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"One New Man"

by T. Austin-Sparks

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The Revelation of Christ

Reading: Gal. 1:15-16; Eph. 2:15-16; 4:15-16,24; Col. 3:10.

The phrase which I feel is to engage us at this time is that in Eph. 2:15 - "one new man". But before we speak about that specifically, there is a word which must lead to it.

The question that is exercising many hearts today is that which relates to the need, the great need, for a recovery of the original freshness, vitality and power of Christianity. Many are concerned with this matter. How can that original freshness, vitality and power be recovered amongst the Lord's people? It is in seeking to answer that question, at least in part, that I think we should find some profit. But we must, of course, ask why it is that that freshness and vitality is lacking. What is the reason for its absence? What is it that accounts for the present state of things which is so different from what it was at the beginning? Do you not think, dear friends, that, while the answer may be a very much wider one, it can be answered in this way, that the present vitiated state of things spiritually in Christianity is so largely due to the fact that Christianity has become almost entirely a tradition, a fixed system, a system of doctrine and of practice crystallized and formed and presented as something from the outside to be accepted, adopted, and conformed to. Christianity has taken a fixed shape. It is an "it", and you are called upon to accept that "it" which is Christianity. When we have recognized that, I think we have got really to the heart of the matter, because in the beginning

and in principle throughout the New Testament everything was a matter of a living inward revelation of a Person; for whenever God has moved to take some fresh step in relation to His purpose, His comprehensive purpose, He has always done so by giving a new revelation in an inward way.

A Revelation of the Lord the Way of Progress

It was a great step in that purpose of God when He brought Abraham into fellowship with Himself. "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham" (Acts 7:2), and that is only saying in other words, "it pleased God to reveal..." In principle it was a revelation that came to Abraham of the God of glory. It was that revelation of the God of glory that emancipated Abraham and resulted in all that came in and through Abraham as a link in the chain of God's eternal purpose.

It was true of Moses; and Moses represents another step on the part of God, a fresh movement in His purpose. God appeared unto Moses in the burning bush. He saw the Lord; he had a vision of the Lord; that meant everything to him. I think we should not be wrong in saying that many times in the life of Moses when pressed hard, under stress, in temptation, trial, suffering and adversity, in the difficulties of the way, he called back that original vision. He called to mind that day when he saw the Lord in the flame of the bush. The Lord appeared unto him. It was something which remained in his history as basic. He would say, On that day I saw the Lord, I came into living touch with the Lord, it pleased God to reveal Himself to me!

So we might go on with one after another and find it true in every case. Isaiah will say, "I saw the Lord high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple" (Isa. 6:1).

It was true in the New Testament. The disciples had to base everything upon the forty days after the resurrection - "We have seen the Lord". That is what the Lord meant by it. He appeared after His resurrection by the space of forty days and they saw, but in another way, in a spiritual way, in a way in which they had never seen Him before. It was in a living way.

Paul certainly based his whole history upon this; "it pleased God to reveal his Son in me". He could say, I saw the Lord.

And that was not only true as one tremendous thing at the beginning of the life of each of these. It was something which in principle was repeated again and again in order to get fresh developments, fresh advances. Peter had seen Him alive after the Cross by the space of forty days. He had seen Him in that way, but there was still need for Peter to move on, and so he saw the Lord again in connection with Cornelius and the inclusion of the Gentiles. He saw the Lord again, and that fresh seeing of the Lord emancipated him some more from the old traditional position, the old legal bondage, from the earthly and the merely historical, from knowing after the flesh. He saw; and we know what happened. When he saw he could not help himself. It was no use arguing. He went up to Jerusalem and they contended with him, they disputed with him, they called him to question over this matter of going in to the Gentiles. He, in effect, says, I have seen, I cannot help myself; I saw and what am I to do? When a man sees, he cannot help himself. He is simply emancipated by what he sees, if he sees in the right way.

