

# Born-Againism

“Prostrating himself and touching his forehead to the ground, Mathieu Pawlak put his demons to rest. Once a practicing Catholic tormented by a spiritual void and the searching questions of youth, Pawlak embraced Islam and, he says, found **peace**... “I found the way that Muslims pray to be truly profound. It links the body and the heart,” said Pawlak (*New York Times*, 1/16/06, “Officials concerned about Muslim converts,” emphasis added).

## 1. Scripture references:

- a. John 3:3: “born again” – the Greek means “born anew” and “born from above”
- b. John 3:5: water and Spirit (= the Word, that is, Christ)
- c. John 6:44: “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him...”
- d. John 15:16: “You did not choose me, but I chose you...”

**NB!** Therefore when all these texts are examined, it is evident that John 3:3 “born anew” means “born from above.”

Acts 16:15: “[Lydia] was baptized with her household...” Household = men, women, children, and slaves. Up until 140 AD there is no reference to infant baptism **or** adult baptism of those from Christian families.

Infant baptism = the perfect example of **justification by faith alone**

Adult baptism is deferred infant baptism.

2. What is *really* real? Experience? Feelings? Experiences fade away. Feelings come and go. Some never have spiritual experiences. Furthermore “...even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Cor 11:14). “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed” (Gal 1:8).
3. What is sin? Spiritual pride, rebellion. (“All our righteous deeds are filthy rags,” Is 64:6)
  - a. Pride – If I do or feel the “right thing,” I am caught in spiritual pride. I’ve done it right. I’ve contributed my share.
  - b. Despair – How to know when I’ve believed earnestly enough? Has my decision for Christ been heartfelt? Has it stuck?
4. The appeal of visible success. 5-7 hundred million Pentacostals. They seek evidence of changed lives = quest for visible transformation. They appeal to experience. They advocate small groups, and small groups work. Speaking in tongues is found in Hinduism, too. Spiritual experiences are not confined to Christianity (matters of psychology/sociology). They are separate from “the truth of the gospel.”
5. Discipleship: “They’ll know you are Christians by your love” (!?) We have to make it happen. And we can make it happen. Claim that evidence of faith can be provided.

Luther’s rediscovery of the gospel: We are totally righteous and totally sinful. Faith, by definition, is hidden, hidden under the cross. What’s real? The promises of God – outside of us, in spite of us.

“One thing is sure: We cannot pin our hope on anything that we are, think, say, or do.”

(Martin Luther, *Smalcald Articles* III/III/36, BC 309)