

# New Creation

F. B. Hole.

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As we have considered in detail most of the features that go to make up the "great salvation" which has reached us, we have hitherto been able to point out how each is designed of God to meet and overcome some particular result or penalty of sin. But now as we reach the last, this feature has to be absent. We have left "new creation" until the last as it seems to be the ultimate thing to which the Gospel conducts us, but at the same time it is evident that God is going to establish it, not because it meets some definite need **on our side**, but because it meets the need of His holy nature — it is the thing which is suitable **to Himself**.

The havoc wrought by sin has been such that we **needed** forgiveness, justification, reconciliation, redemption, salvation, sanctification; and all these are brought to us in the Gospel as the fruit of the work done for us by our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. Equally did we **need** the new birth, the quickening, the gift of the Spirit; and the first two of these are ours by the work of the Holy Spirit in us, while His indwelling follows the other two, and is based upon the work done for us. We could hardly say however in the same way that we **needed** to be newly "created in Christ Jesus;" that wondrous event has taken place to satisfy the heart of God.

As in other cases so again here, we can go back to the Old Testament and discover prophecies which foreshadow the full truth, which can only be discovered in the New. For instance, we read, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth" (Isaiah 65: 17): yet when we examine the context we soon see that what is predicted in Revelation 21: 1-5, is hardly contemplated in the passage, for the prophet goes on to speak of the new conditions that will prevail in Jerusalem in the millennial age, when death may possibly take place; whereas in the scene pictured in Revelation death is gone for ever.

The fact seems to be, that just as with new birth and quickening, so again here, God introduces His thought; but in a limited way as befitted a dispensation in which His government of the earth was the prominent thing. In this Gospel age, life and incorruptibility have been fully brought to light, and in connection with that His full thought and action, both as regards the work of Christ for us and the work of the Spirit in us, has been manifested. The New Testament does not stop at the millennial age but carries us into the eternal state.

The first mention of new creation in the New Testament is in 2 Corinthians 5: 17, where we find

that every one "in Christ" is brought into it. It is "new creation" in this verse rather than "a new creature," and the language of Paul here appears to be very vigorous and emphatic. He omits the verb altogether, and exclaims, "So that, if anyone in Christ — new creation!" as one who exults in this glorious fact. Nothing short of this is involved in our being in Christ Jesus.

That the believer is in Christ Jesus and beyond all condemnation is made very plain in the Epistle to the Romans, but we are not carried on to the full implication of that fact until we reach this scripture. We are **in** Him because we are **of** Him, and this by an act of God Himself. This comes very definitely to view when we reach Ephesians 2: 10, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus." The old creation of which we read in Genesis 1, was God's workmanship and created by the Son. It was created **by** Him, but not created **in** Him, as the new creation is, at least as regards ourselves. Sin was able to gain an entrance into the old creation, but it will never enter the new, which derives its life and nature from Christ.

The passage in 2 Corinthians 5 shows that there is a very close connection between reconciliation and new creation. The former is one of the fruits of the work of Christ for us; the latter the fruit of God's work in us. Yet of course the act of God in making "Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin," with which the chapter closes, is the basis on which rests new creation no less than reconciliation. There must be the complete meeting of every liability and the whole state characterizing the old creation, if the new creation is to be introduced on a righteous basis.

There is no patching up of the old things in connection with new creation. They pass away, and new things which are wholly "of God" are introduced. Once even Christ Himself stooped into old creation circumstances, when He was amongst us "after the flesh," though His flesh was holy and without the least taint of sin. Now, in His risen glory, he has entered into new creation circumstances, and from Him as Head the new creation proceeds.

The main point in this passage however seems to be the subjective effect of new creation in ourselves. We know Christ in a new way, all things are become new to us, our lives are diverted into a totally new channel, so that we live not unto ourselves but unto Him — all this, because of God's new creation work wrought in us. As an illustration we might take the Apostles, as they **were** in the Gospel and as they **became** in the Acts. Between the two came the new creation in-breathing of the Last Adam, of John 20: 22, and the indwelling of the Spirit, of Acts 2. Formerly they knew Him after the flesh; now their knowledge of Him is according to the Spirit of God. There was undoubtedly a change in **His** condition, but we must not overlook the great change in **their** condition.

