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THE NEW CREATION IN CHRIST.

THERE are many valuable thoughts in the article of Prof. Schaff, though some of his declarations seem to us to savor of the transcendental. The affirmation he makes that "the Lord is perpetually born anew in the hearts of believers," sounds strangely to our ears. That his image is created there is indeed true, but that the Lord is born there, is not the teaching of the Bible. Again: "The commencement," he says, "of Church History, is strictly the incarnation of the Son of God, or the entrance of the new principle of light and life into humanity." The incarnation of the Son of God is plain enough, but what is this "new principle of light and life?" And what "new principle" has there been in humanity since the incarnation, that was not in it before that event.—*N. Y. Observer*, Sept. 8, 1848.

THIS paragraph occurs in a short notice of the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for August, the first article of which is a masterly Introduction to Church History from Prof. Schaff. It is significantly characteristic of the system of thinking it represents, and furnishes fit occasion, in such view, for a few remarks.

Here is some approach to a determination of what we are to understand by that most ambiguous term "*transcendentalism*," in the popular vocabulary. It savors of the transcendental, we are told, to say that "the Lord is perpetually born anew in the hearts of believers," or that the mystery of the incarnation in-

VOL. II.—NO. I. • 1

volves "the entrance of a new principle of light and life into humanity." Very well. Let us now look a little into the matter.

The first expression, says the critic, sounds strangely in our ears. The *image* of Christ is created in the hearts of believers, but not the Lord himself, according to the Bible. The image of Christ, then, as formed in believers, is something quite distinct, in the mind of the critic, from the living substance of Christ himself. It bears merely an outward resemblance to him, under a wholly independent form of being; it is the picture morally of his holy mind and character, but carries in it no participation whatever in his very nature. It is related to him, not as the branch to the vine, but only as a mechanical transcript or copy to the original object it is employed to represent. Christ stands in the world solitary and alone. He has made it possible, however, for men to obtain forgiveness with God, and then to be formed by the Holy Ghost and their own endeavors into a new religious life, the type of which is set before them in his person as an outward model. This process involves a new creation; for it is wrought in part, at least, by the creative *fiat* of God's Spirit; but in the end, it is a new creation that belongs in an immediate and exclusive way, to each single believer for himself. It is no reproduction in him of the new creation already at hand in Christ; the Spirit calls into being within him, not the force of what is in Christ himself fontally for the salvation of the world, but the image or picture of this, simply under another form. This, we say, seems to be the meaning which underlies the criticism here in view. The opposite idea, which makes the new life in believers to hold in organic continuity with Christ's life, is set down as 'transcendentalism. To make it an abstraction, a thing of sheer thought, an abruptly miraculous *image*, is counted to be common sense; and the Bible, we are gravely assured, teaches no other view.

Thus it is that the school here represented, is ever ready to run away with the Bible, in a wholesale way, as though it must of necessity be all on their side, just because with their *preconceived system of thought* it carries to themselves such sense and no other. Multitudes, in all ages, have read the sense of the Bible differently; but that weighs nothing with this school; no judgment is allowed to be of any force, in the case, against its own. "This is not the teaching of the Bible," cries the infallible critic; as though *his* dictum in such style must end the matter; and there it is made to stop. We should have been glad to see something more, in this line of argument, a true appeal to the sacred oracles themselves. The subject is certainly deserving of such attention. It goes to the very foundation of Christianity. Is it

a doctrine only or a fact? Is it a new creation in Christ, or is it a divinely wrought image of that only *out of Christ*? The question is worthy of something more than a magisterial wave of the hand, after the summary fashion of the criticism here in view.

