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1

THE NEW LIFE

IT IS TO A NEW LIFE that God is calling us—not to some new steps in life, some new habits or ways or motives or prospects, but to *a new life*.

For the production of this new life the eternal Son of God took flesh, died, was buried and rose again.

It is not life producing life, a lower life rising into a higher, but life rooting itself in its opposite, life wrought out of death, by the death of "the Prince of life." Of the new creation, as of the old, He is the Author.

For the working out of this the Holy Spirit came down in power, entering men's souls and dwelling there, that out of the old He might bring forth the new.

That which God calls *new* must be so indeed. For the Bible means what it says. Of all books it not only is the most true in thought but also the most accurate in speech. Great then and authentic must be that "new thing in the earth" which God "creates," to which He calls us, and which He brings about by such stupendous means and at such a cost. That old life of ours must have been hateful to Him when, in order to abolish it, He delivered up His Son. And we must have been dear in His sight when, in order to rescue us from the old life and to make us partakers of the new, He brought forth all the divine resources of love, pow-

er and wisdom to meet the exigencies of a case which must otherwise have been wholly desperate.

The man from whom the old life has gone out and into whom the new life has come, is still the same individual. The same being that was once "under law" is now "under grace." His features and limbs are still the same; his intellect, imagination, capacities and responsibilities are still the same. But yet old things have passed away; all things have become new. The old man is slain; the new man lives. It is not merely the old life retouched and made more comely, defects struck out, roughnesses smoothed down, graces stuck on here and there. It is not a broken column repaired, a soiled picture cleaned, a defaced inscription filled up, an unswept temple whitewashed. It is more than all this or else God would not call it a new creation, nor would the Lord have affirmed with such awful explicitness, as He does in His conference with Nicodemus, the divine law of exclusion from and entrance into the kingdom of God (John 3:3). Yet how few believe that "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6).

Hear how God speaks! He calls us "newborn babes" (I Peter 2:2); a "new creature" (Gal. 6:15); a "new lump" (I Cor. 5:7); a "new man" (Eph. 2:15); doers of a "new commandment" (I John 2:8); heirs of "a new name" and a new city (Rev. 2:17; 3:12); expectants of "new heavens and a new earth" (II Peter 3:13). This new being, having begun in a new birth, unfolds itself in "newness of spirit" (Rom. 7:6); according to a "new covenant" (Heb. 8:8); walks along a "new and living way" (Heb. 10:20); and ends in the "new song" and the "new Jerusalem" (Rev. 5:9; 21:2).

So that it is no outer thing made up of showy moralities and benevolences, or picturesque rites and a graceful routine of devotion, or sentimentalisms bright or somber, or religious utterances on fit occasions, as to the grandeur of antiquity, or sacramental grace, or the greatness of creaturehood, or the nobleness of humanity, or the universal fatherhood of God. It is something deeper, truer and more genial than that which is called deep, true and genial in modern religious philosophy. Its affinities are with the things above; its sympathies are divine. It sides with God in everything; it has nothing beyond a few expressions in common with the superficialities and falsehoods which, under the name of religion, are current among multitudes who call Christ, Lord and Master.

A Christian is one who has been "crucified with Christ," who has died with Him, been buried with Him, risen with Him, ascended with Him, and is seated "in heavenly places" with Him (Rom. 6:3-8; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:5-6; Col. 3:1-3). As such he reckons himself dead unto sin, but alive unto God (Rom. 6:11). As such he does not yield his members instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. But he yields himself unto God, as alive from the dead, and his members as instruments of righteousness unto God. (Rom. 6:13). As such he seeks the things which are above and sets his affection on things above, mortifying his members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence and covetousness, which is idolatry (Col. 3:1-5).

This newness is comprehensive, both in its exclusion of the evil and its inclusion of the good. It is summed up by the apostle in two things, "righteousness and

holiness." "Put off," says he, ". . . the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and . . . put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24, literally "righteousness and holiness of the truth," that is, resting on or springing out of the truth). The new man then is meant to be righteous and holy, inwardly and outwardly, before God and man, as respects law and gospel, and this through the truth. For as that which is false ("lying," v. 25) can only produce unrighteousness and unholiness, so "the truth" produces righteousness and holiness through the power of the Holy Ghost. Error injures; truth heals. Error is the root of sin; truth of purity and perfection.

