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The New Creation

by T. Austin-Sparks

Edited and supplied by the Golden Candlestick Trust.

"When we drink the cup of blessing, which we bless, are we not all partakers in the blood of Christ? When we break the bread, are we not all partakers in the body of Christ? For as the bread is one, so we, the many, are one body; for of that one bread we all partake" (1 Cor. 10:16-17; Conybeare).

"For the love of Christ constrains me, because I thus have judged, that if one died for all, then all died (in Him); and that He died for all, that the living might live no longer to themselves, but to Him, who, for their sakes, died and rose again. I therefore, from henceforth, view no man carnally; yea, though once my view of Christ was carnal, yet now it is no longer carnal. Whosoever, then, is in Christ, is a new creation; his old being has passed away, and behold, all has become new. But all comes from God" (2 Cor. 5:14-18; Conybeare).

There are few passages of Scripture better known to believers than these that we have read, but there is something about statements by the Lord of this kind which it is very necessary for us to keep always in mind.

In any statement of truth or fact made by God there is contained all that God knows about things, the full range of Divine knowledge lies behind that statement. It is not something either casual or incidental, it is not just something said for the moment. It is something which has the whole view of history, and that Divine history, back of it. And that is why no word of God can ever be exhausted, grow stale, and lose its freshness.

Anything that God says is capable of divulging something more and ever more to those who are spiritually alive, or, in other words, who are under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. That is a Divine fact and you should try to register that fact. It may sound somewhat abstract, but you will see as we go on what we mean, but take it as a fact. You can never take anything said by God, and having heard or read it a thousand times or ten thousand times, pigeon-hole it and say, "I know all about that!" It might be that after the thousandth time, you are only just at the beginning of that very thing, and all its real wealth may yet lie hidden, waiting to be explored. The Word of God is as full as God Himself, however brief may be the space in which it is uttered, however few may be the human words in which it is set forth.

When, therefore, the Holy Spirit of God speaks in a brief phrase of two words about a "new creation", into that little phrase "new creation" is packed everything that God knows; firstly, as to His full thought about creation, God's mind about creation, all that He meant, purposed, intended, and designed by creation. When God uses the word 'creation', it carries the fulness of God's thought about creation, and when He speaks of a 'new creation', that phrase carries with it all that God knows to be necessary in the putting away of the old creation, for God is not thinking of a new creation without the absolute necessity of discarding the old. And all that cancelling of an old creation means that God is bound up in that word '*new*'.

Have we yet exhausted the *Divine* thought for creation, and in creation; what creation would be if it were wholly according to God's mind? Why, we have hardly started on that yet! We know very little about that! Have we yet exhausted all that it means that a creation is discarded, set aside, finished with so far as God's ultimate purpose is concerned? And why it should be so, why that old creation should be put away? We can cover it in comprehensive statements, say that it has failed, it is a sinful creation, but do we know the nature of that creation, and do we know the full meaning of the Cross in which that creation was brought to an end? We have only just started, we are only just learning the depths of that creation that necessitated God winding it up. The older we get, the further we go with the Lord, the more we realise how utterly impossible is that old creation, of which we are a part; in other words, how utterly impossible we are when we come into God's realm.

The Old Creation - God's Object Lesson

But there is more than that. We say that God has wound up and discarded that creation. Yes, so far as the realisation of His purpose is concerned, that is so, but God has still got the old creation in hand. We have said He has washed His hands of it. In a sense that is true. But He has got that old creation still in hand for a purpose - as an instrument of education, and what we call "history" is God's way of teaching men Divine truths. There are Divine facts, Divine truths, and Divine principles; there are Divine laws. How will God demonstrate them in the history of the old creation?

Look, then, outside of the new creation to the old. Take the present advanced and very fully developed form of the old creation on this earth and see in it one of the greatest, if not the greatest, object lesson that God has ever given of Divine laws and Divine principles.

Man's Bid for Omnipotence

What were things which, coming in, sealed the doom of the old creation? One was the man's acceptance of satan's suggestion that he should be omnipotent: "You shall be as God" (Gen. 3:5) -

that was the suggestion, and man accepted it and made a bid for equality with God, omnipotence, being in himself all-powerful.

