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"There is a New Creation"

by T. Austin-Sparks

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"Are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection; knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin; for He that hath died is justified from sin. But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him" Rom. 6:3-8.

"In whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead... If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances... If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with Him be manifested in glory" Col. 2:11,12,20; 3:1,3,4.

"Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new. But all things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation" 2 Cor. 5:17,18.

Now I believe that I am led on to this somewhat familiar ground, to make a simple presentation of the foundations of the life of the believer, and it is this phrase out of which all else comes: "If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation (marg.)"; not merely: "he is a new creature", that is hardly adequate, but: "there is a new creation"; that reaches beyond the man and embraces a very great deal more.

Of course it is no new thought or idea that what we have at the beginning of the book of Genesis is a type or illustration of this new creation in Christ; or, to put it the other way, that the new creation in Christ is spiritually what the old was materially. Very often what takes place in the new creation in Christ, that is, when a man or woman is regenerated and born anew, has been illustrated from the story of the creation in the book of Genesis, and that is nothing new to us. But I do feel very strongly that that is truer and more fully so than has been recognised. What I mean is that the Old Testament story of the creation has in it a very great deal more as illustrating the New Testament presentation of new creation than has been generally seen, that it goes a very great deal further than we have recognised. The weakness is in the failure to recognise the comprehensiveness of this truth and, of course, the essential implications of it. And it is concerning the greater fulness and deeper implications of this thing that we are to be occupied for a little while although not attempting to go very far with it to try and exhaust it, but to reduce it to a few basic factors which must of necessity be taken account of.

Now here, amongst other New Testament Scriptures, the word "new" is used, and in this case it is connected with a creation: "there is a new creation". Now to be very simple indeed, the first thing that has to be taken account of is the fact of the necessity for such. If there is a new creation brought about by God in Christ, then we may take it for granted that such is a necessity. "Well", you say, "there is not very much profundity about that"; but you have to begin at the beginning. And if only we did but see it, a very large proportion of our trouble is because we have not recognised that simple fact, the necessity for a new creation. We may put that in another way which is the implication of it, and that is that the old creation has entirely broken down and failed, making for this necessity that there shall be a new creation. The old has failed, and it always will fail; it will never be any more successful than it has been. Man may have his knowledge increased, he may become very clever, very wise. He may do many wonderful things, but in the realm of relationship with God, the whole creation has broken down and is a failure, and will never be one fragment more successful than it has been, or is.

Now, you and I are all too slow in coming to that very first elementary conclusion. Our trouble is that we are always trying to accomplish something in relation to God by means of the old creation, and we have not accepted fully and finally that "finis" is written over it: failure, wreckage, ruin, uselessness characterises (in the sight of God) that creation to which you and I belong by nature. That is where we begin; therefore the necessity for a new creation.

Following on from that then, we have to see that what has failed and broken down is, in its entirety, set aside by God. It is set aside wholly by God, and the implication of that is that the essential governing principle of that creation is never carried over by God into the new. That which motives the old creation, that which is its driving force and its vital principle, that which energises and actuates its mind, its will, its heart, its spirit, its soul, its body, is to be set aside, is ruled out, and not one bit of that is carried over into the new creation. The mind of the natural man does not come into the new creation, the will of the natural man does not come into the new creation, the heart of the natural man does not come into the new creation; each has got to die in that old creation and be

raised with an entirely new vitalizing, energising, motivating, governing, vital principle - a new creation. The reason for this is that the old creation is entirely separated from God, and in that fallen state it never can be reunited with God.

How plain it is to anybody that knows anything about the Word of God that God never unites fallen humanity with Himself, or unites Himself with fallen humanity. God never brings into living relationship with Himself sinful man as sinful man, the old creation in its fallen state. The two are separated and can never be brought together. You see, that was man's doing. He broke his union with God, he destroyed his fellowship, his relationship, and the very word of the Gospel "reconciliation", shows very clearly the state of things, what kind of a relationship exists between man and God. Reconciliation! "Now", you say, "that very word, if it is carried into effect, contradicts what you have said about re-uniting". No, never. You and I as sinful men and women, in that state can never be reconciled to God, and reunited to God. We shall see presently what reconciliation is although we may not use that word.