The Bible as *we* read it, and as it has been read by millions of God's saints from the beginning, and we will add too, according to the most profoundly scientific exegesis of the present time, *does* teach broadly and clearly the very mystery which this critic proclaims to be transcendentalism, sounding strangely to his ears. The charge of disregarding it falls of right on himself and his widely influential school, and not on Professor Schaff. Has he never read the Gospel of St. John, in which, according to the judgment of the universal Church, the inmost and deepest sense of Christianity is revealed, and by which, accordingly, all the other Gospels are to be explained and made complete? Could it well be more explicitly affirmed, than it is here affirmed in fact, in the very beginning of this Gospel, that it is the *Life* of the Word which is the source of light and salvation to men, and that the Word became flesh to make room for its actual entrance into our fallen nature, as the fountain of a new creation? "Of his *fullness* have all we received" (John i. 16). We become sons of God, by union with him in a supernatural way. Let Christ be apprehended as the central bearer of the new creation, whose universal *fullness* is made to reach over in the form of grace and truth, (not law but life,) into the souls of his people, and the sublime representation of St. John is simple and clear. Resolve the Christian salvation into an outward image only of Christ, wrought either with or without God's help, and the representation is blind as chaos. The beginning of the Gospel, too, is only in harmony with the idea that fills it throughout. It is not only a text or two, here and there, that admits the sense now urged, by violent and doubtful construction. Such men as Olshausen and Tholuck, find this sense in every chapter; and it is only by the most forced and unnatural exegesis, that commentators of the Rationalistic school have been able at all to keep it out of sight. Everywhere Christ speaks of himself, or is regarded by the sacred writer, as the living fountain of the salvation he reveals. He is the resurrection and the life. To have the Son, is to have life. The sixth chapter is as strong as words can make it, in asserting the real participation of believers in the life of Christ. Except we eat his flesh, and drink his blood, we have no life; this involves eternal life, and a resurrection at the last day; it is to dwell in Christ, and have him dwell in us; to live by him, as *he* lives by or from the Father (John vi. 53-58.)

Is this simply to have his *image* formed in us, as something in no organic connection with his person? And what shall we say of his own beautiful emblem of the vine and its branches, employed John xv. 1-8, to represent this mystical union? Is the life of the vine not also the life of its branch? Is the last only *like* the first, a picture of it under a wholly separate form? Could any representation more forcibly show, that "the Lord is perpetually born anew in the hearts of believers," that his life is reproduced in their life, that their formation into his image involves an inward adunation also into the very substance of his mediatorial person? We might refer also to the startling language employed on this subject in his last prayer, John xvii. 21-23; but we forbear.

Nor is this view of the new life confined to St. John. It comes before us also in the more dialectical thinking of St. Paul. No idea is more familiar with him, than that by which Christ and his people are regarded as being joined together in the power of a common life; which, as such, of course, starts from him as its source, and is carried over to them by real organic derivation. He is the head, and they are the members, of the same mystical body. This image is ever at hand in his mind, to express their union. Can it possibly mean less than an actual participation of one side, in the living substance of the other? In this character of Christ's body, the Church is declared to be "the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 23); which plainly signifies something far more than an outward merely moral relationship, however strict and close. Everywhere again, and under all varieties of expression, believers are spoken of as being *in Christ*. One or two instances of such language might bear, possibly, to be resolved into a strong figure of speech; although we should feel it a strange hyperbole, indeed, to speak even twice or once of the patriots of the American Revolution, as being *in General Washington*. But in the case before us, the instances are not one or two only; we meet them on every page; the very frequency and familiarity of their occurrence, serves to blind us to the true and proper force of the phraseology. The foundation of the phraseology with St. Paul, and the sacred writers generally, is beyond all doubt the sense of such a union between Christ and his people, as actually inserts them spiritually into the substance of his life. They are a new creation (*καὶ νῦν κτίσις*, II. Cor. v. 17,) in Christ Jesus; not a new creation out of him and beyond him, by the fiat of omnipotence, bearing some resemblance to him in a wholly different sphere; but a new creation, whose original seat and fountain is Christ's own person, and which conveys over to them, accordingly, with true reproductive force, the vitality which belongs to it in this form. This does not imply that the believer can be all that Christ is; much less