It is then to a new standing or state, a new moral character, a new life, a new joy, a new work, a new hope, that we are called. And he who thinks that religion comprises anything less than this knows nothing yet as he ought to know. To that which man calls "piety," less may suffice; but to no religion which does not in some degree embrace these can the divine recognition be accorded.

These are weighty words of the apostle, "we are his workmanship."¹ Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things pertaining to us. Chosen, called, quickened, washed, sanctified and justified by God Himself, we are, in no sense, our own deliverers. The quarry out of which the marble comes is His; the marble itself is His; the digging and hewing and polishing are His. He is the Sculptor, and we the statue.

¹Eph. 2:10. See also Deut. 32:6; Ps. 100:3; 138:8; Isa. 43:21; 60:21; Rom. 9:21; Heb. 13:21; James 1:18.

"We are his workmanship," says the apostle Paul (Eph. 2:10). But this is not all. We are, he adds, "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." The plan, the selection of the materials, the model, the workman, the workmanship, are all divine. And though it doth not yet appear what we shall be, we know that we shall be "like him"—His image reproduced in us, Himself represented by us, for we are "renewed . . . after the image of him that created" us (Col. 3:10).

It is not, however, dead, cold marble that is to be wrought upon. That is simple work, requiring just a given amount of skill. But the remolding of the soul is unspeakably more difficult and requires far more complex appliances. The influences at work in opposing, internal and external, spiritual, legal, physical, are many; equally numerous must be the influences brought into play to meet all these, and carry out the design. The work is not mechanical, but moral and spiritual (physical in a sense, as dealing with the *nature* of things, but, more truly, moral and spiritual): Omnipotence is not mere unlimited physical power, operating, as upon inanimate matter, by mere intensity of volition. It is power which, with unlimited resources at command, exhibits its greatness by regulating its forthgoings according to moral circumstances, producing its greatest results by indirect moral influences, developing itself in conformity with law and sovereignty, and holy love on the one hand, and on the other with human guilt, creature responsibility and free volition. The complexities thus introduced are infinite, and the "variable quantities" are so peculiar and so innumerable that we can find no formula to help us in the solu-

tion of the problem. We get bewildered in speculating on the processes by which Omnipotence deals with moral beings, either in their sinfulness or their holiness.

Notice the *duality* or twofoldness of divine truth, the overlooking of which has occasioned much fruitless controversy and originated many falsehoods. Truth is, indeed, not *two-sided*, but *many-sided*, like a well-cut crystal. In a more general sense, however, it is truly *double*; with a heavenly and an earthly, a divine and a human side or aspect. It is at the line where these two meet that the greatest nicety of adjustment is required, so it is here that divergent theologies have especially come into conflict. The heavenward and the earthward aspect of truth must be carefully distinguished—the one fitting into the other, the one the counterpart of the other. God is absolute Sovereign; this is the one side. Man has volition of his own and is not a machine or a stone; that is the other. God chooses and draws according to the good pleasure of His will, yet He hinders no man from coming or from willing. God is the Giver of faith, yet “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17).² God worketh in us both to will and to do, yet He commands us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. It is God that sanctifies us, yet it is through “the truth” that we are

²Hence the difficulty of believing is not from the absence of proper faculties but from the derangement of these; and conversion is God's restoration of these to their original nature. Faith is not a foreign gem imported into the soul, distinct from all our original powers; it is simply the man believing, in consequence of his soul being set right by the Holy Spirit. But he believes and disbelieves in the same way as before. It is not the intellect or the mind or the affections that believe; it is the man, the whole man, the same whole man that formerly disbelieved. Very absurd and unphilosophical (not to say unscriptural) have been the questions raised as to the seat of faith, whether it is in the intellect or the will or the heart. Faith is the man believing, just as love is the man loving. In Rom. 10:9 Paul is not contrasting the heart with the mind, but with the mouth; in other words, the inner with the outer man.