When the Lord would make that fresh tremendous movement with the Gospel into Europe, He did it by showing something. Paul saw a man of Macedonia, and that man said, "Come over into Macedonia and help us", and although Paul had essayed to go into Bithynia and sought to preach

the Word in Asia, the Lord said, No, and then showed him a man of Macedonia (Acts. 16:6-10). Paul could have summed it all up in this way - The mighty movement of God into Europe with the Gospel was by a new divinely given vision; I saw and I went. The way of advance was the way of the heavenly vision; the way of development was the way of new revelation; the way on in the purpose of God was by having the inner eye opened to see. Not once nor twice, but whenever God wants to move on, He opens the eye anew. "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me" - that is the principle all the way along. It has ever been so; a living revelation, the eyes of the heart being enlightened, but a revelation of Christ. "It pleased God to reveal..." That is the opening of the inner eye, the eye of the heart, the understanding.

Not Things, But Christ

"It pleased God to reveal *His Son*" - that is the comprehensive object. In Him all the purposes and ways and intentions of God are gathered up. God does not show *things* to His people, He shows His Son. He does not show truths; with God no one truth is an abstract thing. It is personal. Christianity has become a system of abstract truths, the truths of the Gospel. God ever presents His Son, and the truths in relation to a living Person, never out of such relation. If we see the Lord by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, we have seen everything related to our salvation, related to our sanctification, related to our vocation, and related to our glorification. It is all in seeing Christ. The recovery of the original spiritual vitality and freshness and power will only come along this line - a new revelation in an inward way, in a living way, of the significance of the Lord Jesus. That means much more than it sounds in a statement, because there is nothing of significance beside Him. The very significance of this universe is centred in God's Son. "All things have been created through him and unto him" (Col. 1:16); He is the significance of all things. All time has its significance in Him - "He is before all things" (Col. 1:17). To see the meaning of the Lord Jesus is to be out of everything earthbound, timebound, fleshbound. You cannot see the Lord Jesus and be limited to any of the things of this old creation.

We have mentioned some of those who saw, and you observe what happened. When they saw, they were soon out; out with God, free with God. Nothing in this world would have extricated Saul of Tarsus from his Jewish history, his Pharisaical bondage, his legal strait-jacket, from his very blood as of a son of Israel; nothing! But he saw Christ, God's Son, and that did it. It is a mistake to talk to people about this and that and the other thing from which they should escape and "come out", and so on. You can get things done like that and just get a Christianity of a systematised order imposed. People embrace *it* and become adherents to *it* and believe in *it* in a way, but you do not get the freshness, the vitality and the power that was there at the beginning. That comes when people are in a position to say, I see; it pleased God to reveal His Son in me, I have seen, I cannot help myself; I am bound to take such and such a course because I have seen!

You can see how hidebound Peter was - "Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath ever entered into my mouth" (Acts 11:8). Not so, Lord! If you and I see Christ, the things which are religiously impossible with us will become actualities, and religious impossibilities are much stronger than human impossibilities.

Today the need is not primarily for the recovery of doctrine and truth. There may be a need in a large area for the restoration of fundamental truth and doctrine to its right place, but when you have it, when you have exact doctrine, you have no assurance of having life. It is possible to be exact and correct in your doctrine and to be perfectly dead. Whatever may be the need of the recovery of

lost truth, the need over all, greater than all, is the recovery of spiritual revelation as to the Lord Jesus, to see Him anew.

A Revelation of Christ Corporate

That can lead on to what is bound up with the fragment of the Word which is before us - "one new man". You can see from these Scriptures that there is a double, two-sided, major revelation of Christ comprehended by the New Testament; it came by revelation. Firstly, there is the revelation of Him personally, Christ personally, the Son of God; and then following that, by revelation again, Christ corporately, not as two things but two sides of one, so much so that the second is spoken of as "the Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12 Gr.). This word 'man' is a collective term and is gathered up into the one Christ. Here is the statement - "have put on the new man... where there cannot be" this and that and the other thing "but Christ is all, and in all" (Col. 3:10-11). The new man where Christ is all and in all.

