

I

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 was 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, as being, of all books, not only the most true in thought, but 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. Most hateful also must that old life of ours be to Him, when, in order to abolish it, He delivers up His Son; and most dear must we be in His sight when, in order to rescue us from the old life, and make us partakers of the new, He brings forth all the divine resources of love and power and wisdom, to meet the exigencies of a case which would 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, 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 in our day 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' (1 Pet. 2:2), 'new creatures' (Gal. 6:15), a 'new lump'

(1 Cor. 5:7), a 'new man' (Eph. 2:15), doers of 'a new commandment' (1 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' (2 Pet. 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).

It is no outer thing, made up of showy moralities and benevolences, or picturesque rites and graceful routine of devotion, or sentimentalisms bright or sombre, 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, and truer, and more genial, than that which is called deep, and 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 as 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. 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;...put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness' (Eph. 4:22-24), literally 'righteousness and holiness of the truth,' that is, resting on 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 ('the lie' 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 is that 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. 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.

'We are his workmanship,' says the apostle. 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 in knowledge 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; and

1 Ephesians 2:10 'His poem,' the production of His wisdom, love, and power; that which He and only He can make, Psalm 100:3. A house should be worthy of the builder, and a poem of him from whom it comes.