sanctified (John 17:17). It is God that purifies (Titus 2:14), yet it is by faith that our hearts are purified (Acts 15:9). It is God that fills us with joy and peace, and yet this is "in believing." It is God that renews, yet we read, "make you a new heart" (Ezek. 18:31). The movements of man's faculties are not superseded by God, but assumed and regulated; the intellect is not overborne and deforced, but set free to work its true work truly.³ The "heavenly things" and "earthly things" are distinct, yet not separate; always to be viewed in connection with each other, yet not confused; for confusion here works mysticism, superstition and false doctrine. "There are also *celestial* bodies, and bodies *terrestrial*: but the glory of the *celestial* is one, and the glory of the *terrestrial* is another" (I Cor. 15:40). In every Bible truth there are two elements, the divine and the human; but the divine element is one thing, the human another. The theology that embodies most truth is that which knows how to recognize both of these without confusion, yet without isolation or antagonism, and which refuses to merge either the divine in the human or the human in the divine.⁴

Hence the necessity for confining ourselves to the Word, and the danger of introducing human metaphys-

³The more thoroughly we can study the Word of God, the better; and all critical helps are to be welcomed. Genuine scholarship, consecrated to the elucidation of the Word, is an accomplishment of no common price. Everything that brings our souls into full contact with "the Word," in its fullness and variety, so as to steep them in it, is to be greatly prized, as fitted to make us holier, more fruitful, and more spiritual men.

⁴We hear much of the divine and the human element in Scripture; nor is the expression amiss. Yet might we not rather say that the Bible is all human and yet all divine? It is perfect according to what God meant it to be, though we may note what we call "imperfections" in it. The mountains of earth, in their ruggedness, are perfect in their way, though they have not the artificial perfection of the statue or the temple. God has chosen that His Book and His world should resemble each other in that kind of perfection—a perfection which man appreciates in the landscape but depreciates in the Bible.

ics into questions connected with the spiritual change wrought on us. It is God that worketh; it is we who are wrought upon. And everything needful to be known in connection with this work is revealed in the divine record. We give this thought some prominence because of the tendency with many to magnify humanity and to undervalue the greatness of that change, which begins the Christian course and character. No elevation of natural taste, no infusion of religious or benevolent earnestness, no cultivation of the intellect, can fill up the description given us in the word of one "who fears God," and is the "called according to his purpose," "begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." And we urge this the more decidedly because, as is the beginning, so will be the middle and the end. A false idea or a diverging step at the outset may lead to a false religion throughout life, to an imperfect and superficial goodness, as one incorrect figure or sign in an equation falsifies both process and result. If the dislocated joint is not properly set, it will never work comfortably; and if the wound is merely skinned over, the disease may be taking its own way underneath, all the more fatally because it is supposed to be removed.

How the Holy Spirit operates in producing the newness of which we have spoken, we know not; yet we know that He does not destroy or reverse man's faculties. He renovates them all so that they fulfill the true ends for which they were given. As He does not make the hand the foot, nor the eye the ear, so He does not make the heart the intellect, nor the will the judgment. Each faculty remains the same in end and use as before, only purified and set properly to work. Nor does

the Holy Spirit supersede the use of our faculties by His indwelling. Rather, this indwelling makes these more serviceable, more energetic, each one doing his proper work and fulfilling his proper office while the whole man—body, soul and spirit—instead of being brought under mechanical constraint, is made more truly free. He is never more fully *himself* than when filled with the Holy Spirit. For the result of the indwelling of the “free Spirit” is liberty, not bondage nor the production of an artificial character.

Thus, though no violence is done to our being in regeneration, omnipotence is at work at every point. Our new being is not the result of a mechanical process, yet it is the product of a divine power. God claims it as a “creation” and as His own handiwork. “He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God” (II Cor. 5:5). Here the word “wrought” implies the thorough elaboration of some difficult piece of work. “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). These expressions indicate an operation which influences our “willing” as well as our “doing,” and this because of His being well pleased with Christ (Matt. 3:17) and with His own eternal design. “God’s tillage” (or husbandry, I Cor. 3:9) is His name for us when speaking as a Husbandman; “God’s building” (or fabric) is His name when speaking as an Architect. It is to *the image of His Son* that He has predestinated us “to be conformed . . . that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29), having “chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (Eph. 1:4).

