

Creational and Racial Union

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the profound implications of being a new creation in Christ, emphasizing spiritual union, transformation, and the corporate nature of the Church's mission.

Scripture: Genesis 2:17, Matthew 11:28, Romans 8:17, 1 Corinthians 15:45-49, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 4:1-2, Galatians 6:15, Ephesians 2:10, Ephesians 3:9, 1 Peter 2:9

Topics: "New Creation", "Spiritual Inheritance"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the profound transformation that occurs when one is in Christ, highlighting the concept of a new creation that transcends racial and creational boundaries. He explains that this union with Christ is not merely a change in status but a complete reconstitution of one's being, enabling a spiritual relationship with God. Sparks illustrates the journey of faith as a process of learning and adapting to a new spiritual reality, akin to navigating a foreign culture. He cautions that while believers are legally heirs of God's promises, they must actively pursue spiritual growth to fully inherit their divine rights. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a deeper understanding of one's identity in Christ and the responsibilities that come with it.

Transcript

2. Creational and Racial Union

"If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17, R.V. margin). (Note the translation, a correction and an improvement upon the King James' Version.)

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

"To make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God who created all things" (Eph. 3:9).

"For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation" (Gal. 6:15, R.V. margin).

"So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the

earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (notice the marginal alternative to the last clause - "let us also bear the image of the heavenly") (1 Cor. 15:45-49).

In this sequence of aspects of union with Christ we are following the natural order: that is, that which is natural first, and then that which is spiritual. We are passing by way of figure and representation in the natural to the spiritual meaning. That is the Divine order; the Lord indicates that the function of everything is to lead on to the spiritual. And, of course, in this matter of CREATION, we are keeping MAN particularly in view. I want to be as simple and as practical as possible, and I am quite sure that no one will be offended at that.

We begin this matter of creational and racial union with Christ by reminding ourselves that God had a pattern for creation, and worked to a pattern; and that pattern for the whole creation was a Man, and that Man was His Son, the Archetype of all created things. If man had not rebelled and fallen and departed from the way of the projected pattern, sooner or later - we are not able to say how long it would have taken - but sooner or later, probably sooner, he would have arrived at that dimension. He would have been conformed to the image of God's Son, he would have "conformed to type," he would have come to the Archetype of all things. But he did rebel and depart from that way. Redemption comes in to recover him to the way, and, just as it was BEFORE the necessity for redemption, so IN redemption, God's Son is the pattern.

Now that is quite a simple statement, and very easily understood; it will not tax you a little bit. But there is much more in it than that. It is what that type is, that Archetype. That, of course, represents all the difficulty for us; but it is the whole work of the Spirit of God to perfect the creation according to the original pattern.

Now, how can we put that in a way which can be understood? Let us put it firstly in a very simple form. When we, who have never done so before, pass from the Western world to the Far East, having never met anyone from the Far East, having never read anything about the Far East, but are suddenly - that is, as quickly as modern transport can take us - are suddenly taken from our world into that world, we find that we have got to learn everything all over again. Everything is done exactly the opposite way round to the way we do things. All the thinking is in just the opposite direction. All the acting is just contrary to all our training and constitution. It is so completely another world, in mentality, in conduct and habit and procedure and standards and values, and everything else, that we really do not know where we are. We are completely, as we say, at sea. We have to stop. It takes some people half a lifetime or all a lifetime really to get the mentality, to think the other side of the world, to adjust, to adapt. It is said to be someone of very considerable gift who can be in every way one of those people, without a flaw, even after many years.

But you could take it further than that. I am hesitating as to whether I ought to say it, but there was a time in my life when I used to go to theatres - many years ago! I remember that there was a play called "The Man from Mars." It was a very humorous thing, and I have often thought about it since. A man from Mars came to our earth, looked at everything. "What is this?" "Why do you do it like that?" "That is not how we do it." So he went round everything, comparing; everything was so strange, and most of it so ridiculous, so foolish; he went round putting everything right according to Mars. You see what I am getting at.

The Lord Jesus Christ is such a Being, such a Man, as has never been in this world before. He is in Himself the personal embodiment of a world which is another world from ours; and when we come into Christ, we are utter strangers to everything that belongs to Him, and we have got to learn everything all

over again. Our thinking is all wrong, all out of the way, it is all different - our standards, our ideas, our judgments, our calculations, our expectations: yes, the whole constitution is another. In everything He is different, and the new creation is like that. Notice - "If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation: the old things are passed away behold, they are become new. But all things are of God." That is the difference.