The union has been broken, and the old creation is severed from God, and as an old creation can never again be united with God and yet men are everywhere striving and struggling to get back to God. All the philosophies that ever were, were an effort to discover how man may come into amicable life with God, to solve the problem of man's relationship to God. And wherever you go the world over, no matter how darkened the understanding may be, you will find an effort being made in some way or another to solve the problem of relationship to God and living on amiable terms with Deity. And even in the most enlightened Christian lands, people are still struggling and striving to reach up to God and to, so to speak, get hold of God, and to be in a relationship to God. And they are ignoring this fact, or have never seen it, that it is an impossible undertaking, it cannot be done. Let us settle it once and for all, that the old creation cannot be reunited with God.

Now one step further, that:-

Old Creation was Taken Possession of by Man.

Man took possession of it for himself. That is where all the trouble began. God had given everything to man, and everything was for man, and man was to be the inheritor of the earth, but he was to have it all in relation to God, and only in relation to God. The one condition was that he possessed his possessions in the Lord, and it was upon that one point that he broke down, and at that one point that he rebelled and he, prompted by one who sought to usurp God's place, took his possessions out of relationship to God, to have them for himself.

There is a deeper spiritual significance about very familiar words than perhaps we have seen: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof"; and that is set over against this well-nigh universal attitude and spirit of the fallen creation to have what is God's, without deference to God, without reference to God, without recognising that God has rights, and the first rights. And that is not merely in the realm of gross sensuality and downright wickedness; that is in the realm of religion. The creation is shot through in its very constitution with religion, and you cannot eliminate religion however much you try. But man has taken religion and become possessed of it with everything else.

Man has made religion his own possession, something that he now uses and organizes in his own wisdom. To see how thoroughly true that is you have only got to look at Saul of Tarsus, a representative of that class to whom the Lord Jesus had some very, very strong things to say. Here is

a man who has got hold of religion, and he has really got hold of it in both hands, and the very highest form of religion that the world has known. Yes, a religion of Divine revelation; Judaism contained those things which, apart from Christianity, every other religion has recognised the value of. I remind you that our Gospels make that very clear. You take as an instance, the Roman centurion at Caesarea whose servant lay sick, dying, and who sent for the Lord Jesus to intervene for his servant. And I remind you that that servant was an Italian; he was not brought up in Christianity or Judaism. He was in charge of a little garrison in that part of the country which was now subjected to the Romans, and he was responsible for that territory, and being there he came daily into touch with the Jews. He clearly recognised that there was something in the Jewish religion that he had not in himself or his own religion, his paganism, and he came to see that amongst the Jews there was this Jew who possessed something supernatural. The spiritual story of that man's life must have been marvellous if we had known it; feeling his way through all the terrible darkness and confusion of paganism, towards the light, with all his background from infancy, and at last reaching One whose person he did not recognise, but whom he recognised as having power, and coming at last into the light. But he had recognised in Judaism something, and through Judaism to Christ, and Christ to Jesus, as he would have called Him.

Well, here is Judaism with all its tradition, with all its revelation, now a religion in the days of the Lord Jesus. And take Saul of Tarsus, he has got hold of it mightily, he has got hold of this thing and he is running it to the very last ounce of his strength. He has poured into it all the wealth of his intellect, all the resource of his energy, and all the fires of his enthusiasm and passion. He is a Hebrew of the Hebrews, out and out for his religion, the religion of his fathers as he called it, and when you come to the great crises in his life, you discover that the whole thing was as diametrically opposed to God as anything could be. The whole thing is against God and not for Him. "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary..." Yes, but he had got hold of religion. Man had taken possession of religion, and even that was against God and was working out in the opposite direction of God's intention and purpose concerning His Son. God had appointed Jesus Christ His Son heir of all things and religion was ruling out the heir: "This is the heir; come, let us kill Him, and let us seize on His inheritance". That is taking possession is it not? "This is the heir - 'through whom also He made the worlds' - come, let us kill Him". The Lord Jesus said that to the Jews, whose representative in a peculiar way was Saul of Tarsus and he was going about to kill the heir, in religion, religiously. You see how this whole thing has got away from God and is separated from God. Man had taken possession.