Well, look at your old creation today, see it as the gathering up of that history. It has been seen through the centuries at different times in a very strong and full way. You have it in Babel, you have it later in Babylon, you have it later in Rome. But they were mere shadows of the present as to size, range and strength. There has been a tremendous bid for omnipotence - that lies at the heart of the present world situation. Already that is history, and if ever there was an object lesson of why that creation should be wound up, we have had it in the last five years. God has demonstrated to this world and to all who have eyes to see, that that original bid for omnipotence which has persisted and come out in this awful form, is man's undoing, and everybody today would say, "This is not a world to live in if that is going on, this is not a creation in which to have any place!" Who wants to go on in a world such as this has been during the past five years, and even it is not final, we have not reached the full development of that yet. We can see the awful possibilities of pursuing that course to really wipe out a creation, and that in most awful misery and suffering. God has got hold of that thing and has been demonstrating since the day that Adam made his choice, that that necessitates the setting aside of a creation and the bringing in of another: a new creation, where that thing has been eradicated.

It is here that we can speak of eradication, for in the new creation when it is fully realised, all that aspiring on the part of man to omnipotence will have been eradicated. It is the cause of all the trouble.

Man's Desire for Independence of God

Again, go back to Adam. What more was bound up with that bid of his? Independence of God. Equality with God carried with it independence of God, that man should no longer be dependent upon God, but have the root and spring of everything in himself and be self-sufficient, self-contained, self-governing, self-directing, and everything come out of self, not out of God.

Well, let history prove whether that has been a good thing. We see it today. We see in this awful thing, (we do not refer to a nation on a merely earthly ground, we are using God's object lesson) for whether it is the whole nation or not, the thing in the nation which has produced these five years, that philosophy, that ideology, that doctrine, is constructed upon independence of God, the setting aside of all Divine sanctions, the turning round of everything and making it just the opposite of Christian truth, just exactly the opposite of Christian truth: that evil is good and lying is quite right, and such things; the destruction of every established Divine sanction and becoming a law unto itself. It does not matter about other nations, the law lies with *that* nation. It is to dictate the law, even Divine law. If anything Christian or anything else gets in its way, then so much the worse for it! An absolute independence of God and taking things out of God into self, and this is the result, and God has used the old creation to demonstrate firstly the necessity for it being set aside, and secondly the necessity of bringing in a new creation.

So we arrive at this, that in the new creation that which has necessitated a new creation will not be found, and anything which is of a semblance of independence of God will be eradicated from the new creation. You get into church laws, new principles of that embodiment of the new creation - the church, omnipotence, independence. So we go on. It is not necessary, that is enough to illustrate this

thing, that God has all that stored up in a single phrase and all history is gathered into the smallest phrase of two words - 'new creation'.

Man's Desire for Worship

Take another feature. If God is to be robbed of His uniqueness of position, His utter isolation as the sole object of worship, and man is to come on to equality with God, be deified, omnipotent, independent, self-sufficient as God alone is, then man is to become the object of worship, equal with God. Worship must turn towards man.

You see history; what was Nebuchadnezzar's great image intended to be? It was intended to be representative of himself. The falling down and worshipping of that image was in effect the falling down and worshipping of Nebuchadnezzar. They were identical, the worship of man. What has come out during these recent years? "Hitler is our Jesus Christ, our God. 'Mein Kampf' is our Bible" - the worship of this man. And, mark you, that has been supernaturally reinforced. You cannot explain the utter subjection of a nation to that, only that there is supernatural reinforcement of it, something other than a man taking that position. You have it right at the beginning, satan and man coming into league to depose God and take God's worship from Him. The world, the universe, has had in these five years, a great demonstration in history of the necessity of that creation being set aside.

In the new creation, therefore, worship is brought back solely and wholly to God, and the new creation is founded and established at its very inception upon worship. That is your church foundation, and it is very remarkable that the focal point of worship is the Cross in which the old is brought to an end and the new is introduced. And the Cross and the Lord's table is the focal point of the worship of the new creation, and in heaven to come it will be the same. The worship will be the Lamb.

You see how profound and far-reaching are the things bound up with a simple statement by God - how far-reaching. In the new creation, then, the supreme mark is worship to One alone. "Worship God" (Rev. 22:9). Man is deposed, and the result of man worshipping himself is seen, is written for all to see who have eyes. "As God", is the formula: "thou shalt be *as God*". That is expunged from the universe of the new creation.

