ**. Is that a begettal or birth?

C) We have been **begotten or born** upwards **to an incorruptible inheritance**. Is that a begettal or birth?

D) **If we have been born upwards**, WHY is the inheritance still only "reserved" for us in heaven? **Why haven't we received it yet?**

If we claim that Peter was talking about an upward **birth**, then these points (i.e. **unto** a lively hope, **by** the resurrection, **to** an inheritance and **reserved** for us) require further explanation. But Peter was not talking about an upward birth; he was only talking about an upward **begettal**. And so these points are clear in pointing to the hope that has been set before us.

Let's continue by looking at verse 7.

That **the trial of your faith**, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: (1 Peter 1:7)

Trials of faith are not for individuals who have experienced an upward birth. Trials of faith are restricted to the time before the actual upward birth; i.e. trials of faith apply to the period from begettal to birth. Trials apply to us while we are still physical.

Next, if some people are supposedly already "born again", then the following question requires an answer: when someone who has experienced a second **birth** dies, is that his **first** death or is it his

second death? Can you have only one death to cover **two** births? Can there be a death **after** someone has been born for a second time?

What if that person, after supposedly being "born again" (i.e. having experienced an upward birth), rejected God's truth and then dies: is that death only one death or is it two deaths, since there had previously supposedly been two births? If this particular person ends up in the lake of fire, which birth is it that dies **then**?

Can those who have been "born again" (i.e. experienced an upward birth) still die? Is there **ever** a **birth** that makes it **impossible to die** (i.e. a **birth** into an immortal existence)? Would that be a second or a third birth?

Can a person live **two lives** simultaneously? We have been born physically and that life is still continuing. If we have also been **born** upwardly, then we are **now** also living a second life through this upward birth. **Do these two lives run concurrently?** How does 1 Corinthians 15:36 tie in with this?

[Thou] fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, **except it die**: (1 Corinthians 15:36)

And verse 44:

It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. (1 Corinthians 15:44)

The Greek text here means "**there is a spirit body**", in the sense of "consisting of spirit". The first body is composed of physical matter, and the second body will be composed of spirit essence.

The above questions all require answers if we are to believe that we can **now in this life** experience an **upward birth**. But they are all very readily answered if we accept that the choice of "begotten" rather than "born" in the KJV translation of the word "anagennao" in 1 Peter 1:3 is correct, though it should read "**has begotten us from above**" rather than "has begotten us again".

It is always **the context** which makes clear whether the word "gennao" should be translated into English as "born" or as "begotten". And it is clear that in this verse "begotten" is the intended meaning. And here the translators got that part correct.

Now consider this: the Apostle **John** used the two words "**gennao**" + "**anothen**" together exactly twice in all his writings (John 3:3,7). Theoretically this expression can mean either "**born from above**" or "**begotten from above**".

The Apostle **Peter** used the word "**anagennao**" exactly twice in all his writings (1 Peter 1:3,23). This word can mean either "**born upwards**" or "**begotten upwards**".

It should be clear that **John and Peter were expressing the same thing**. "Gennao anothen" expresses the same thought as "anagennao". The question is not whether there is a difference intended between "upwards" and "from above"; the real question is whether both John and Peter intended the meaning of "born" or "begotten" ... since "gennao" clearly embodies both meanings. And that depends on the context of each usage, not on any inherent meaning in the word "gennao" itself.

THE CONTEXT OF 1 PETER 1:23

Now let's continue our examination of 1 Peter chapter 1. Let's move on to verse 13.

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for **the grace** that is **to be brought unto you** at the revelation of Jesus Christ; (1 Peter 1:13)

If we have already experienced an upward **birth**, exactly what is "the grace" that will be brought to us at the second coming of Christ? Remember that **"birth" implies an independently viable entity**. Peter seemed to have some special grace in mind that is extended at the second coming. What is it?

In the next verse Peter emphasizes obedience.

As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: (1 Peter 1:14)

Notice the example Peter uses: obedient children. "**Obedient children**" are the best way to illustrate the conduct God expects from us. Peter uses this same illustration a few verses further on, in chapter 2 and verse 2. Still 3 verses later he uses other illustrations, **lively stones** and **a holy priesthood** in verse 5. And in verse 9 he uses still more illustrations, **a royal priesthood**, **a chosen generation**, **a holy nation**, etc. So Peter used a number of different illustrations.

The word "**as**" is translated from the Greek adverb of comparison "**hos**". Peter has used this word **13 times** in the first 2 chapters of this epistle; 13 times he makes a comparison! Notice:

1:14 = "**as** obedient children ..."

1:19 = "**as** of a lamb ..."

1:24 = "**as** grass ... **as** the flower of grass ..."

