

## Two “beginnings” in the Bible - Genesis 1:1 vs. John 1:1

The Gospel of John is the book of the New Testament correspondent to the Genesis book of the Old Testament. And it is precisely for this reason that those two books - Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1 - begin with the words: *“In the beginning...”*, which means that there are two “beginnings”, corresponding to two different creative principles.

And so, whereas the book of Genesis records the earthly creation of man, the Gospel of John records the spiritual creation of the newborn man, as Jesus taught to Nicodemus in John 3:3 ... *no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.*

The word “beginning” (lat. *principium*, gr. *arché*) means “principle”, that is, the origin, the basis, the foundation or the presupposition of anything. Basically, the word “principle” has two senses: one linked to the chronologic time and the other linked to a moral foundation.

According to the creative principle of Genesis, the first man – *Adam* - was created from the dust of the earth, who received the breath of physical life through the breath of Jehovah ... *Then Jehovah formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being..* (Genesis 2:7)

On the other hand, according to the creative principle of John’s Gospel, a person can have the experience of a new birth and receive the breath of the spiritual life of the Holy Spirit, similarly to that blowing which Jesus breathed into his apostles ... *And Jesus breathed on them and said: Receive the Holy Spirit!* (John 20:22).

Thus, there are two beginnings, two principles and two breaths, which correspond to two different creations. Every human being in this world has an earthly nature inherited from the “beginning of Genesis”, but not everyone has the spiritual nature of the new birth, which Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:3.

The earthly man, who was created according the “beginning of Genesis”, reveals an animalistic and vulgar nature, which tends more and more to the character distortions. In Ecclesiastes 3:18-21 it is written that those men are like the animals ... *Surely the fate of human beings is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; humans have no advantage over animals. Everything is meaningless. All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return. Who knows if the human spirit rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?*

As we read in that text of Ecclesiastes, there are no great differences between the man created according the book of Genesis and the irrational animals in general, for they all are moved by instincts. This man does not cultivate naturally the virtues, for his natural affection is for the fruits of the flesh, that are reported in Galatians 5: 19-21 ... *sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.*

On the other hand, the man created according to the creative principle of John's Gospel, that is, the “beginning of John’s Gospel”, is not moved only by instincts, because he is capable to make his own decisions without the coercion of carnal impulses. This newborn man cultivates naturally the virtues, for his new inclination is to the fruits of the Spirit, which are related in Galatians 5:22-23 ... *love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*

This newborn man has an inner reactive force that leads him to resist the irrational and natural impulses from the old self, causing a spiritual fight in his interior. Paul described in Romans 7:22-23 an inner conflict in his soul, which is the conflict between the old creature shaped by the standard of the Genesis and the new creature shaped by the Gospel of John’s principle.

In the same text, Paul said that in this struggle of the newborn self against the old self, the old nature keeps insisting on resurrecting and resuming its original place. ... *For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.*

This difference of reactions and behavior can only be identified by those who have the Holy Spirit, as described the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:14 ... *The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.*

The newborn man mentioned by Jesus to Nicodemus is the new creature quoted by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:17 ... *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new.*

As we read that "*all things have become new*", we can conclude that the circumcision in the foreskin of the males from the old Law has been replaced by the circumcision of the heart; the liturgical repose on the Sabbath from the old Law was replaced by the repose of the soul in Christ; the commandments of the old Law which were written on tablets of stone had been replaced by commandments written on tablets of meat in the hearts; and so on.

The Old Testament's Law and ethical-moral principles were an antithesis, that is, a counterpoint to all that was taught in the New Testament. This is why commandments such as: "*Thou shalt not kill*" from the Law of Moses have been replaced by: "*Thou shalt love thy enemy*" from the law of Jesus Christ, which is much more noble and difficult to fulfill.

Paul admitted that his old nature was not completely exterminated even after the experience of a new birth. Each time a newborn person allows that the fruits of his old nature be manifested again, the animal instincts of the Genesis Adam rise and prevail, counteracting the regenerating action of the Holy Spirit.

Indeed, insofar as we let ourselves to be filled with the Holy Spirit, the evil passions will be replaced by creditable and noble things. That is why Paul exhorted in Galatians 5:16-18 ... *So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

In Romans 6:6, Paul said that if the old self was crucified with Christ, there is no reason to remain as a slave to the infamous passions of the Adamic nature.... *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

Also in the subsequent verses 11-14 of this very text, Paul said that God's grace is the weapon available to the born-again person, that makes him able to crucify the old man with its concupiscence ... *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.*

In Ephesians 4:22 Paul points to the need for the mortification of animal instincts, in order to counteract the impulses of earthly nature, so that the inclinations proper to the new birth may prevail: *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires.*

Finally, let us read Colossians 3:5-14, where Paul confirms the need for voluntary mortification of the flesh.... *Mortify therefore whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, that is idolatry. In which things you also walked some time, when you lived in them. But now you must also rid*

*yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Forbearing and forgiving one another, if any man has a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do you.*

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