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Bible Treasury: Volume 12, Beginning of the Creation of God, The (3:14)

Rev. 3:14

Few things are more calculated to give stability and comfort to the heart of a saint in passing through this world than the conviction that, according to the counsels of God, he has been introduced in a divinely effective way into an entirely new order of things, and that he is eternally established therein upon immutable guarantees. So wonderful and so impressive is this discovery of the “new creation,” that most of those who have any adequate apprehension of it can probably remember what a moment it was to them, when, in all its blessedness, it broke in upon their souls, opening up a lovely and an incomparable scene, and revealing at the same time their own integral part in it, in the length of it and the breadth of it, without restriction and without reserve.

But one is painfully convinced that the subject is foreign to the minds of believers generally, forming no part of the creeds of churches, and unknown as a doctrine in the theology of Christendom; also, among ourselves, alas I many have never possessed themselves of it in its marvelous sublimity and precious import. What, we may ask, do such make of the last title of Christ to the church as a professing body on earth, the title specially taken by Him in view of these closing Laodicean days— “the beginning of the creation of God?” If Laodicea set forth a spurious and apostatizing form of Christianity, denying the power of godliness, such as in its incipient state at least is disclosing itself everywhere around us, and by means of which Satan is making the name of Christ as a football in the streets, the title which our sovereign Lord takes at such a moment is peculiarly refreshing to every loyal heart, indicating as it does a new glory inalienably re served to Him, and distinctly suggesting to our souls that sinless, cloudless, domain into which He has brought us even now, and where no unholy element can ever enter, nothing that defileth or worketh abomination, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Nothing, probably, can supply motive and power more blessedly than this truth for the threefold deliverance which the Lord loves to effectuate for us as believers—from self, from the world, and from Laodiceanism. Each of these spheres pertains to man as alive in the flesh, and is characteristically marked by the workings of the human will. How many dear children of God there are who have never known deliverance from these things, simply because they have never learned the truth of the new creation! They have known their deliverance as sinners from their sins, from guilt and from judgment, but they know not the further deliverance which grace effects for them as believers. Yet it is impossible that I can say with truth and candor, I know that I am part, a veritable part, of the new creation, until I am divinely assured that for faith every link has been broken that connected me judicially and morally with the first man, Adam, and the effete creation of which he was constituted the responsible head. If personally I have not got beyond being a responsible man in the flesh, in the very nature of things my will works, the flesh is allowed some liberty to act, I hold to the fact that the earth has been given to the children of men, and human religiousness is the consistent sequence of such mistaken reckonings of my bearings as a believer!

But the only innocent man of the old creation, set in a paradise of earthly blessing, sinned away his innocence and his Eden directly the hot breath of the enemy touched his cheek; thus he sank into a debased and fallen being, under sentence of death, with its premonitions, too, in every sorrow and suffering which befell him in the cursed scene he went forth to occupy, under pressure of sin and its penalties. Such was the first man in the first creation in the results of his responsibility.

Into that same creation, when morally it had ripened to the utmost, “in the consummation of the ages” (Heb. 9:26), came the second Man, the last Adam, God's Man; not set in a paradise, but in the blighted scene that the first of his race had turned that paradise into, and, as another has said, the only perfect man that ever trod this earth has died out of it!

What a character do these two Adams—the first and the Last—impart to the old creation! The first a man of the earth, created upright and innocent, and set in an Eden—yea, in a garden which the Lord God had planted for him—yet becoming disobedient and self-willed, bringing upon himself the catastrophe of a moral and physical ruin involving all his race. The second Man, from heaven, the untainted, the holy, and the true, in the same creation in grace, but being hated and refused, dying out of it, thus abrogating, and morally closing to faith, that creation forever, for all who have died to it with Him!

Rising, then, from among the dead by the glory of the Father, in the power of a new and endless life, He is “the beginning of the creation of God;” “the beginning” of that which will have no ending, the Head of that unchangeable order of things which grace loves to unfold to faith, and that will find its illumination and display in the glory forever!