2:2 = "**as** newborn babes ..."

2:5 = "**as** lively stones ..."

2:11 = "**as** strangers and pilgrims ..."

2:12 = "**as** evildoers ..."

2:13 = "**as** supreme ..."

2:16 = "**as** free ... not **as** a cover ... **as** servants of God"

2:25 = "**as** sheep going astray ...".

In all of these cases the word "as" is the Greek comparative adverb "hos". In the space of 37 verses Peter has made **13 different comparisons**. They are really quite random; each one refers to the immediate sentence in which it is found.

The comparison to "children" is already introduced here in 1:14 and not only in 1:23, which verse talks about being begotten or born upwards.

Now let's look at chapter 2 of 1 Peter.

Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, **as newborn babes**, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: (1 Peter 2:1-2)

The comparison to newborn babes in verse 2 is predicated on what is said in verse 1; i.e. to lay aside malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies and evil speaking! It is only when we lay aside all **these** wrong attitudes and motivations that we can "as newborn babes" take in the unadulterated truth of God. It is **not** referring back to the statement about being begotten or born upwards; verses 24 and 25 concluded that reference.

To make this clear:

Peter is NOT saying that we "are" newborn babes! Not at all! Peter is only drawing a very specific comparison to **one particular attribute** that newborn babies have: a strong desire for milk! It is this one specific attribute of newborn babies that Peter is speaking about. But Peter didn't mean to imply that we **are** newborn babies, any more than he meant to imply that we **are** "lively stones" (2:5) or "sheep" (2:25) or "grass" (1:24). Converted Christians are **not** stones or sheep or grass any more than they are newborn babies. Peter was **not** saying that we "are" born again at this time. In this verse Peter was not speaking about any kind of birth at all!

In the Greek text 1 Peter 2:1 starts with "apothemenoi oun" or "laying aside therefore". The verb "apotithemi" refers metaphorically either to cleansing from defilement or to putting off clothing. Like dirty clothing we are to "put off" all the wrong attitudes in verse 1.

The word "**oun**" is used 526 times in the N.T. and is rendered in the KJV as "**THEREFORE**" 263 times, as "**THEN**" 197 times, as "**SO**" 18 times and as "**WHEREFORE**" 8 times, etc. . It is frequently used in exhortations to show what ought now to be done by reason of what has been said.

Logically Peter used this word here to hearken back to what he just said in the previous verse, not to what he said 3 verses earlier. And the previous verse reads:

But **the word of the Lord** endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. (1 Peter 1:25)

In plain language Peter was saying:

Because the word of God, which endures for ever, **was preached unto you** ... **therefore you need to put off all these wrong attitudes** so that you can take in the truth of this word of the Lord without any defilement, like newborn babies desiring pure milk.

Notice the repetition of "**the word**": it is "**the word** of the Lord" and "**the word** which ... is preached unto you" and then it is "the sincere milk of **the word**, that you may grow **thereby** (i.e. by **the word**)".

Peter is telling us that **if we don't put off** all these wrong attitudes, then **we cannot really take in** the truth!

With this understanding of the context, let's now look at 1 Peter 1:23, the verse that refers to "born again".

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. (1 Peter 1:23)

The Greek here is "anagegennemenoi" and this means "being begotten or born upwards". But notice the

rest of this verse: This verse states plainly that an upward begettal or birth results **from "incorruptible" seed**.

A "seed" is required! Without an incorruptible seed there can be no upward begettal or birth!

It is a basic premise that "a seed" must always precede "a birth". A birth is the result of development by the seed. A birth can never precede the seed. A seed is the cause for a birth, and a birth is a consequence of a seed developing.

Receiving the Holy Spirit cannot represent receiving "**the seed**" and **the actual birth** at the same time. Receiving the Holy Spirit can **only be the one or the other**, but not both at the same time. So which one is it?

1 Peter 1:23 proves categorically that **an upward birth** must be preceded by **the sowing of an incorruptible seed**!

It might be interesting to examine the Greek text of this verse more closely. Here it is transliterated.

anagegennemenoi ouk ek sporas phthartes alla aphthartou dia logou zontos theou kai menontos eis ton aiona (1 Peter 1:23)

"Dia logou theou" means "through the word of God". The Greek expression "zontos kai menontos eis ton aiona", which means "which lives and abides for ever", has two present active participles which, grammatically, can be taken with **either** "theou" (God) **or** with "logou" (the word). In other words, this section of the verse can theoretically mean either that God or the word "lives and abides for ever". The more likely one is that **God** lives and abides for ever, something the rest of the Bible also supports.

So a correct translation of **1 Peter 1:23** reads as follows:

"Being begotten upwardly, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, who lives and abides forever."