Now, this has to be otherwise in the new creation and has to be exactly the opposite, whereas in the old creation all things have become of man, even religion. You have Christian religion as much of man as you can have Judaism of man, or paganism of man. Man can get hold of Christianity just as thoroughly as ever a Saul of Tarsus got hold of Judaism.

The fact that we are religious, and even "Christian" so far as that word relates to a religion is concerned, does not mean that we are in union with God or that we are in fellowship with God. It does not carry that implication that being what we call Christians (and that means that we cannot be called heathen, Mohammedan, Confucian, Buddhist) the fact that we are Christians in that sense, and make a Christian profession and conform to Christian requirements externally, as to the outward forms of Christian religion in Church going, Bible reading, and so on, does not carry with it at all of necessity, the meaning that we are in living union with God. It may just remain as true of us as it was with Saul, that we are separated from God and out of fellowship with God, and with all our religion, still not working to God's end that in all things His Son shall have the pre-eminence.

Now, that is the state of the old creation: all things out from man, even unto religion. In the new creation the whole thing has to be changed, and so it says: "If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation (marg.); the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new. But all things are of God", nothing out from man now. All things out from God, and they have to be; nothing can be out from ourselves in this matter, but many have tried it. They have subsequently come to see how futile it is. The sooner we recognise it, realise it, accept it and settle it, the happier; that this whole thing is now out from God and not out from ourselves. That is where our hope begins. Our assurance begins there. All the joy begins when you come to the place where you cannot do anything. Yes, then it begins. When you get there the Lord begins to show you what He can do, and He does not, until you come to that place. That is true in the first steps in the believer's life; even in the matter of the initial step of salvation that is true.

I remember in one of the docks in Glasgow there was a man who could not swim and who fell into a deep water dock. He shouted and struggled and announced quite audibly that he had fallen in, and a man who saw him go in, heard him shouting, watched him kicking, and though himself a good swimmer, just folded his arms and looked at him. The man in the water went down, came up again still kicking, still struggling, still trying to shout. Still the man on the side watched him, apparently unmoved. He went down again and when he came up his kick was nearly all gone, his struggle was practically over, he just appeared and then was disappearing for the third time when the man at the side went in and brought him out. When the man was brought round he said: "Why didn't you save me before? Why didn't you come in at the beginning? Do you know I nearly died, I was practically as good as dead?". "Yes", said the other man, "I have saved a good many men like you, but when I started saving men from drowning I found that their kicking and struggling dragged me down with them and two men were nearly dead, and I learned that it must be my job, and not my help, so I wait until he gives it up and then I save him."

I think the Lord takes that attitude to the unsaved and to the saved very often. Our struggles only dishonour the Lord. In our contradicting the truth of the Cross, which truth is that there is no salvation in man and man cannot save himself, we are giving God the lie, we are making out God to be untrue. That is dishonouring God, that is putting the Divine judgment and wisdom at a discount. It is in effect saying, "God does not know what He is talking about, God is not telling the truth". And then, supposing we could do something towards it, the result would be that we would go about saying that it was our wonderful will-power, because we put up such a fine fight that we overcome sin! God will not have that. It is not that the Lord wants us to flop passively and have no interest in the matter; there is all the difference between passivity and the helpless looking to the Lord in faith as Saviour, as Deliverer.