Of the first creation we read, “all things were made by him;” and again, “All things were created by him and for him;” not so the second, for the formula of this is “in him.” It is “the creation of God” with Christ its Head, as the former was by Christ, with Adam its head. Accordingly, in Ephesians—the birth-book, or book of the generations of the new creation (Gen. 2:4)—we are said to be God's “workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before prepared that we should walk in them.” So that this now creation, and the works morally suited in character to it, are as truly as the first creation divinely formed and prepared. And, what is of deepest moment, they are altogether and exclusively in Christ in every respect. Thus we are chosen in Him, have redemption in Him; are made nigh, sealed, blessed, accepted, and seated in Him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, &c. (Eph. 1, et seq.) In the same epistle, too, we read, “Having put on the new [man], renewed into full knowledge, according to the image of him that has created him, wherein there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondsman, freeman, but Christ all things, and in all.” Clearly we see here the righteous title of Christ as sovereign Head of the new creation, and the same scriptures constitute our title-deeds to this inheritance in Him, in whom all its moral characteristics find full and blessed display.

Now in Rom. 6:11 we get the first mention of this new ground, “So also ye reckon yourselves dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” So in verse 23, “the wages of sin is death” —that is the old creation— “but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” —that is the new; for, be it observed, it is not only eternal life, but “in Christ Jesus our Lord,” which establishes it as this new, positive, order of blessing which is ours in association with Him, as “the beginning of the creation of God,” and which is perfectly exemplified only in the moral beauty of His own character. Then, in chapter 8, “No condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,” making clear our deliverance judicially from the curse of the first creation. In Adam is condemnation, in Christ Jesus none; because in the reckoning of faith we have died with Him out of the creation to which condemnation belonged, and for those who are His it is irrevocably abolished. “So if any one be in Christ [there is] a new creation.” (2 Cor. 5:17.) This is the positive side, as the other was the negative, and essentially and positively blessed it is. For, observe, it is not that this creation is a matter of hope, or a matter of attainment, but there it is, a positive present portion; we are actually upon the virgin soil, as it were, of a new creation— “in Christ, a new creation"; the words are forcible in their terseness, and sublime in their simplicity! “The old things have passed away;” this was indispensable, for it is impossible that we should have at the same time a standing in Adam to answer for ourselves, and a standing in Christ who has answered for us. It is the total relegation, morally, for faith of the former and abrogated creation, now no longer acknowledged, and carrying with it a final repudiation of the flesh and its activities, so that it has no longer a recognized existence, and even “Christ after the flesh” is not known.

What a thorough, what a perfect, deliverance is this! In fine, it is God's solution for us of every problem as to our relation morally to man's world. “I have died in the death of Christ” is the reckoning of faith, and in the same reckoning, “the old things,” in which the life of the first man found gratification, “have passed away,” be it the world, with its lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and pride of life; or be it the flesh itself, with all its nameless variety of ways of working; or be it man's religiousness, or will-worship; all that God traces to that parent root of self will, or lawlessness, He, in His supremacy over the evil, assures us that all has “passed away,” as between us and Him

One need scarcely say that, inasmuch as we have yet to wait for our glorified bodies, those we have belonging to the old creation, this leaves untouched every human relationship, and the natural affection belonging to it, as well as of moral duties the laboring for our bread, and submission to authority, all which things. God has specifically ordained for the scrupulous observance of the believer. And He has thus established, upon the highest ground, for those of the new creation just so much of what belongs to the old; which indeed constitutes the special title upon which these things are held or exercised by us. Seeing that now, according to faith's reckoning, we are not here in the way of nature, and therefore cannot speak of “rights,” but by the grace of Christ as sent into the world, one recognizes the gracious hand of our Father in ordaining for the need of His children the comfort to be found in (1) these natural relationships; (2) in honest labor; and (3) in submission to the powers that be: so much, and only so much, of the old creation is ours, and one delights to take it, not upon natural grounds, but upon the new title of the Father's consideration for His children. In the old creation one has to be peremptory with oneself in expressing its total abrogation to faith (save as stated), but in this “all things have become new, and all things are of God” (ver. 17, et seq.); its sphere, its nature, its character, its headship, its everything, is essentially new; and faith affirms its investiture with every privilege found therein, and reckons, not only that we are “dead to sin,” but in the same reckoning, that we are “alive to God in Christ Jesus,” and thus orders its way in traversing the old creation in the light and power of the new, where—pervading the whole scene—God in everything prevails, and all is altogether of Him! Seeing this, how peculiarly fitting is the term, “the creation of God;” God protecting it, too, by divinely enforced exclusion of whatever is not of Him, no trail of the serpent ever marring its pristine loveliness. For a brief moment all things were of God in the former one, but how soon evil entered, probably on “the opening day” of Eden, “when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy,” and a greater than they rejoiced “in the habitable parts of his earth.” Thus what was of Satan, through his victim, man, quickly became more manifest than what was of God, and this has developed more and more ever since, so that now those who have eyes to see find emblazoned upon the world's brow, “all things are of Satan and of man.” And how cheering when that discovery is made, and in the sense of our eternal emancipation morally from the old creation, to have divine assurance that in the new everything will be its converse, for there one can never meet with one iota of the things of man, or man's enemy; all, all, is of God.