that he can be thus complete in any separate view. Christ is the central person, in whom is the fullness of life for the whole world; his people are made complete only by being comprehended relatively in this fullness; as all the other points of a circle are made what they are, by real dependence on the centre of it, and not by bringing the centre, as such, over into themselves. The union here, is indeed spiritual; it is wrought by the Holy Ghost; but the realness and inwardness of it are, on this account, only the more sure. It is the spiritual being of the believer, his personality, his intelligence and will, (which in the end, however, must determine the quality of the entire man,) that are poised on Christ as a perpetual living centre. "Christ liveth in me," says Paul, "and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are *complete in him*" Col. ii. 9, 10; your life, in other words, is made perfect, finds its true end and sense, in union with him, as the universal centre of the vast spiritual organism of Christianity. It is, in truth, Christ's *image*, that is formed in the souls of his people; but not a dead image; not an outward image; not such an image as is cut off in full from the object it represents, and comes before us as a quite different thing. It is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. i. 27); Christ, who is our life" (Col. iii. 4); Christ that dwells in our hearts by faith (Eph. iii. 17); Christ formed with birth travail into our persons, (ἄχρησ οὐ μορφωθῆν, Χριστός ἐν ὑμῖν, Gal. iv. 19); the very thought which the critic of the New York Observer pronounces transcendentalism sounding strangely to his ears. The image of Christ thus born into his people, is like that of the vine in its branches, the power of his own life continuing itself over organically into their persons. He is the beginning of the new creation, the first-born from the dead; not as the outward cause of it simply, or its outward model; but as its principle and fountal spring; the whole flows forth really from his person (Cor. i. 15-18). Thus it is, that his life repeats itself in believers; their salvation is carried forward by a mystical reproduction in them of the grand facts of his history; he is born in them, suffers in them, dies in them, rises in them from the dead, and ascends in them to the right hand of God in heaven. This bold thought, as we all know, abounds in all Paul's writings. Our baptism buries us into Christ's death; our old man is crucified with him; we are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead (Rom. vi. 4-6; Col. ii. 12, 13). The sufferings of believers are the sufferings of Christ; they fill up that which is behind

of these last, carry onward the sense and value of them in the world, for the sake of his body, the Church (2 Cor. i. 5; iv. 10, 11; Phil. iii. 10; Col. i. 24). In virtue of the living bond, which unites the members with the head, even that which is still future in their case, is at times spoken of as past; they are not only called and justified, but are glorified also in Christ, as potentially secure of all that is comprised in his resurrection (Rom. viii. 29, 30). They are quickened, raised up, and made to sit together with him in heavenly places (Eph. ii. 5, 6). Their citizenship is in heaven; their life hid with Christ in God, and destined by its full relation hereafter, to change even their present vile bodies into the glorious image of his own (Phil. iii. 20, 21; Col. iii. 3, 4). His spirit dwelling in them now, shall in due time quicken even their mortal bodies into immortality (Rom. viii. 11). His resurrection is the guaranty and pledge of theirs, works itself out to its last result only in their recovery from the grave (Rom. viii. 23; 1 Cor. xv. 20-23, 45-49; 1 Thess. iv. 14).

But why should we go on to multiply proofs in this way, for what no unsophisticated reader of the New Testament surely will pretend to deny? What can the New Testament be said to teach at all, if it do not teach the fact of the mystical union, the true and actual formation of Christ's life into the souls of his people? Men may get rid of this teaching, if they choose, by wilfully turning the whole of it into barren metaphor and figure. But it is with a very bad grace they then turn round and say: *We go by the Bible.* The same system of interpretation, with less than half the same trouble, might set aside every text that is usually quoted in favor of the Trinity. The question of election, the question of the perseverance of the saints, and many other questions made to be of primary account in one orthodox system or another, are of far less clear representation in the Bible, than this view of the Christian salvation, as involving "Christ in us the hope of glory." Nor is it, by any means, of new acknowledgment in the Church, however strange and transcendental it may now sound to *some* "evangelical" ears. It runs through the universal theology of the old Christian Fathers. It forms the key-note to the deepest piety of the Middle Ages. It animates the faith of all the Reformers. Luther and Calvin both proclaim it, in terms that should put to shame the rationalism of later times, pretending to follow them, and yet casting the mystery to the winds.