So that becoming a Christian is something far more than adopting a set of doctrines and teachings and theories and ideas, practices and forms. It is coming into a new world, a strange, to us faraway, world, for which we have naturally no capacities at all. They all have to be given to us, and we have to start all over again, learning new ideas.

Well, that may sound simple, but it is not simple in practice. We stumble scores of times every day over that. Christ offends us - and He alone knows how we offend Him. It is like that every day. That is the Christian life - being transformed. It begins with this new creation, this racial union, this coming into, not the second Adam, but the last Adam. Everything is finished in Him, there will not be a third, there will not be any more. This is final.

As I speak, without premeditating, I recall a legend - the legend of St. Christopher, as he was called. Christopher was an immensely powerful man, physically, and his one quest in life was to find someone more powerful and to overcome him - or at any rate, to find someone more powerful than himself. He heard of someone more powerful and went and sought him out, but found that he was nothing remarkable. But this someone noted his quest and told him of the devil, of Satan, as being far, far more powerful than he. So Christopher went and found Satan, and he found him to be so much more powerful than himself that he sold himself to be the servant of Satan; and he faithfully served Satan as his much more powerful master for some time: until one day someone mentioned the name of Jesus Christ - and Satan fled for his life in terror.

And Christopher said, "Well, there is evidently someone much more powerful than Satan; I am going to find him." So he went in quest of this One, Jesus Christ, and he came to a hermit and told him what he was after, and the hermit said, "If you go and act as ferryman across this river, taking people and their burdens over and giving yourself to humble service like that, you will find Jesus Christ." So away went Christopher to the riverside, and built himself a little hut, and day and night he took the ferry over, and the people and their burdens, in calm and storm.

After some time he heard the cry of a little child, a little boy, and the little boy wanted to go over the river. Well, said Christopher to himself, this is not worth the ferry, so he hoisted the boy up onto his shoulder and stepped into the river. It was not long before the wind came up and the river became almost tempestuous - but something else was happening. This boy was getting intolerably heavy, at every step the boy got heavier, and at last poor Christopher was beaten, just beaten, by the weight of this boy on his shoulders. He had never known anything like it, "Who are you, boy?" he gasped. "You are going to drown me!" And the boy said, "I am Jesus Christ." And Christopher said, "You are my Master!" And of course the legend says that the boy baptized him in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and from that time he was the bond-slave of Jesus Christ and became St. Christopher.

Well, it is legend, but I think it serves my purpose. You take on Jesus Christ and you are taking on more than you know. You may take Him on lightly. You may take on the Christian life glibly. You may think it is child's play; but it will not be long before you have something to cope with that is more than your match. You have a universe upon your shoulders, and unless Jesus Christ gets inside, you will go down. You see

the point. Oh yes, it is very easy to sign a decision card and say you will be a Christian, to act under some emotional persuasion and call yourself Christ's. You take on Jesus Christ, and you will find before long you cannot carry Him, He will have to carry you. He is far too great for us. That is what we are finding every day. He is too much for us, unless we have as complement the assurance of being in Christ, which is Christ in you.

But that is just it. Christ is not only the type, the figure, of the creation - He is the life of the creation. He embodies the creation as well as the creation embodying Him.

Having said that, let us now consider Creational and Racial Union under the following headings: Constituted; Conditioned; Cautioned.

(a) Constituted

We pass from Adam as type to Christ the Antitype, and then to ourselves in Christ. Adam was constituted pre-eminently with capacity for Divine relationship. Union with God in Christ is spiritual. The medium of union with God in Christ is the human spirit. Man was constituted with a spirit because God is Spirit, and the human spirit was that which made it possible for man to have union and communion with God. The link between the human spirit and God the Father, in the Son, is the Holy Spirit. Union with Christ is all a spiritual matter. That is why we have become a new spiritual being. In the last Adam, in Christ, the union with the Father and the communion with the Father were perfect, but this was by reason of His human spirit - I am speaking of Him now in incarnation - by reason of His human spirit and the link of the Holy Spirit: so that His union with the Father was a perfect union. He lived, walked, spoke, acted and laid down His life, in perfect oneness with the Father. Everything was received by Him from the Father: He even had to obtain from His Father authority to lay down His own life. The oneness was complete, but it was wholly spiritual.

