

A New Creation

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The author, Michael Horton (Ph.D., Wycliffe Hall, Oxford and the University of Coventry), is associate professor of apologetics and historical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in California, and chairs the Council of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals.

Maureen O'Hara and Walter Truett Anderson have recently underscored the growing suspicion that the therapeutic industry is in bad shape. Based on her own experience as a San Diego psychotherapist, O'Hara introduces us to a few of her patients. The names have been changed.

Jerry feels overwhelmed, anxious, fragmented and confused. He disagrees with people he used to agree with and aligns himself with people he used to argue with. He questions his sense of reality and frequently asks himself what it all means. He has had all kinds of therapeutic and growth experiences: Gestalt, rebirthing, Jungian analysis, holotropic, breathwork, bioenergetics, the Course in Miracles, twelve-step recovery groups, Zen meditation, Ericksonian hypnosis. He has been to sweat lodges, to the Rajneesh ashram in Poona, to the Wicca festival in Devon. He is in analysis again, this time with a self-psychologist. Although he is endlessly on the look out for new ideas and experiences, he keeps saying that he wishes he could simplify his life. He talks about buying land in Oregon. He loved *Dances With Wolves*. Jerry is like so many educated professionals who come in for psychotherapy these days. But he is not quite the typical client: He is a well-established psychotherapist.

There are others. Beverly "comes into therapy torn between two lifestyles and two identities. In the California city where she goes to college, she is a radical feminist; on visits to her Midwestern home town she is a nice, sweet, square, conservative girl. The therapist asks her when she feels most like herself. She says, "When I'm on the airplane." All these people, O'Hara and Anderson write, "are shoppers in the great marketplace of realities that the contemporary Western world has become: here a religion, there an ideology, over there a lifestyle."

Psychologist Robert Jay Lifton labels this pervasive yearning for ever-new identities "the Protean style," taken from the Greek myth in which Proteus constantly changed his shape to evade capture. Having multiple personalities used to be called a disorder, says Lifton, but it is now a common characteristic of the postmodern self. At our local mall, Nordstrom's -- a fashionable retail chain -- has been running a marketing campaign in recent years with the slogan, "Reinvent Yourself." The "passion of rebirth," says Lifton, is fueled at least in part by a nagging sense of guilt that is never really confronted. Everyone wants to be someone or something else, a new creation -- but on their own terms.

This cannot help but invite a vicious and ultimately unsatisfying series of rebirths precisely because they all take place, as Ecclesiastes reminds us, "under the sun" (Eccles. 1:3), without any significance penetrating from outside the web of this world's natural everyday possibilities. "Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities! All is vanity," said one who had it all (Eccles. 1:2). Our thirst for perpetual self-transformation is largely generated by the culture of marketing. We see advertisements of people we'd like to be, having lives we'd like to live, seeing themselves and being seen in the way we'd like to see ourselves and be seen. And yet the truth is that our bodies are aging; our charisma is fading; our minds are forgetful or too often distracted by the trivial and the urgent. Our souls are so thin that we do not even know what it would be like to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

And all the while, we live amidst the whirl of Vanity Fair, hoping that something new will come into our lives that may change everything. We watch the fireworks, look at each other, and -- when we're honest - then sing "Is That All There Is?" We are like the Beatles' lyrics "Nowhere man, living in his nowhere

land, making all his nowhere plans for nobody." That's not who we tend to think we are; it's not what the evangelists of cool tell us we are, but it is precisely what we know ourselves to be when the lights go on.

It is into this culture of restless change leading nowhere that the gospel's light comes, proclaiming that something has happened outside us, in history -- a divine disruption that really has inaugurated a new world (see Rev. 21:5). The Holy Spirit has been sent by the Father and by the Son who sits victorious at the Father's right hand so that he can make all things genuinely new from the inside out. Even now, the future consummation is breaking into "this present evil age" (Gal. 1:4), working like leaven in a lump of dough (see Matt. 13:33; Luke 13:21). It does not promise a "better you" or a "new look", a "new style," or a "new image," but a genuinely new creation. And this new creation is God's work. It is humanity's only real hope. I will here indicate in broad strokes what Paul has to say about this "new creation" in the book of Romans.