Well, nothing is carried over, it is all out from God this new creation, nothing out from us. The new creation is a new creation, and the word here is one of the Greek words translated in our language "new" which has its own peculiar value and meaning. As we have found, there is another Greek word translated "new" which means fresh; the word that we might use when we get up in the morning and say we feel all fresh and new this morning, but I ask you, are you a different person from what you were when you went to bed? I mean a different species. You went to bed a man or woman, but did you get up a dog, or cow, or cat? Your newness is just freshness of the old kind. That is not the word used here. The word used here is "brand new", something that never was before, and it is not that which dies with Christ that is raised together with Him. It is something new that never was before; never in a former creation was that which is here in the new creation. It is a new creation in Christ.

What is the New Creation in Christ?

It is not "he is a new creation"; it is "there is a new creation." Where is the new creation? In Christ, not in you or in me. In what way is it a new creation? In the risen person of the Lord Jesus you have got humanity joined with God, and God joined with humanity, but it is a humanity according to God's thought, God's mind. It is not our humanity, but a humanity which is in the highest thought of God, the humanity of the Lord Jesus with which God can unite Himself, and does. And the mystery of the person of Christ is just this, that God and humanity have become one in that person, in that representative. Now put that into a man or woman and you see what you have got. Not God united with them, but God united with a humanity after His own mind in His Son.

It is *Christ in you* with Whom God is joined, and that is the hope of glory, and that is the new creation. That is the beginning; from that point the new creation grows. The first creation in the book of Genesis was not consummated, finished, and perfected when Adam was put in charge. He was given charge to develop it. It was to be progressive development. And when Christ takes up His residence with those of us who become united with Him, from that point it is the development in us of a new creation, and the whole process of the work of the Lord, the Spirit within us, is conformity to the image of Christ. Everything that the Lord does in our experience is related to that, that Christ may be fully formed in us. It is a new creation, something quite new; man never had the Lord resident within him before. It may sound strange to use the word, I trust it will not be the occasion for any mischief, but in this specific sense of Christ dwelling within, God is in us. Be careful how you say that. I have my Scripture, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Yes, but it is *in Christ*, it is not ourselves.

We still carry about with us a humanity that is not according to God, but the marvel is that there in a renewed spirit, by the Holy Spirit, is all the meaning of a humanity that is glorified in the presence of God: Jesus Christ, with which God is linked, and that is the nature of the new creation. There is a new creation in Christ. See Him and you see what God's new creation is, and then see that that is to be within the believer, the child of God, God joined with man, the Man after His own heart, the Lord Jesus dwelling within making everything possible. This is what takes place at the new birth. This is the meaning of the new birth. It is Christ coming in. What is that? God joined to man, coming in; not to our old creation, but to His own new Man, coming in to reside, to abide.

Let me again point out that that is why it is necessary that we should definitely take our position in relation to the death of Christ, His Cross, His burial. Everything hangs upon that in the first place, that that Cross of the Lord Jesus is the place where that old creation is by God judicially put away. It is that side of the offering that is represented by the ram that goes out to Azazel, out to the wilderness with the sin upon it to be lost in the eternal desolation where God is not. That is you. That is me. We have to take that position by faith. We have to accept the end of ourselves in the Cross of the Lord Jesus. Have you accepted that? And then, having accepted that by faith, we take our place in risen union with the Lord Jesus. From that time it is Christ in you, united with Him. "For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection", "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death... even so we also should walk in newness of life." A new creation in Christ, and Christ in us.

And the last word must always be the supreme word. From that time it is all Christ: "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me." Not what I am; what He is. The more you make of the Lord Jesus, the more you count upon Him, the more you draw upon Him, the more you dwell upon Him, the

more you will know the life of the new creation and of the fulness of that creation. If the enemy can get you turned in upon yourself, with yourself in view, you will lose all the benefit of the new creation and be back on the old plain of poor, miserable creatures. But if you can keep your eye and heart upon the Lord Jesus, living on Him, dwelling on Him, all God's fulness will be meted out to you and you will find that Christ is all the fulness of God for you. The Lord lead us into the fulness of the new creation in Christ.