This side of things is emphasized by the fact that we are said to "know . . . **no man** after the flesh." Now with the great mass of men there is no change at all in **their** condition, the only change is **in ourselves**. It is because we are a new creation in Christ that we know everyone in a new way. We look upon all men and everything with new creation eyes — if we may so put it.

What we have just been looking at is the new creation mind found in the saints; whereas Ephesians 2: 10 brings us to new creation **practice** and **action**. We are created "unto good works," in which God purposes we should walk. James, in his second chapter, speaks not of good works but of the works of faith; that is of work energized by **faith**, and consequently manifesting **it** before the eyes of men. Here we do have **good** works; that is, works that express the goodness of God. Being God's workmanship, created by Him in Christ Jesus, we have the inward capacity to do works of this exalted character, and the obligation to do them rests upon us. These good works were supremely and perfectly done by Christ, and as created in Christ, we are to walk in them — works of that order, though of course not in the same measure as He.

What we find in Ephesians 4: 21-24, and in Colossians 3: 10, is in keeping with this. The former passage agrees with the latter, for the New Translation renders it, "Your **having** put off.... and **being** renewed.... and your **having** put on;" that is, in both passages the great transaction is viewed as one **accomplished** in every believer. Formerly we belonged to the old order of man and wore his corrupt character: now we belong to the new order of man and wear his character, marked by holiness, righteousness, truth. It is not something merely external, for the very **spirit** of our **minds** is renewed. The passage in Colossians corroborates this, though it has distinctive differences. It also speaks of the new man as **created**.

It is because we have put on this new creation character that we are to behave as indicated in the context of both passages. The things to be utterly repudiated, and the things to be cultivated, are all determined by the character we wear by God's new creation act.

We may go one step further, and in the light of Ephesians 2: 15, speak of the church as God's new creation production. By the Gospel, God is calling an election out of both Jew and Gentile, and of the two He is making "one new man." The word translated in that verse "make" is the word for "create." That one new man is God's creation by the Lord Jesus, for He is the Actor in that verse. And He creates this one new man, which is virtually the church, "in Himself." So we may speak of the church, as well as the individual saint, as a new creation in Christ Jesus.

Lastly, in Revelation 21: 1-6, we are permitted to know that there are to be new heavens and a new earth, and amidst these new creation scenes the new creation church will have her eternal home, as the tabernacle of God, when He dwells with men.

### **Are we right, in dealing with the new creation, if we give the same literal and full meaning to the word "create," that we give to it when dealing with the creation of Genesis 1?**

We believe that we are. Any difficulty that is felt about it probably springs from the fact that as yet God's new creation work has not touched any of the material things round about us. It has so far only affected **us** spiritually: we are renewed in the **spirit** of our minds. It is quite certain we are not yet newly created as to our bodies, and that probably accounts for the scripture saying, "renewed in the spirit of your mind," rather than, "renewed in your mind;" for the mind cannot be altogether dissociated from the brain, which is a part of the body. When we are in our glorified bodies, in the likeness of Christ, and dwelling in the new heavens and new earth, we shall see that no word short of "creation" will meet the case. But what we are to-day in a spiritual way, as the fruit of God's workmanship, is exactly of that order. God says it, and we may happily believe it.

### **The fact that we have been created "in Christ Jesus" has been mentioned. Are we to deduce from this the stability of the new creation?**

We certainly are: but more than that also, we believe. Since it is created in Him, it will be as stable as He is; but also it will bear His character in other things. It originates in Him, for He is the Source whence it springs. He is "the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead" (Col. 1: 18), "the Beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. 3: 14). Even the inanimate things of the new heavens and the new earth will spring from Him, yet we are created in Him in a deeper sense. He has entered heaven in His risen Manhood, and we now are men of His order, participating in His life, "all of one" with Him, as we are told in Hebrews 2: 11. Hence the church is His body, for in it corporately He is to be expressed. The new creation will be expressive of Christ and as stable as He.