Two Adams (Romans 5:12-21)

After concluding in Romans 3:9-20 that the whole world stands condemned either by the law written on tablets (as it was for the Old Testament Jews) or by the law written on the conscience (as it was for the Gentiles -- that is, for everyone else), Paul announces God's free justification of sinners in Christ alone through faith alone by grace alone (see Rom. 3:21ff.). This leads to his opening the fifth chapter of Romans with these words: "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Here is real peace, real rest, that is not primarily a feeling (and thus some pious goal to be strived for by super-saints) but a real change in status before God -- a change in status from standing guilty before God to standing righteous before him -- that is the objective possession of even the weakest believer. It is a peace that depends on the fact that we have already been "reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (v. 10), justified before God once and for all through faith in Christ's work. It will certainly generate both feelings and actions, but this peace with God that Paul describes rests securely on the work of Christ for us, outside us, in history. It is not just the cessation of hostilities between God and us (although it includes this), but the presence of divine blessing and fellowship.

Immediately after this declaration, Paul launches into his discussion of the "two Adams" and their roles as the representative heads of all humanity. Each one of us is either "in Adam" (and consequently spiritually dead; see I Cor. 15:22) or "in Christ" (and consequently spiritually alive; see Rom. 6:11). Moreover, our union with Adam or Christ -- our being "in Adam" or "in Christ" -- is both *federal* and *organic*. By "federal" I mean legal and covenantal. Just as Thomas Jefferson spoke and acted for all Americans, born and yet unborn, when he drafted the Declaration of Independence, so God at creation appointed Adam to speak and to act for the entire human race. In other words, God made Adam the legal and covenantal head of the human race. So when Adam chose to disobey God, he acted not only for himself and his immediate family, but also for all of his descendents, for all human beings. God's resulting legal judgment indicted the entire human race. "Through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation..." (Rom. 5:18 [NIV]). But this union with Adam is not just a matter of law and covenantal order; it also has an organic aspect. Just as a branch of an apple tree is part of that tree and consequently shares that tree's botanical strengths and weaknesses, so we as Adam's children not only legally bear his guilt but also organically share his corruption. As his heirs, Adam's disobedience is not only legally imputed to us but his fallenness is also organically imparted to us. And so the law's righteous demands not only go unfulfilled by the children of Adam, but also are actively suppressed.

The contrast with those who are in "in Christ" could not be greater. Paul elsewhere calls Christ the "last Adam" in order to stress that he (rather than the first Adam) is the representative head of all who believe (see I Cor. 15:45-49). Just as his resurrection is the dawn of the future glorification of our bodies (see I Cor. 15:20-22, 35-56; Rom. 6:5), so Christ's vindication before the Father in his triumphant ascension secures for us our full acceptance before God (see 2 Cor. 5:14-21; Eph. 4:7-8). "But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many" (Rom. 5:15). The verdict of

the last day is rendered here and now. For us, judgment day is a settled affair. We are legally justified by virtue of Christ's perfect obedience credited to us (see also 2 Cor. 5:21), and we are organically united to Christ in such a way that the most relevant metaphors drawn throughout the New Testament are those of a vine and its branches (see John 15:1-8), a head and the rest of the body (see Eph. 5:13; Col. 1:18, 2:19), the temple and its constituent "living stones" (see 1 Pet. 2:4-5), and so forth. By union through faith with Christ we not only inherit Christ's legal vindication before the throne of God, we also become so vitally connected to him by the mysterious work of the Spirit that his very life becomes the source of the transformation of our own lives (see Rom. 8:9-11; Gal. 2:20). We live because he lives. We feed on Christ through Word and Sacrament, as the powers of the age to come break in on this present evil age.

The fact that our union through faith with Christ has both federal and organic aspects is extremely important. This is because we can easily separate justification and sanctification -- the legal verdict and the transformed life -- in a way that ends up emphasizing one to the exclusion of the other. On one hand, we can so revel in the blessing of the forgiveness of our sins and our justification before God that we neglect the reality of the new birth that converts us and "turns us around" (as the biblical words for conversion imply). On the other hand, we can be so overcome with the magnitude of our conversion that we cling to it rather than to Christ and fail to see that our sanctification, no less than our justification, has Christ as its source. Too often, "Christian life" programs separate these two aspects of our union with Christ so that believers end up living schizophrenic lives, trusting in the sufficiency of Christ for their justification and yet trying to attain victory over sin from some other source. Jerry Bridges treats this issue marvelously in his article [Gospel-Driven Sanctification](#). My purpose here is to flesh out just what Christians can and should expect the normal Christian life to be like.

