

lous changes? Scientific men call these processes the "Metamorphoses of Insects;" the big word meaning changes. Let us endeavor to observe the wonders of Nature, for, indeed, they are transpiring all about us day after day. And in contemplating these miracles of being, reverently think of the wisdom and might of Him, who made all such.

REGENERATION.

The conversation of the Redeemer with Nicodemus, the Rabbi, recorded by John in his gospel, is concerning one of the most important subjects ever chosen for consideration. In it we learn that every man must experience a certain entire change, and that without this change no one can either see or enter the kingdom of heaven. We are also told how this all-important change takes place. This conversation can therefore be studied with a view of ascertaining whether or not we are in a condition to become members of this kingdom.

Although I have seen many "notes and commentaries" upon this passage, yet I do not remember ever to have heard or seen one that would give satisfaction in every respect. They have all been more or less successful attempts at fitting the words of Christ into the religious ideas of modern times, a fault too common among both theologians and laymen. It seems to be forgotten among many Bible students now-a-days that the expressions used had all their distinct significations at the time of our Savior. "The kingdom of God" or of "heaven," "The world to come" and "The heavenly Jerusalem," all signified in the Jewish theology the same thing, namely, the reign of the Messiah. To be "born again" was the description for becoming a proselyte or disciple. It is clear that an oversight of these facts must bring confusion and disturb the harmony of the questions and answers of which the conversation consists.

Two notorious errors have been supported by this passage. One teaches that the really regenerating power lies in the water of baptism, and that through this water man is "born again." From this view springs the practice of baptizing or sprinkling infants. They must be "born again," and can be so only through the water of baptism. Now, there is no doubt that this practice is anti-christian, and we may well conclude, too, that the doctrine on which it is founded is false, as an anti-christian practice cannot possibly grow out of a true doctrine.

The other error is that "regeneration" is a momentary act, synonymous with conversion. This view is held by all pietists of all denominations. They require that a regenerated person shall be at once totally changed. They claim to be so themselves. Hence their rigid judgments of their fellowmen, their intolerance and much of their "church discipline" which are

nothing but outbursts of spiritual ignorance and pride, ugly in their consequences and damnable in their essence. According to this view, regeneration ought really, as the Baptists maintain, to precede baptism, but the whole position is undefendable and must, as such, be given up.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

At the time of our Lord the Jews generally expected the appearance of the Messiah. The time set by Daniel was certainly up; for this prophet (chap. ix) clearly says that in seven weeks, i.e. forty-nine years—reckoning from the decree of Artaxerxes, B. C. 457—the walls of Jerusalem were to be rebuilt; in sixty-two weeks (484 years) Christ should appear in His ministry and, in the middle of a week, after three years and a half, be cut off. Now this time was up, and every believing Jew waited for the appearance of the Messiah.

It was thought that when He came He would come a Deliverer. The Jews suffered under the bondage of the Romans. Their liberty was gone. They had even had to submit to the interference of the Romans in their ecclesiastical affairs, inasmuch as these had put the old sinner, Hannas, out of his high-priestly office, and put in Caiaphas, an infidel, in his stead. The oppressions of the Roman officers were great and intolerable; and every Jew hoped and expected at this time that the long-promised Messiah would come and cause a rising against the Romans, liberate the people, and establish His own kingdom on the ruins of the kingdoms of all the world. A kingdom was expected, the kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of God, in which a "New Jerusalem," a "heavenly Jerusalem" was to be the glorious capital.

Were not the Jews right in this expectation? Certainly; for of the Messiah it was predicted that He should be a King over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there should be no end. Christ never contradicted the idea that He should be King, and reign. He explains that His kingdom was not of "the world," should not be originated from or by this world (*ek tou kosmon toutou*, John 18: 36); and He says that the kingdom was not yet, at that time, to be established. The King must first depart into a far away country to receive the title or right to the government, in the same way as Herod had been in Rome to be confirmed in his office by the Emperor. While he was absent the citizens should hate Him and lay plans for taking His crown away. In this, however, they should not succeed, but when the King came back, vested with full authority to reign, the enemies should be slain before His eyes. (Luke 19: 12-27). Here Christ very clearly declares that He should be a King, to reign over a kingdom, with the authority from heaven, and He teaches the truth that it was not to be established at His first presence here, but on His return.

Here was the only, but fatal, mis-

take of the Jews in relation to this question. They expected a Messiah who should come to reign, and not to suffer first. They overlooked and explained away all the passages which speak of a suffering, dying, and humiliated Messiah, and they expected one who could be exalted without previous humiliation. They had a one-sided view of the subject, as in our days many Christians have got a one-sided view of the other side, looking only at the suffering and death of Christ and forgetting all about His exaltation. But crude and one-sided as the ideas of the Jews then were, they were interested in the subject, talked about it, and discussed it with one another. It has even been asserted that a widespread plot had been laid by some of the Rabbis to establish the Messianic kingdom, and that Jesus had been secretly asked to co-operate in the plot.

NICODEMUS.

Nicodemus was a great Rabbi, a teacher among the Jews. He was, as a member of "Sanhedrim", what you could call perhaps a Justice of the Supreme Court, a "ruler." This "Sanhedrim" consisted of seventy-two members, twenty-four of whom were priests and 24 elders; the rest were made up of the scribes of the people (see 1 Chronicles, 27: 32). This great body had power to pass sentence upon certain criminals and otherwise act in a judicial capacity among the Jews. It is not known whether Nicodemus became a convert openly or not, but as we find him at the death of Christ bringing his liberal gifts for the embalming of the body, the inference is that in heart he was a disciple, and it is to be hoped that he did not give his vote to the death sentence of our Lord. Perhaps he was not present when the sentence was pronounced.

This Nicodemus, then, paid our Savior a visit in the evening, in order to have a long, quiet talk with Him concerning the subject dear to the heart of every true Jew, and much discussed the expected Kingdom of God.

TO "SEE" THE KINGDOM.

In the very first sentence uttered by Christ upon the subject, we find Him laying down a principle, strange and humiliating, to a great Jewish Rabbi, particularly: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." The Jews thought that they as born Jews were certainly in a fit condition for the foundation of the kingdom. But Christ says that every one must be born again. It does not matter who he is by birth, Jew or Gentile, man or woman; everyone must actually be "born again," become new from head to foot, before he or she can "see" the Kingdom.

To "see" the Kingdom of God I take to mean to live in it, under its laws and regulations. For what else can "see" a kingdom mean? It cannot mean to see with the bodily eye, since that organ by no known means can be made to see a kingdom unless upon a piece of paper. It must therefore signify to perceive its nature, laws, and opera-