We pass on to the second point, presented in this criticism. The incarnation, we are told, is plain enough; but the critic is at a loss to make anything out of the "new principle of light and life," which it is supposed to introduce into humanity; and

asks, what new principle has been in it *since* the incarnation, which was not in it *before*.

His own idea of the incarnation is, plainly, that it did not enter into the organization of the world at all, as a fact of permanent force. Probably he has no sense whatever of this organization, as a vast whole completing itself in man, and thus reaching forward as a single historical process from the beginning of the world to its end. *This* too, he would take to "savor of the transcendental." The world is for him neither organism nor history, but a vast sand-heap, in which men are thrown together outwardly, to be formed for eternity as so many separate units, each perfect and complete by itself. The incarnation, of course, in such view, becomes one of these naked units only, the man Jesus mysteriously made God for himself alone, an abstraction that comes into no real connection with our general humanity beyond the limits of his person. He stands in the world a mere theophany; not of a few hours only, as in the days of Abraham, but of thirty-three years; a sublime avatar, fantastically paraded thus long before men's eyes, only to be translated afterwards to heaven, and continued there, (for the imagination,) in no real union with the world's life whatever. This, thus left behind by the transient apparition, pursues precisely its old course, including in its living stream nothing more than has belonged to it from the beginning. The incarnation, under such Gnostic view, is taken to be "plain enough;" while to conceive of it as a new principle of light and life for the world, seems a flight clear over the horizon of common sense.

But now, in the full face again of all this abstract thinking, we affirm that it finds no countenance or support whatever in the Bible. According to the first chapter of Genesis, the world is an organic whole, which completes itself in man; and humanity is regarded throughout as a single grand fact, which is brought to pass, not at once, but in the way of history, unfolding always more and more its true interior sense, and reaching onward towards its final consummation. The Jewish dispensation had respect to the wants of the universal world, and was intended from the beginning, to make room for the coming of Christ; which took place, accordingly, at last, when the "fullness of the time was come," (Gal. iv. 4,) "in the wisdom of God," (1 Cor. i. 21,) and "according to the riches of his grace, wherein he hath abounded, toward us in all wisdom and prudence" (Eph. i. 7-10). The incarnation, in this view, was no passing theophany or avatar. It was the form, in which the sense of all previous history came finally to its magnificent outlet. This outlet, however, when it did come, involved a great deal more than was comprehended

in the actual constitution of the world, the living human world, as it stood before; for it was brought to pass by the real union of the everlasting Word with our fallen life. The mystery of the incarnation had been coming through four thousand years; still the *coming* was not the presence of the fact itself; as little as the aurora which gilds the eastern heavens may be taken for the full orbed splendors of the risen sun. Christ is the sense of all previous history, the grand terminus towards which it was urged from the beginning; while in this very character, at the same time, he brings into union with it a new divine force, which was not in it before, though required from the first to make it complete. He is the true basis thus of the period going before, as well as of the period that follows. Two conceptions, in this way, enter jointly into the idea of the incarnation, as it challenges our faith throughout the New Testament. First, it is a fact which unites itself really with the living constitution, the actual concrete and organic history, of the world, as it existed previously; it was no phantasm, no spectrum, no abstract symbol only played off to the eyes of men supernaturally for the space of thirty-three years. Secondly, however, it is in this form a new creation; not the continuation simply of the old, but the introduction into this of a higher life, (the Word made flesh,) which all its powers, as they stood previously, were inadequate to reach. Can there be any doubt, in regard to the scriptural authority of *both* these conceptions? They form the poles of the universal christian consciousness, as it starts in the Apostles' Creed. They rule the whole process of theology in the Church, from the beginning, in opposition to Gnostic supernaturalism on the one hand, and Ebionitic naturalism on the other. Both are presented to us from every page of the New Testament. Christianity, shorn of either, falls at once to the ground. To make Christ an intrinsic result simply, or an extrinsic accident only, for the old creation, is to go full in the face of the whole Bible. He *must* be all or nothing here; the deepest and most central fact of the world, or no fact at all; the alpha and omega of humanity, or no part of humanity whatever.