It is, then, “unto holiness” that God is calling us (I

Thess. 4:7); that we should have our "fruit unto holiness" (Rom. 6:22); that our hearts should be stablished "unblameable in holiness" (I Thess. 3:13); that we should abound in "all holy conversation and godliness" (II Peter 3:11); that we should be "a holy priesthood" (I Peter 2:5); "holy in all manner of conversation" (I Peter 1:15); "called with an holy calling" (II Tim. 1:9); "holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4), presenting not our souls alone but our "bodies" as (not only a "living" but) a holy sacrifice to God (Rom. 12:1); remembering that these bodies are not merely "a sacrifice," but "the temple of the Holy Ghost" (I Cor. 6:19).

Holiness is likeness to God; to Him who is the holy One of Israel; to Him whom they laud in heaven as "holy, holy, holy" (Rev. 4:8). It is likeness to Christ; to "that holy thing" which was born of the Virgin; to Him who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26). It is not only disjunction from evil and from an evil world; it is separation unto God and His service. It is priestly separation for priestly service. It is distinctiveness such as that which marked the tabernacle and all its vessels, separation from every common use; separation by blood—"the blood of the everlasting covenant" (or that which it signifies, viz., death) being interposed between us and all common things, so that we are dead to sin but alive unto God and alive to righteousness, having died and risen in Him whose blood has made us what we are—saints, holy ones.

This holiness or consecration extends to every part of our persons. It fills up our being, spreads over our life, influences everything we are, or do, or think, or

speaking, or plan, whether it is small or great, and outward or inward, negative or positive. It influences our loving, our hating, our sorrowing, our rejoicing, our recreations, our business, our friendships, our relationships, our silence, our speech, our reading, our writing, our going out and our coming in—our whole man in every movement of spirit, soul and body. In the house, the sanctuary, the chamber, the market, the shop, at the desk, on the highway, it must be seen that ours is a consecrated life.

In one aspect, sanctification is an act, a thing done at once, like justification. The moment the blood touches us, that is, as soon as we believe God's testimony to the blood, we are "clean" (John 15:3), "sanctified," set apart for God. It is in this ceremonial or priestly sense that the word is used in the epistle to the Hebrews. For as in Romans justification takes us into the *forum* and deals with our legal standing, so in Hebrews sanctification takes us into the temple and deals with our priestly standing. As the vessels of the sanctuary were at once separated to God and His service the moment the blood touched them, so are we. This did not imply that these vessels required no daily ablution afterward; so neither does our consecration intimate that we need no daily sanctifying, no inward process for getting rid of sin. The initiatory consecration through the blood is one thing, and the continual sanctifying by the power of the Holy Ghost is another. The former is the first step, the introduction to the latter which is absolutely indispensable to any progress in the latter. Yet it does not supersede it, but makes it rather a greater necessity. To this very end are we consecrated by the blood, that we may be purified inwardly by the Holy Ghost.

He who would make the completeness of the former act as a substitute for the latter process, or a reason for neglecting it, has yet to learn what consecration means, and what is the import of the blood which consecrates, and for what end we were chosen in Christ and called by His grace (Eph. 1:5-7).

The thing which man calls sin may be easily obliterated or toned down into goodness. It deserved no expulsion from paradise, no deluge, no Sodom fire. It is a thing which the flames of Sinai greatly exaggerate, and of which Israel's history presents an exceptional picture. It is one of the mishaps of humanity, the enormity of which has been quite misreckoned by theologians, and the history of which, in Scripture, must be read with abatements and due allowances for Oriental coloring! It is not a thing for the judge, but for the physician; not a thing for condemnation, but for pity. It deserves no hell, no divine wrath, no legal sentence. It needs no atonement, no blood, no cross, no substitution of life for life. Mere incarnation as the expression of divine love to the unfortunate, and the intimation to the universe of God's all-comprehending fatherhood, and of Adamhood's union with God, will be sufficient. But that which God calls sin is something infinitely terrible, far beyond our ideas of misfortune and disease, something to which even Sodom and Sinai gave but faint expression. It is something which the law curses and the judge condemns; something which needs a righteous pardon, a divine Saviour, and an almighty Spirit. It is something which can destroy a soul and ruin a world, which can, from one single drop, overflow earth for six thousand years and fill hell eternally. It is that of whose hatefulness the blood, smoke and fire of