**In Hebrews 8: 13. it is pointed out that the fact of a new covenant being introduced makes the first covenant old, and the deduction is, "Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." Can we reason in the same way in regard to the new creation?**

We believe so; with this modification perhaps, that not all the heavens created in Genesis 1, have been touched by sin, consequently not all will be newly created. All that has been spoiled by sin is old and ready to vanish away. Nothing less than new creation will meet the case, just as nothing short of it meets our spiritual needs to-day, because all has to be lifted to the level of the Divine thoughts. In principle it is so to-day, as we see in Galatians 6: 15. The Galatians were being diverted to the ordinance of circumcision as practised under the law. But any such ordinance or other fleshly observance is entirely beside the mark to-day. It might be all right so long as men "in Adam" were recognized as having a standing before God; but "in Christ Jesus" neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any account; a new creation alone avails. Because of what God is, once a thing has been touched and tarnished by sin, it has to go and a new creation take its place.

**Are the new creation scenes predicted in the opening part of Revelation 21, to be distinguished from the scenes of millennial blessedness, of which the prophets have so largely spoken?**

The two scenes are clearly distinguished in that chapter in Revelation. Verses 1-8, deal with the eternal state, whilst verses 9-27, gives us a more detailed description of the heavenly Jerusalem in its relations with the millennial earth. Hence in the second section we read about nations and kings of the earth, and walls and gates which shut out any defiling thing. This supposes of course that there are defiling things which might enter. In the earlier part all sin and sorrow and death are gone from God's fair new creation, and all evil lies under God's judgment, segregated in its own appointed place.

Nations, too, only exist as the result of God's judgment upon men at Babel; so they disappear, and God will revert to His original thought and just dwell with men. He will dwell as their God in holy freedom because righteousness will then be dwelling, as 2 Peter 3: 13 tells us, and not merely reigning, as it will in the millennial age. As long as there is anything to challenge its supremacy it must reign: when the last challenge is met, it will dwell in undisturbed repose.

**Will all differences between men disappear in the new creation?**

It may be that on the new earth they will: as to that we cannot dogmatize. But at all events there will be the difference between those whose seat is to be in the heavens and those on the earth. In that day the holy city, symbolic of the church, will be the dwelling-place of God.

Again, in 1 Corinthians 15, where we find that already we have been quickened by the Last Adam, we also learn that His great work with us will reach its completion when we "bear the image of the Heavenly." It is a most marvellous fact that we, who belong to the church, shall enter those new creation scenes bearing the image of our Head even as regards our bodies. We do not find this asserted of others, besides the heavenly saints.

It is quickening which is actually mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15, though we have referred to it in connection with new creation. This rather raises the question as to what is the relationship between the two things; and indeed between all the things we have considered. How can we put them all together?

There are things connected with our most holy faith which are quite beyond our powers, and this

is one of them. We contemplate our Lord Jesus, we confess His Deity, whilst recognizing His true Humanity, yet our minds are not equal to the task of explaining how both go together. We see the sovereignty of God plainly taught in Scripture, and the responsibility of man taught with equal plainness, yet how exactly to adjust them together we know not. This inability of ours does not disturb us. We expect it, because the faith, which we believe, comes from God. Could we bring it all within the compass of our little minds we should thereby prove it was not Divine.

Now how can we put together all the things we have been surveying in cursory fashion? We may do so in part, but we cannot do so in any complete way, especially when we deal with the work wrought in us. The attempt to do so in the past has often led to unprofitable contentions, as might be expected. We repeat that we can no more see all round the subject at the same moment than we can see all four sides of a house at once.

The truth is one; of that we are sure. It is given to us in parts; and as we trace out these parts in Scripture we are instructed and profited. If we fail to distinguish things that differ, and lump them all together in a kind of indiscriminate mass, we lose a great deal. On the other hand if we divorce and divide the various parts we soon run into erroneous notions, as also we do if we attempt to work out theories as to the order in which they take place.

Without dividing we distinguish, and thereby understand more fully how rich and varied is the great salvation which has reached us. And the more we do understand, the more our hearts are moved in praise and thanksgiving to God.