To say that no "new principle of light and life" was introduced into the world by the incarnation, that the world carried in its constitution, before Christ came, all that is carried in it since, is virtually to deny the incarnation altogether; for it overthrows the historical centrality of the fact, and, indeed, thrusts it quite out of the process of history. The fact, in this view, ceases to be *immanent* to the economy of our universal human life, lies on the outside of it, comes to no real union with it in any way. Surely this is not Christianity. The Word, eternally with the Father, says John, became flesh in Christ, and so joined itself

through him with our fallen nature. This he holds to be plainly the Fact of all facts, the *cardo* of the world's life, the pillar that upholds at last the entire sense of the moral universe. "The law came by Moses; but grace and truth by Jesus Christ." I baptize you, cries the Baptist, (himself greater than all the Old Testament prophets, and yet less than the least in the kingdom of heaven, Math. xi. 11,) with water only; he that cometh after me shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. So Christ himself everywhere claims to be, not the oracle simply of truth and life in force before, but the *principle* of truth and life made real for the world wholly and only by himself. The Spirit fell upon him, at his baptism, in full measure, to find way through him and from him subsequently to the whole family of the redeemed (Math. iii. 16; John vii. 39; Acts i. 4, 5; ii. 1-4). He is the organ of living communication between earth and heaven, the central point where they are first fairly united into one (John i. 51). He is the real presence in the world, of what had been proclaimed before in the way of shadow only and word (John i. 18; Math. v. 17, 18; Heb. ix. 8-12, &c., &c.). He is no moon merely to reflect, like the prophets before him, a simply borrowed light, but according to his own word, the very sun of the spiritual world, (John viii. 12,) and so, of course, a fountain and principle of light for it in his own person. He is the well of salvation, (John iv. 14; vii. 37, 38,) the manna of immortality, (John vi. 49-51,) the victory itself in which is swallowed up all the power of the grave (John v. 21-25; xi. 25, 26). He is the principle thus of *life*, as well as of light; the one indeed involving the other. He hath life *in himself*, fontally, (John v. 26,) for the use of the world. His life is the light of men (John i. 4). A new order of things is proclaimed, as coming into force especially with his resurrection and glorification. Cast into the ground, he becomes the seed of a vast harvest (John, xii. 24). Lifted up from the earth, he is the nucleus of a new humanity (John xii. 32). His entrance into glory opens the windows of heaven and allows free egress for the powers of his own higher life to go forth into the general stream of human history, by the Church, as never in all ages before (John vii. 39; Mark xvi. 15-18; John xiv. 16-20, &c., &c.).

Need we say, that Paul again abounds everywhere with the same thought, in his own way? Beyond all question, *he saw in Christ* a new principle of light and life for the human race. In no other view, is his language at all intelligible. Christ is for him the "second Adam," more intimately related to the race, as its base and centre, than the first (Rom. v. 12-15; 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22, 45-49). He is in this character a "quickeningspirit (*πνεῦμα*