Now, in our coming into Christ, into the new creation - our human spirit being quickened and renewed and restored to its place, and we receiving the Holy Spirit to be the link between our renewed spirit and Christ - relationship with God is immediately established. All that sense of God's remoteness has gone. One of the blessings of conversion or regeneration, of coming into Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit, is that the sense of God being far off, remote, inaccessible, has all gone. He is near, very near, very real. Union has been established.

And then by an established spiritual union, that very constitution - that is, a renewed spirit linked with the Lord by the Holy Spirit - becomes the basis of an entirely new world, that world being Christ: a new world, a new creation, a spiritual world, a spiritual cosmos, where we begin again to learn, to learn, to learn from infancy everything as new. Much harm is done to the spiritual life by not recognizing that. Christianity has become such a system, such a way. "Get saved; get busy!" - and that is Christianity, and much of our phraseology has taken the meaning of an earthly system. For instance, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" has become a bit of liturgy, and its meaning as heaven's way of doing God's will has been lost to view. The Holy Spirit, if He had His way, would be causing us to act as we would not act naturally, and speak as we would never speak naturally, and think as we would never think naturally, as though in another world altogether - often to our own amazement that we should ever talk or think like that. That is not the way we are made. Yes, but we are being made all over again; it is another world, this creation which is in Christ Jesus. I think I need not labor that further.

Everything is now spiritual. Do remember that sin is fundamentally spiritual because it touches relationship with God. Relationship with God is that which is spiritual. Sin touches relationship with God. Sin is against the design of man's being: so that when we sin we are defeating the very design of our being: we are working against our very destiny from God's standpoint. We were designed for fellowship with God. We were designed for the kingdom of the heavens - but do not make that geographical: the kingdom of the heavens is a spiritual order - and sin being spiritual works against the very design of our being, and we know it. We know that it touches the very matter of relatedness to God.

Sin is not doing this and that and that. You cannot call sin by a whole assortment of names. That only comes out in a world like this. You say - This is sin and that is sin. Well, you may be right, but you have to get behind all these names, which are names for aspects of sin. Sin is one thing; sins are another. Sin, which is behind all sins, is that which touches our relatedness to God; which touches the very design of our being and defeats the end for which we have a being and were constituted. Sin is spiritual and salvation is spiritual. The Christian is a spiritual person, in this sense - that relationship with GOD is established, and everything that is according to GOD is brought into view, and the whole system of the kingdom of the heavens becomes the Holy Spirit's sphere and basis of activity for our transformation.

Have I gone out of the realm of simplicity? I think you can follow that. This kind of Christianity is very different from the Christianity that is current, that is popular, which is - You must do this and that to be a Christian. It is something far removed from that! Now let us pass on.

(b) Conditioned or Probationed

After Adam was constituted pre-eminently with a capacity for Divine relationship, he was put on probation, and this with a view to graduation. What would be the graduation if he successfully passed his probation? His graduation would be transfiguration. I said a little earlier that sooner or later that is what would have happened. Adam would have been transfigured, which means he would have been glorified. He was on probation with a view to graduation. You see, the course of the Son of Man is the course of every child of God. There is a birth by the operation of the Holy Spirit. That is the Son of Man, that is every child of God. There is a baptism into the will of God, because, whatever else baptism may mean, over it all is this - an utter committal, abandonment, separation, unto the will of God; dead to all else, alive only to the will of God. The Son of Man took that position, and you and I are born again with that in view, with that before us - of being dead to the one race, and alive in the other only unto God. Then, on that ground, He received the Spirit: coming up out of the water the heavens were opened and the Spirit rested upon Him. The receiving of the Spirit should be the course of every child of God.

And then how strangely He was led right into the probation, right into the condition, as though now everything was prepared: He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. The Son of Man was on probation, being tested, tried, not only in the wilderness for forty days and nights but for some considerable time afterward, being assailed along every line along which He could be assailed, from hell, from the world, from friends: under test, on probation - but triumphant. It is not without significance that it was at the farthest outward point of His journeys, from which He turned and went straight to the Cross, that He was transfigured, as though that were the goal of this Man. The end of this Man was the transfiguration. The rest, up to Jerusalem, was for us, not for Himself. It was for us, to bring us into that same way - the birth, the baptism, the receiving of the Spirit, the triumph of faith, the transfiguration. We shall speak about the transfiguration when we reach the consideration of Consummated Union.

