A New Creature

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."
—II Corinthians 5:17

THIS WONDERFUL PAS- sage of scripture reveals with clarity that becoming a Christian implies much more than a reformation of heart and life, and obtaining salvation through the blood of Christ. It is a wonderful thing to realize that by faith we are saved by being reconciled to God through Christ, but we should not lose sight of the Divine purpose in offering us salvation during this present Gospel Age. It is not merely in order that his grace may be manifested toward us, but also that we may participate with Christ in saving the human race under the administration of his future kingdom of righteousness.

To be 'in Christ' means more than to be in harmony with him. It means to be a member of his mystical body, "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (I Cor. 12:13) The Apostle Paul further explains, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." (vs. 27) This means that all of the Messianic promises of the Old Testament

apply to the church, as well as to Jesus who is the head of the church.

It was God's ultimate purpose that Jesus and his church should be exalted to glory, honor, and immortality. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (II Pet. 1:4) We also read, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."—I John 3:2

When the apostle says that those who are in Christ are now 'new creature[s],' he wanted us to understand that the church's heavenly exaltation to glory is a process of creation that is now taking place. When the church is in glory, they will be much more than sinful human beings who have been purified and made holy.

Paul explains further, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained [prepared, *Marginal Translation*] that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:10) The Lord's people are thus being created as Divine beings to be with the Heavenly Father and with his beloved Son throughout eternity. They will participate in all of the good works of restoring mankind to life upon the earth, and throughout the endless ages of eternity to share in whatever program our loving Heavenly Father may design for his glory, and for the blessing of his creatures.

This creative work that is taking place during this Gospel Age will not be complete until the entire

Christ, head and body, is brought forth on the Divine plane. Each of us is experiencing the creative process as a New Creature in Christ Jesus while we are still in the flesh. If we have been baptized into Christ we have already become New Creatures. Already 'old things' have passed away and all things are 'become new.'

All of these new things are of God. We do not as yet have a new body, but we do have a new mind and this new mind directs the old body into new paths—paths of righteousness and of service to God. Old things have passed away, and our old selfish outlook on life should now no longer control us. Worldly hopes, aims, and ambitions are no longer the things upon which we set our affections. As we read, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."—Col. 3:1

We are no longer working for ourselves, but for God, and in so doing we are being trained for the glorious kingdom work of the future. This is our new work, and what a glorious privilege it is to have a share in it. It is an unselfish work because it is on behalf of others. We have already been reconciled to God, and now God invites us to extend the opportunity of reconciliation to others. We will not be able to reach many while we are still in the flesh, and few of those we do reach will respond, but we will share in the great work of the kingdom.

As New Creatures in Christ all things have become new. We have a new work to do, and new sources of wisdom and strength to enable us to serve God acceptably. We have new joys—the joy of knowing God and of being in partnership with him

and with his beloved Son. We have a new goal for which to strive, even the prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus. These are the 'all things,' and are truly of God for he will exalt us to the Divine nature if we are faithful even unto death. ■