You may say that these are very awful things. We can see them in Adolph Hitler and that system. Oh, but they are only, not the final, but a very full manifestation of what is in the whole of the old creation. That is in you and that is in me in principle. Is there no desire in our natures, are we not capable of wanting to be independent of the Lord? Have we never acted independently? In our old days before we were the Lord's, was not our spirit one of ignoring the Lord's rights, repudiating our dependence upon God, and is there not still something of that in the old man about us? We have not learned very much if we have not learned that. The fact is that we do realise more and more as we go on how difficult it is for this old man of ours to be utterly dependent upon God and subject to God.

Worship of man - well, we would never call it that, but is it not the same thing in principle when we want to draw things to ourselves or be in view ourselves? It is a part of us. Put it round the other way if you like. The soul of the natural person never likes to be utterly ignored, set aside or walked over. There is always some kind of bitterness or resentment when something like that happens.

The Old Creation Put Away in the Cross

God knows the sum total of the characteristics and nature of that old creation, what it has embodied throughout, the poison that is in it, that of which it is capable; He knows. When He says: "A new creation", it is because He knows all that, and when He says, "A new creation", what He means is that that has got to go, and that has gone in the Cross of Christ. In Christ you will find none of that, you will find just the opposite. The Lord Jesus Christ will say, "My Father, My God". He will say to satan, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Luke 4:8). God is utter and absolute with the Lord Jesus; subjection to the Father, dependence upon the Father, is the great thing which His life on earth demonstrated, and He is the embodiment of the new creation in its whole nature and all its laws. The church is chosen in Him to be conformed to His image; that is the new creation.

The Establishment of the New Creation

Now, that has far-reaching and many-sided meanings, implications and applications. We read from 1 Corinthians 10: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not our common participation in the blood of Christ?" or, as Conybeare puts it, "Are we not *all* partakers in the body of Christ?" The emphasis is upon "*all*" - that is the emphatic word in the sentence. "Common participation" is one translation; Conybeare's "all partakers" is another translation, but the emphasis is there. We are all one. "The loaf which we break, is it not our *common participation* in the body of Christ?" What is this linked with? Well, you can see a direct relationship between that passage and the other passage in 2 Corinthians 5. There is the death of Christ set forth and now: "...One died for all, then all died in Him; and that He died for all, that the living might live no longer to themselves, but to Him". "*I* therefore" (the '*I*' is the emphatic word in the original) "know no man after the flesh".

Speaking about the new creation on the other side of the death of Christ and our death with Him, he says, 'In this new creation, I know no man after the flesh.' 'Flesh' there is not used as it is in some places in the New Testament in that bad sense of the carnal fleshly nature, the evil nature. All Paul is speaking about here when he says 'after the flesh', is after that old earthly Adam order, the order of the old creation in Adam. Of course, it is bad; here it is just that the old creation, knowing no man after that order - he could not mean it in the bad sense and then immediately go on.

What he is saying is this: there is an old creation order, an earthly order as men of this creation view it, and we no longer view those in the new creation so. Well, how did the old creation view Christ? Not universally as an essentially bad man in the bad sense of flesh, but simply as a man. People did not see any difference between Him and other men. He was just like other men in the world to them. Paul says, "That is how I viewed Christ once; I just viewed Him as being like any other man. I did not accept Him as being other than other men; like other men, one of the men of this world, one of the order of this creation - that is how I viewed Him; and while He was perhaps, in my judgment, an outstanding man, the enemy of what I thought to be right, an impostor, an upstart, and so on, nevertheless I just viewed Him as a man amongst men!" That is how He is using the word 'flesh' here, and he is saying, in effect, "Henceforth I know no man as just a man among men as the world knows men; if I do, I am back in the old creation, I am taking account of man as he is naturally, and letting that govern my attitudes, relationship, and procedure with regard to people; I am all the time keeping in view what they are naturally. And when I do that, I am violating the new creation, I am ruling Christ out, setting Christ at naught."

No "... - and the emphasis is upon the personal pronoun in the Greek, and the emphasis is there in Paul's intention for these Corinthians. You see the context: "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas" (1 Cor. 1:12); "I am taking account of men in themselves". In Corinth the old creation spirit was rampant and everything was judged among them according to natural standards: what people were or were not in themselves, probably making a great deal of people of worldly importance, and thinking very little of those of no worldly importance.