Are there not serious grounds for concluding that the great failure among us is that of not sufficiently bringing ourselves practically into relation with the wondrous truths we hold? What, among other things, is greatly needed is that the truth of the new creation should be a controlling power, not so much for testimony, blessed and important as that is, but, primarily within our own souls, in separating us from things down here. We cannot surely acquire too much of truth, but too frequently we are not in the current of what we have accepted. This accounts for its not so imparting to us of its tone and character as would be the normal effect of such truth if cultivated in its unction, and submitted to in its power. When Paul records his rapture into the third heaven, how beautifully does he take his new creation place as “a man in Christ!” In that supreme moment in his history he lost all his reckonings as to the old creation; even the question of whether in the body or out of the body, he could only refer to God; but his place in the new creation could not be more clearly asserted.

With what remarkable vigor and pungency does he also write to the Galatians: “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.” (Gal. 6:14, 15.) In what a superb manner are the world, and the flesh, and its religiousness brushed out of the way, that the new creation may stand prominently forth in a supremely salient style.

If we now turn to John 20, we see Him who is also “the Amen, the faithful and true witness,” emphatically as “the beginning of the creation of God.” “Touch me not,” He says to the weeping Magdalene; the tears and the touch alike belong to the old creation, and have no place now. He knows no man after the flesh; His mother and his natural brethren disappear from the scene: to all this He has died, and in His death parted company with all its associations; the favored home at Bethany even He visits no more! And everything was over too for His disciples at the moment; house-less, homeless, and orphans indeed!

But hark, “Go tell my brethren I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God!” Magnificent word for faith—the new-born message of a risen Lord and Savior! The corn of wheat which had died is bursting forth its prolific fruit, and this resurrection word on the first day of the week is as the shout of a king, a clarion note of victory, as the Conqueror enters triumphantly upon the new ground He has won, and into which it is His prerogative, as also His peculiar joy, to conduct His own along with Himself!

And if so, shall there not be new relations as well as new conditions? Assuredly, and thus divine relationships are now revealed, and eternally established. They were brethren to one another before it is granted, but now, says He, “My brethren,” thus bringing them into relationship

with Himself; and now also are they constituted children, whose Father is His Father, and whose God is His God! Following this, “Peace unto you;” and then He breathed on them, expressly and impressively identifying them with Himself, and they received in the Holy Ghost the power of His resurrection-life, or life abundantly, as had the Lord God in the first creation breathed into the nostrils of Adam the breath of lives; by which man became a living soul.

How beautiful the order of this as presenting the characteristic features of the new creation! “Touch Me not” closes every thought of the old thing. Then (1.) He is there in the dignity and majesty of a Conqueror— “the beginning of the creation of God,” the new creation which He opens up for the first time in His own person, and into which, on this “opening day,” He carries them in spirit along with Himself (2.) New relationships are now formed for them, they are for the first time His brethren avowedly, and have His Father also as theirs! (3.) He greets them with “Peace,” the very atmosphere of this new and blessed scene—unbroken, unending peace (4.) The Holy Ghost is the power of His life imparted to them in resurrection for this new regime of blessing.

Thus did He send His disciples forth; the old creation had been abrogated in His death, the new is inaugurated in His resurrection, and they are to go forth as those who have been inducted of Himself into all its unique privileges, and are invested with all the dignity He imparts to it, to represent Him who had been refused in His own person here.

How far have we accounted this portion to be ours? How far have we realized that we are identified with Him who is “the beginning of the creation of God?” That He has in that character formed new and abiding relationships into which He has introduced us? That He has, in the precious and tender love of His heart, greeted us with “Peace” as we crossed the threshold of this new creation? And that Himself has given us of His risen life, in the power of the Holy Ghost, that we might go forth in all the wonderful elevation of spirit and tender grace of heart that belongs to His own character, “always bearing about in the body the dying [or death-process] of the Lord Jesus, that the life [or life-estate] also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal bodies?”

May He deepen in our souls the recognition of all that necessarily follows from the fact, that in these days of defection and declension, we, through grace, have been eternally associated in the same life, the same scene, and the same character of blessing, with Him who, as first-born from among the dead, is “the beginning of the creation of God!” R.

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