μαζωοποιού); second in order of time, but first in the depth and inwardness of his representative life. He is the great mystery of humanity, hid from ages and from generations, but at last made manifest to his saints (Col. i. 26, 27); "that in the dispensation of the fullness of times, God might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth" (Eph. i. 9, 10); "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. iii. 9, 10). He is our peace; the medium of our reconciliation with God; the source thus of a new order of consciousness, in which all previous antagonisms are brought to an end (Eph. ii. 14-22). He is the universal solvent, through whose force the elements of the ethical world are subdued and constituted into new form (Gal. iii. 26-28; 1 Cor. iii. 21-23). Christianity in this view is a new creation, greater and more glorious than the first (Col. i. 16-18). All moral relations come, *in Christ*, to new significance and force. He is such a real fountain of freedom and power, as never was in the world before. What the law could not do, being weak through the flesh, (Rom. viii. 3, 4,) is accomplished by the mystery of the incarnation; the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, sets men free from the law of sin and death. He is himself, our righteousness and life, (1 Cor. i. 30,) *in whom* we have redemption through his blood, (Eph. i. 7,) and *by whom* we have received the atonement (Rom. v. 11). He has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light (2 Tim. i. 10). He is the foundation of the Church; it starts in his person; its whole magnificent structure serves only to reveal the full force of the mystery of godliness here brought into view, (1 Tim. iii. 15, 16,) the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints, and the exceeding greatness of his power towards them that believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him on his own right hand in the heavenly places (Eph. i. 18-20).

Again, however, we forbear. The difficulty is not to find proofs in the New Testament for the position here called in question, but to make room for them and set them in order. They crowd into view from every side. The idea of a new creation flowing from Christ, and actually lodging in the constitution of the world the force and power of a divine life which was not in it before, may be said to underlie, as a tacit assumption at least, every portion of the evangelical record. To *our* ears it sounds strangely, we confess, to hear this view of Christianity called in question by any who pretend to follow the Bible as their rule and guide. If the incarnation wrought no change in the spirit-

ual posture of the world, but left it in its relations, capacities and powers, just what it was from the beginning, we may well ask with trembling anxiety: In what then did it consist, and what force has it for our salvation? *Could* the mystery be real, if it brought no real difference into our life? Can we rationally admit at all the entrance of the Eternal Word into the organism of humanity, if the fact be so taken as to involve no modification still of its previous state, no entrance into it at the same time of a new principle of light and life? The question is not, of course, whether the human world out of Christ remains what it was before; but whether that part of it which is comprehended in Christ, and which forms thus the true central stream of its history, has not come to be filled with new substance and sense. The new creation holds in the bosom of the Church and not beyond it; but it holds there, at the same time, as the inmost substantial sense of humanity itself, the form in which it is required to become universally complete. Christianity, so far as it prevails, is the actual elevation of our general life into a higher sphere of existence. History is made to possess contents by it, which had no place in it before. The possibility of a real and full solution of the problem of man's life, hangs on the actual coming of Christ in the flesh (1 John v. 4, 5, 11, 12, 20). By this, humanity is made complete. He brings into it light, life and immortality, is himself the principle, and fountain, and immediate ground of all this, in the constitution it receives through his person. Just here is the broad chasm, which separates between all rationalism and the true christian faith. The Unitarian sees in Christ only an outward teacher, who accomplishes our salvation by his excellent doctrine and holy example. Does it, however, alter the case materially, to allow the mystery of the incarnation, and yet turn it into an outward *occasion* only in the service of the same end? If Christ be no *principle* of life for humanity, if he be not in truth the power of a new creation in its constitution, it follows necessarily that it needs nothing of this sort for its redemption. This is at once Pelagianism.

Let us not be told then, that it savors of the transcendental, and contradicts the Bible, to say that "the Lord is perpetually born anew in the hearts of believers," and that Christ is the "principle of a new creation" for the human race. It savors sadly of the *rationalistic*, to have any other view; and we may well be amazed, to find such skepticism placidly arrogating to itself the title *evangelical*, as its own special distinction, and boldly underpinning its want of faith with the pretended wholesale authority of the Bible. Unitarianism plants itself too on the "teaching of the Bible," with quite as much reason, and full as good a grace.

J. W. N.