You notice the significance of Eph. 4:20: it is worth looking at closely. "Ye did not so learn Christ." It does not say learn about Christ, but learn Christ. "If so be that ye heard him, and were taught in him, even as truth is in Jesus: that ye put away... the old man... and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man." So learn Christ that ye put off the old man and put on the new man, being renewed in the spirit of your mind. That is worth thinking about - to learn Christ, is to do something, is to result in something, and that something is that if you have learned Christ, you have put off the old man. If you have learned Christ, you have put on the new man. To learn Christ is to see and embrace an entirely new order of man. That is the significance of Christ. It is this - a new and different kind of man has been introduced by God into this universe, and He is the object of all spiritual education. "So learned Christ". It is a practical thing, it is not an academic thing, it is not a thing at all; it is a Person, and your way of learning that Person is not observation and imitation. Your way of learning is the exchange of something for Him, an old man for a new.

Have we seen that new man? Have we really seen Christ and the tremendous difference that there is between Him and every other creation? Is that being brought home to us in an inward way, that we are altogether different naturally from Christ, that He is utterly different from ourselves? "Renewed in the spirit of your mind"; that we "should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4); that we should "serve in newness of the spirit" (Rom. 7:6). It is all newness and all different, all other. To see that difference is the way of recovering the vitality, freshness, and power of seeing with ever-growing vision what Christ is. He is the first and type of a new family. The Holy Spirit has come to generate after the order of Christ a new type. The life in the Spirit is the progressive conformity to the image of God's Son, and the consummation of that life is the revelation of the sons of God, a different order altogether.

Dear friends, if we could recognize it, the explanation of everything in this world is bound up with that. What is the explanation of the present world upheaval and travail? Well of course, this is only a development of things that have been going on all the way through the centuries, but what is the explanation? There is no doubt that this world is plagued; it is plagued by war, it is plagued by tumult, it is plagued, plagued all the way through. And who has plagued it? God has plagued it. And why has God plagued it? Because it is the kingdom of Satan and as God continually plagued Egypt until Egypt disgorged His son, so God has plagued this great kingdom of Satan until the sons of God are secured. Then "the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption" (Rom. 8:21). An explanation of this world's trouble and travail is this, that there is a corporate sonship within this kingdom, and until this Pharaoh's overthrow is made good this world will be plagued.

"The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain waiting for the manifestation, (the apocalypse, the revelation) of the sons of God." (Rom. 8:22,19). Yes, this is the explanation.

Well, how does that affect us? It brings us right back here. Our primary concern is not to get better conditions in this world, to get peace and a new order here on this earth. God knows we long for wars to cease and conditions to be changed, but that is not our primary concern. Our primary concern is this question of sonship, this question of getting out of the nations the people for His Name, getting out of this kingdom that new family, getting that Christ-order completed. That relates to ourselves. We have to see to it that we are bent upon this matter, that this Christ-order, this Christ-kind, this Christ-nature, this Christ-species into which we have been brought by regeneration by the Holy Spirit is brought to perfection in ourselves, that we are being conformed to the image of that Son, that we are growing up into Him in all things Who is the Head, even Christ, that we are making increase spiritually after that order. But it is a corporate thing. Our business is the completing of the Christ order in a corporate way in the Church which is His Body, and beyond that the bringing in from the nations of those who are eventually to make full that Body and be the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