So it should read "**who** lives and abides forever" **rather than** "**which** lives and abides forever". Now is "the word of God" that incorruptible seed, as verses 24-25 indicate? Yes!

Notice verse 25.

But **the word of the Lord endureth for ever**. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. (1 Peter 1:25)

The word of God doesn't have a life of its own (i.e. when this is not a reference to Jesus Christ as a person). So **God** "**lives and abides**" forever (verse 23), and the **word of God** "**endures**" forever (verse 25). There is a difference here.

A careful examination of this verse and asking the right questions makes clear that this verse is a reference to being **begotten**, exactly the same meaning as in verse 3, the only other place where this word is used. 1 Peter 1:23 does not talk about us already being "born again" at all!

The Holy Spirit is "the seed" which initiates a begettal, which after a period of growth and development then produces a birth.

And that about covers this matter of "born again". Let's briefly summarize all the things we have

discussed.

IN SUMMARY

1) The expression "born again" appears exactly three times in the English translations of the New Testament: in John 3:3; John 3:7 and 1 Peter 1:23. In all three places the word "again" represents a mistranslation of the Greek text. So when these mistranslations are corrected, then the expression "born again" is **never used in the Bible**!

2) The NT Greek verb "gennao" means: to beget, to conceive, and to give birth. It is always the context that makes clear which of these three meanings is intended.

3) The NT Greek word "**anothen**" means: upward, above, and from above. It **never** in any place **means** "**again**"! The Greek prefix "ana" means: above, to the top. This prefix also never in any place means "again".

4) The correct meaning "from above" for the word "anothen" is also quite clearly illustrated in various places in the New Testament.

5) The Greek verb "anagennao" means: born from above, or begotten from above. But this word likewise never means "born again".

6) So the New Testament speaks about "born from above" and about "begotten from above". But it never speaks about either "born again" or "begotten again".

7) Thus in the Bible **the focus is on the origin or source** of the new begettal and the new birth. That focus is completely hidden when the correct words "from above" are replaced by the incorrect word "again".

8) The New Testament Greek word for "again" is "palin", a word that is never used in conjunction with "gennao". This meaning of "again" for the word "palin" is also indisputable.

9) The real origin of the word "again" in the expression "born again" in our English language translations goes back to Jerome’s Latin Vulgate translation. Jerome mistranslated the Greek word "anothen" with the Latin word "denuo", which means "again".

10) The first recognized translation into English was made by John Wycliffe in 1382. Wycliffe translated from the Latin Vulgate text, and therefore coined the English expression "born again". While subsequent scholars and translators were well aware of the correct meaning of the Greek word "anothen", they nevertheless followed the tradition that Wycliffe had established. That is why most translations today use the totally unjustified term "born again" in these particular verses. In this process Satan used the Latin Vulgate translation to impose one more deception on humanity.

11) The use of "gennao" in the New Testament makes quite clear that in some places it means "born", while in other places it equally clearly means "to beget" or "to conceive". In other places still the word "gennao" could theoretically mean either "beget" or "born". In those places it is always the context that establishes the correct intended meaning. In those places people who do not correctly understand the greater context are likely to sometimes use the word "born" when the context is in fact talking about "begotten".

12) The clearest example of "gennao" also meaning "to conceive" is Matthew 1:20, where Mary had very obviously not yet given birth to Jesus Christ. Therefore in this context "**is conceived in her**" is the correct translation for "gennao" (i.e. "en aute gennethen").

13) In the expression "gennao anothen" the word "gennao" is applied to something that God does. When in this expression the word "gennao" is applied to God then it can mean either "begotten from above", or it can mean "born from above". Again it is the whole context which will establish the correct intended meaning.

14) New Testament Greek did not have a word which had the specific meaning of "to conceive". And so when different writers of the New Testament wanted to speak about a woman conceiving a child, then different writers selected different Greek words to express this thought. Thus Matthew used the word "gennao", and Luke used the word "sullambano", and Paul used both "koite" and "katabole". The key here is to recognize that it is not a case of "stacking the numbers" in favor of one or other of these Greek words (i.e. "sullambano" is used more often than the other words). Rather, it is a case of understanding that **different writers simply favored different Greek words**, because none of those Greek words had the primary or exclusive meaning of "to conceive".

15) If anything, Luke's use of the word "sullambano" was probably due to Luke only being familiar with the Greek translations of the Old Testament books ... the Greek translations had assigned the meaning "to conceive" to the Greek word "sullambano". As a matter of interest, even though Luke was at times Paul's traveling companion, yet Paul did not share Luke's understanding that the Greek word for "to conceive" should be "sullambano". And Paul never used "sullambano" with the meaning "to conceive". Paul only used this word "sullambano" one single time, with the meaning "to help" (Philippians 4:3). As already stated, Paul used the words "koite" and "katabole" to convey the same meaning that Luke chose to convey with the word "sullambano".