the altar speak. It is "exceeding sinful," whose wages is death, the first and second death, and of whose balefulness the everlasting darkness is the witness.

He who would know holiness must understand sin. He who would see sin as God sees it, and think of it as God does, must look at the cross and grave of the Son of God and must know the meaning of Gethsemane and Golgotha.⁵

The tendency is to underestimate sin and to misunderstand its nature. From the cross of Christ men strike out the very elements which intimate the divine opinion of its evil. And that accursed tree is not recognized as a condemnation of sin, but simply as an exhibition of self-surrender in a noble Sufferer. Sin is admitted to be an evil, greater or lesser according to circumstances; a hereditary poison, which time and earnestness will work out of the constitution; an unruly but inevitable appetite, which is to be corrected gradually by moral discipline and wholesome intellectual diet, rendered medicinal by a moderate infusion of the "religious element"; a sickening pain, sometimes in the conscience, sometimes in the heart, which is to be soothed by the dreamy mysticism which, acting like spiritual chloroform, dulls the uneasiness without touching its seat; this is all! Why a loving God should, for so slight and curable an evil, have given over our world for six thousand years, to such sorrow, pain, tears, weariness, dis-

⁵Am I bound to think of sin as God thinks? Most certainly. Have I no liberty of thinking otherwise? None. You may do so if you choose to venture, but the consequences are fearful, for error is sin. We are not bound to think as man thinks. In this respect we have entire liberty, not tradition, but free thought may be our formula here. But we are bound to think as God thinks—not in one thing but in everything. Woe be to him that presumes to differ from God, or reckons it a light matter to be of one mind with Him, or tries to prove that the Bible is inaccurate or unintelligible, or but half inspired, in order to release himself from the responsibility of receiving the whole truth of God, and afford him license to believe or disbelieve at pleasure, freed from the trammels of a fixed revelation.

ease and death as have overflowed it with so terrible a deluge, is a question which such a theory of evil leaves unanswered. Yet, such are the representations of sin with which we find a large amount of literature and religion penetrated. Humanity is struggling upward, nobly self-reliant! The race is elevating itself (for the Darwinian theory found its way into religion); and Christianity is a useful help in this process of self-regeneration, this development of individual constitutions by which perfection is to be reached at last and the kingdom won! Thus does many a prophet speak peace when there is none, bent on "healing the hurt" by the denial of its deadliness. A coming hour will show of what avail this calling evil good and good evil is now or will be in the great day of reckoning.

"Awake to righteousness, and sin not" (I Cor. 15: 34) is God's message to us. "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Peter 1:16). "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Rom. 12:1). "Purge out . . . the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump" (I Cor. 5:7). "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (II Tim. 2:19). "Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:12). "Be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (II Peter 3:14). "Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27). "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:14). "I beseech

you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (I Peter 2:11).

God is calling us from sin, then, in every sense and aspect. He warns us against it as exceeding sinful, the abominable thing which He hates and will avenge. He speaks to us as "shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin," carrying evil about with us and being filled with it and steeped in it. Not merely are we diseased and require medicine, or unfortunate and require pity, but we are guilty, under law, under sentence, dead in trespasses and sins, with inevitable judgment before us. He neither palliates nor aggravates our case. But He calmly tells us the worst, showing us what we are before calling us to be what He has purposed to make us. He is calling us in Christ Jesus His Son from all unholiness and unrighteousness, from all corruption, from all crooked ways, from all disobedience, from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26

Romans 6:4

II Corinthians 5:17

Galatians 6:15

Ephesians 4:24

Colossians 3:10

I Peter 2:2

II Peter 1:4