Paul says, "God hath chosen the weak, the base, the things that are not (1 Cor. 1:27-28). This world chooses the things that are, the strong, the intellectual. That is what you are doing at Corinth!" The Cross rules all that out, finishes all that; that is a part of the old creation; the basis of our relationship, judgments and procedure, is *Christ*; the only possible basis of oneness, our common participation, 'we all', is Christ: His Blood, His Body. In this new creation, we have to make everything of Christ because He *is* the new creation. It is only as we adhere to Him, keep our eyes on Him, seek ever and always the Holy Spirit's changing of us for Him, bringing Him in in our place, only so can the cohesiveness of this new creation, the oneness, be established. It is established there with God, but it has got to be manifested here among the saints.

So this whole thing comes right down in this passage upon relationships and what the Body of Christ is. What is this Body? "We... are one body"; "we are all partakers in the body of Christ". "We are one body". That is the embodiment of all the new creation laws in Christ, and it is supposed to stand to testify to the fact that that old creation has gone.

Now you see that the Body of Christ has such a prominent place in the Corinthian letter because it was there that the very nature of that Body was being violated and threatened. Paul says, "In Christ there is a new creation and it is just the opposite of what you are doing, the way you are going on." It is corrective. So that, if you and I have much to say and think about the Church, the Body of Christ, let us remember that it is the new creation. The new creation is not that people are born again and then subsequently come into the Body of Christ; not at all. It is there that so many of the perils arise. I just mention one or two of these.

You and I have got to take ourselves very seriously in hand along certain lines, so that we do not violate the very thing for which we are supposed to stand. We are all in peril of doing this. We can make division among the Lord's people in this way, that if people have not got the light that we have, have not seen, as we so often say, 'He or she has not seen', if they have not 'got the light', they are separated - a spirit of separation arises. We would not deliberately cut them off and say, "Of course, not having our light they cannot be Christians!" - but the effect of our light is to put them in another category than in the new creation, in effect. Truth is not the ground of oneness; Light is not the ground of oneness. *Christ* is the ground of oneness.

We may have practical difficulties in the measure of fellowship; that is another thing, the measure of co-operation is quite another thing. But I do feel that there is a need for us to realise that our responsibility is all the greater in this matter the more light we have, that we positively refuse to have divisiveness in spirit between ourselves and the most unenlightened child of God and other companies of the Lord's people, or those who may not see as we see. They may be very much in the dark; God only knows how much we may be in the dark. Oh, I think we are going to get some surprises when we get into the full light as to the utter ignorance which is ours, even when we thought the Lord had shown us something. Light is always only comparative, and if there are those who have not got the light that we think we have, let us inwardly stand against separating on the

basis of the measure of light, but wherever there is anything of Christ, let us cherish it and go after it, and even with a rebuff, refuse inward division. It is the inwardness of this thing that matters.

It is like that in the new creation. The new creation is quite impossible of expression unless there is that absolute domination of Christ in our spirit, and that that takes charge of our mentality and our attitudes and our ways of speaking which may have the effect of breaking up. "We *all*..." - and Paul is saying this 'all' even to Corinthians - 'we *all* participate, we *all* partake'. It is the spirit of the new creation. I am sure that you are recognising that there is a very vital point in what I have tried to say. I am not saying it to you apart from very deep exercise in my own heart on this matter.

Do you see that there are certain perils for a company of people such as this, meeting in one place and standing for something more of the Lord? The perils of that position are very great, the perils even to the new creation, of an inward separation from the Lord's people, even very far back in their, or our, knowledge, understanding and enlightenment. Oh no, we must not have that, we must stand against it most positively, otherwise we just move on to the position which is, whether we would allow it or not, that *we* are the Body of Christ and others are not because they do not know the truth of the Body. God forbid anything like that should ever be!

Let us stand very strongly against anything that resembles that and realise that we have a tremendous object lesson of the disintegrating power that is in the old creation, and in the mighty integrating power of the Cross of the Lord Jesus to make for oneness. And if that oneness is not true in spirit, we have contradicted a major factor in our position in the Cross, and again in another major factor - the Body. This is a thing of the Spirit and not of truth, not of light, teaching, or doctrine. May the Lord make it so in an ever-increasing way.