(c) Cautioned

Adam was warned, was admonished, was made aware that there was a choice of two ways that he might take, a choice of two decisions that he might reach; and he was cautioned, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). Cautioned - with a view to what? Oh, not only to personal transfiguration, but to inheritance; constituted with a view to Divine relationship, conditioned with a view to transfiguration, cautioned with a view to spiritual ascendancy unto inheritance. You can call it world dominion, if you like. That is what it was for the first Adam, that is what it was for the last Adam, and that is what it is for the Church - dominion together with Christ, in union with Christ.

But we are on probation now. We have been born of the Spirit, we have been baptized into the will of God, we have received the Holy Spirit. We are on probation, not with a view only to personal transfiguration, but on probation for dominion. We are up against things, and things are up against us. The enemy has not been annihilated; the Lord has left him. Just as He allowed the enemy to get into the garden, just as He never acted to prevent him from coming to Adam, so He has done nothing to keep the enemy out of our way or to keep us out of his way. He has allowed him a tenure, and He permits him to assail us and drive us and test us along every line - with one thing in view. It is not our personal salvation or our personal glorification. It is that we may be with Christ in dominion.

The letter to the Ephesians makes that perfectly clear. That is, indeed, the object of the letter to the Ephesians. It is not primarily an individual thing; it is only individual in so far as the individual forms a part of the corporate. It is the Church that is in view there, and the Church is in the heavenly warfare because the Church is "his Body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all," and it is the Church which is to be the vehicle and the vessel of His universal dominion. Do remember, when Satan assails and the Lord lets him "have a go" at you, and you have a bad time, that it is not just some personal matter, some individual affair. It is related to this vast intention of God to make the Church His city of government for the universe throughout the ages of the ages. That is what is in view, and it is not at us, it is at the Christ, through us, that the enemy is striking. It is that union, that oneness, as set forth in this Ephesian letter, that is the occasion of it all. Satan knew very well that, if he struck the individual, he struck the rest; if he captured the individual, he captured the rest; if he dethroned Christ from the individual, he dethroned Christ from the race and enthroned himself: and he did so, and was called the prince of this world. But we have seen the Divine reaction to that, in bringing men back to heaven spiritually and going on with the purpose in justification, as though nothing had happened, going on with it with men of faith; but it is a tested faith, a tried faith. We know that. It is all to bring us to spiritual ascendancy and victory; into the inheritance, into dominion.

Now I close by reminding you, as I shall do in other connections, that inheritance is the key to the conflict with Christ, and the Church. And heirship has two sides. It has a legal and a spiritual aspect. We are legally heirs when we are born anew. When we are in the new creation we are legally heirs by birth, but there is a very great deal of difference between the state of legal heirship and the act of spiritually inheriting. The Bible makes that distinction clear, in this connection as in the others, as we shall see. The letter to the Galatians is built around this very thought. "So long as the heir is a child, he... is under guardians and stewards until the term appointed of the father" (Gal. 4:1,2). And then the letter goes on - If children, then sons: we are all sons, by faith, that is to say, legally, even if we are not actually and spiritually in possession of the meaning and value of sonship, that is, of the inheritance. We are legally inheritors by birth, but we become actually possessors of the inheritance by spiritual growth.

Is that clear? Well, if it is not clear in teaching, ask yourself whether it is clear in practice and experience. How many Christians are enjoying the inheritance, are possessing their inheritance, are even progressing towards the possession of their inheritance? Many are not, yet they are children of God, legally heirs. Between being a legal heir and becoming a spiritual inheritor, something may happen so that you miss the inheritance. The New Testament is all the time telling us that we have a great inheritance - then do not miss it; we have great rights - then do not let them go; we are called into something from eternity - but be sure you "make your calling and your election sure." It is the difference between our legal status and our spiritual state.

So it is in this new creation. We have to do our learning spiritually; we have got to pass from the one realm to the other progressively; we have got to battle, to enter into the conflict, not for our salvation, but for our inheritance in Christ. We have to be tested, tried, not so that we shall prove ourselves good Christians, but so that we may learn what spiritual ascendancy is, and thus in spiritual ascendancy come into the inheritance. You will be calling to mind those seeming paradoxes about receiving as a free gift and then having to inherit. As we have seen, one is a legal position, the other is a spiritual position. We are in a new creation. By far the greater measure of it is beyond; but we are moving on. Indeed, whenever we gather together in Conference, it is simply because we want to go on with the Lord, we want to pass from the one realm to the other, our hearts are set upon all the Lord has meant by bringing us into union with Himself. By His grace, we will go through and go on.

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