You see, dear friends, that the New Testament has one object in view, only one object, and that is the completion of this Body and its ultimate emancipation. It begins with evangelism, but evangelism is not a thing in itself. When the gifts are given by the ascended Lord - apostles and prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, they are all related to one thing, they are all centred in one thing. They are not things in themselves. "Unto the building up of the body of Christ". That is the issue of all and of each, but evangelism has been made something in itself, detached and unrelated. Those who are taken up with it very often have no interest beyond that. It is something in itself. Evangelize, evangelize, get souls saved, that is all that matters! But it is related to a centre. There are those who are teachers and their whole interest is in teaching, and it becomes a thing in itself, teaching, teaching, teaching. The poor people are fed and taught, taught and fed, but it is something going round in a circle. Teaching is to the building up of the Body. The teacher, the evangelist, the prophet are all centred in one thing - the building up of the Body. That Body is God's end. The evangelist to bring in, the teacher to build up, instruct; everything is to one end, and that is the Christ corporately expressed and ultimately universally manifested in that Body. Let me say again how needful it is for us to get this in the way of a living revelation, otherwise these things become technical and ecclesiastical; you make them something in themselves and very earthly. But to see the full vision by revelation of what God is after does mean deliverance from little ends in themselves, little circles constantly going round earthly things, ecclesiastical orders, religious systems, mere doctrines and teachings; all these things in themselves. Oh, see God's one great end and it is enlargement, it is life!

Of course, here is the difficulty. If you have not had some real experience of what I am talking about, then I am saying to the blind, See! That is always the difficulty. If you know in a little way what I mean, if you have seen, though it be a little, something has come to you at some time with all the force and power of the opening of the inward eye and you have been able to see, and you say, I see now! You know what a power that seeing has become in your life, what a release has taken place with that, what a new prospect loomed up before you. There is tremendous strength in really seeing like that. Well, if you see, you know what I am talking about.

But what I am saying is this, that there is a full, mighty end that God has in view, a tremendous thing, an immense thing, and the way by which He is going to reach it is the continual opening of eyes. We

shall come to a standstill, we shall just be stuck, if we have reached the end of revelation. There are many who have reached the end of all revelation. You understand that I am not talking about something extra to what is in the Scriptures, I am not going outside of the Word of God. I am saying this, that here is the Book and the Book can be comprehended and mastered and you may be, like Apollos, mighty in the Scriptures and know nothing whatever about the mighty vitality of the Holy Ghost. Paul came on the heels of Apollos of whom it was said that he was mighty in the Scriptures, and those to whom he had been ministering at Ephesus knew not that the Holy Spirit was. Aquila and Priscilla took him and expounded unto him the way more perfectly. You may be mighty in the Scriptures. There is the Book, the letter, and we may be letter perfect, Book perfect, masters of what is written and yet there be no life about it, no energy about it, no power, no freshness. The one cannot dispense with the other. We must have the Scriptures, but oh, to have the Holy Spirit opening, revealing in a living way so that with the inner eye we are seeing more and more through those Scriptures the significance of Christ, the fulness of Christ ever breaking upon us. That makes Christianity a living, fresh, powerful thing. That is the way of revival. I think that is the revival we need - to see the Lord again and things will happen; to see the Lord in ever-growing fulness so far as our seeing is concerned, and things will happen when it is like that.

Now I have just presented to you the object and stated the realm of revelation. What it requires is for the Lord to reveal Christ to us, breaking in upon us, but there is no doubt about it that it is going to be a costly thing. There never has yet been true revelation without tremendous responsibility and cost. Those who have seen have been involved in a costly way. It cost Abraham a lot to see the God of glory; it cost Moses a lot to see the Lord; it cost Isaiah a lot to see the Lord; it cost Paul everything when he saw the Lord. But, having seen the Lord, who would exchange that revelation for a tradition, for something earthly, of time, in religious things? No, you cannot go back upon that. It is the most precious thing to have seen, and to see. It is life, and I take it that you and I desire more than anything else that our Christianity should be living. We do not want just to be brought up in something, having been told something, instructed in something in an outward way, so that that has become our religion. No, we want it every day to be something that works, something that is real; no matter what it means of finding us out, of making demands, we want it to be real, to be living. That is what the people of God need - living, real Christianity that is a constant challenge to them and through them to others, and the secret of such a Christianity is seeing the Lord and seeing more and yet more of the significance of Christ. It is along the line of living revelation that power comes. May the Lord explain to our hearts what this means and interpret His Word.