16) In 1 John 3:2 the Apostle John contrasted two different states of being:

A) **Our present state**, what true Christians are right now. Right now we are "**the sons of God**".

B) **Our future state**, what we shall be after Christ's return. Then we **shall be like Jesus Christ**.

The rest of that chapter continues to focus on these two distinctly different states of being.

17) In 1 John 3:9 the Apostle John makes two absolute statements. Those who are **born** of God:

A) Do not commit sins.

B) They cannot sin.

These two absolute statements must apply to one of the two different states of being that John referred to in verse 2; i.e. they must refer either the state we are in right now, or to the state we will be in when Jesus Christ has returned. Those are the only two options for John's statements here in verse 9.

18) Now in 1 John 1:8 John had already made clear that we converted Christians still have sins in our lives. Therefore the absolute statements in 1 John 3:9 must refer to the future state we will be in, after Jesus Christ has returned.

19) This means that the two states mentioned in verse 2 can be described as follows:

A) **At repentance and baptism** we become the **begotten sons of God** at the moment we receive

God’s Holy Spirit.

B) **At the resurrection**, i.e. the time of Christ’s second coming, we become the **born sons of God**. It is exactly as Mr. Armstrong used to explain.

20) In John 3:3 Jesus Christ said that those who are "**born** from above" can actually see the Kingdom of God: its Ruler who is God, its inhabitants who will be spirit beings, and its territory which will be all of God’s creation. This will only be true for when we are born as spirit beings at the resurrection. Mortal human beings cannot see the Kingdom of God.

21) In John 3:5 there is **no definite article** for the word "spirit". So Jesus Christ said that in order to enter into the Kingdom of God, we must "gennao" out from water and spirit. With this statement Jesus Christ was referring to the two steps that are involved in the process of salvation:

STEP #1 = **At baptism** we are "**begotten out from water**".

At baptism we come "out of water", and we then receive the gift of God’s Spirit with the laying on of hands.

STEP #2 = **At the resurrection** we are "**born out from spirit**". We receive an immortal spirit body, and in that process we in practical terms also end up "coming out of our physical bodies".

Both these steps involve "coming out of something".

22) In 1 Corinthians 15:50 Paul explained that flesh and blood absolutely cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. Therefore Jesus Christ’s statement in John 3:5 regarding **entering** the Kingdom of God must apply to the time when we are **born** of spirit, i.e. when we have a spirit body.

23) A vital key is this: **unless we first come out of something, we absolutely cannot go into something else**. In John 3:6 Jesus Christ said: "that which is born of the flesh is flesh". Since all of us are very evidently still flesh, therefore none of us have yet been born of the spirit.

24) In 1 Corinthians 15:36 Paul explained that "that which you sow is not made alive except it die". This means we cannot possibly be born from above until our present fleshly existence has died. **We cannot live two different lives concurrently!** So as long as we continue to live this present mortal life, we can only be in the begotten stage. At present we can only be the begotten but not yet born sons of God.

25) In 1 Corinthians 15:44 the Apostle Paul pointed out that there is a physical body (which we have right now), and there is a spirit body (which we will receive in the resurrection).

26) In 1 Peter 2:1-2 the Apostle Peter made the point that in order to be able to take in the truth of God, we must first put off (or "lay aside") all the wrong attitudes which emanate from Satan. Again, the point is that we first have to do something before we are capable of doing something else.

Over the centuries **many people have come into the fellowship of God’s Church without FIRST "laying aside" all the wrong attitudes** that Peter mentions. This meant that they consequently were in fact incapable of taking in "the sincere milk of the word". And so those people usually leave again. As John explained in 1 John 2:19, those people were never a part of us.

27) Many people have failed to understand this basic point: if we don’t **put off** the wrong attitudes **first**, then we are simply not capable of "**putting on** the breastplate of faith" (see 1 Thessalonians 5:8). We can’t put on something new until after we have first put off something old.

28) The Holy Spirit is "the seed" which is capable of producing an upward begettal in a human being, provided we human beings ourselves provide the correct environment for that seed, much like a womb provides the right environment for a fertilized ovum to grow.

29) The way we provide the correct environment for that seed to grow is by first putting off all the wrong selfish attitudes that Peter speaks about in 1 Peter 2:1. In other words, we must first change the way we use our minds.

30) So if someone were to walk up to me and claim that he is already "born again", then I would say: "friend, you are no more born again than my dog is born again ... and I don’t even have a dog!"

Frank W Nelte