"Already" (Romans 6)

What is truly marvelous about this section of Paul's famous epistle is how he links justification and sanctification in terms of our union with Christ. Corresponding to the "two Adams" is death in Adam and life in Christ. After observing that "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Rom. 5:20), Paul anticipates the logical reply: "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" (6:1). These questions have gotten a lot of different answers in pastoral counseling, in sermons, and in Christian literature. Sometimes the answer seems to be, "Sure! How marvelously things seem to be arranged. God likes to forgive and I like to sin!" Most Christians, however, reply otherwise. But how do they answer, more specifically? Sometimes with threats. "If you do continue to live in sin, you may lose your salvation" or "...you may lose your rewards" or "...you will become a carnal Christian and fail to live the victorious Christian life." Yet notice how Paul replies: "By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (6:2). Victory over the tyranny of sin is not some goal to be attained only by super-saints but is already the present possession of every believer who has been "baptized into [Christ's] death" (6:3). "We were buried...with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (6:4).

"We were buried...with him by baptism." For those of us who have been united with Christ through faith, being baptized into his death is -- just like his own death and resurrection -- a completed event, expressed in this passage by the Greek language's aorist tense. Just as we have been justified, we have been baptized. Through union with Christ, the Holy Spirit sweeps us into that future world, that resurrection world (see Rom. 6:5-11). Paul is not issuing a command at the beginning of Romans 6; he is making an announcement! Life in Christ by the power of the Spirit is not something to be attained by us but something that has already been "reckoned" to us -- and that we are to recognize as already having been reckoned to us because of our union with Christ. Baptism's decisiveness -- done once, never to be repeated -- assures us of the decisiveness of this act of rebirth and renewal, toppling Satan's reign in our lives. Thus, Christian warfare is waged on the basis of Christ's victory and not on the basis of our attainments. We fight from victory to victory. We can stand in the battle because the war has already been won and the enemy has already been defeated!

Elsewhere Paul writes, "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died" -- past tense -- "and your life is now" -- present tense -- "hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear" -- future tense -- "with him in glory" (Col. 3:1-4 [NIV]). Paul then continues: "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature" (Col. 3:5 [NIV]). And so it is on the basis of what God has done, is doing, and will yet do because of our union with Christ that we obey his commands. This is why Paul now turns in Romans 6 from the "indicative" mood (the mood announcing what has been already accomplished for us) to the "imperative" mood (the mood commanding what we are to do): "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passion...For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace" (Rom. 6:12, 14). Sin cannot rule those who are baptized into Christ by water and the Spirit because in truth they have "passed out of death into life" (I John 3:14).

The new creation -- that is, the kingdom of God -- has broken into "this present evil age" from the future ("the age to come"). This two-age scheme ("this present age" / "the age to come") governs Paul's thought. We find it already in Jesus' discourse in places like Luke 18:30 ("in this time" / "in the age to come"); Luke 20:34-35 ("the sons of this age" vs. the sons of "that age"); and Matthew 12:32 ("this age" / "the age to come"). This world of CNN, fashion, entertainment, consumerism, violence, and oppression -- the world that we take for granted as being the "real world" -- is in truth the world that is passing away. It is the vain attempt of rebellious humanity to write its own script, to develop its own plot, and to find some meaning apart from God.

We are already living in "these last days" (Heb. 1:2; cf. Acts 2:17; James 5:3, etc.). And in this time between the two advents of our Lord, we experience what theologians have come to distinguish as the "already" and the "not-yet." The "already" part of our salvation involves our being chosen in Christ, redeemed by him, forgiven, justified, regenerated, and sealed in him by his giving to us the promised Holy Spirit, who is the "down payment" on our final redemption (Eph. 1:4-13). "And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified" (Rom. 8:30). And so we pray, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). In heaven, our future is already present in Jesus Christ being seated at his Father's right hand (see Heb. 1:3), from where "he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet" (I Cor. 15:25; cf. Ps. 110:1; Acts 2:33-36), including the last enemy that is to be destroyed, which is death (see I Cor. 15:26).

So there are no first-class/second-class (or "victorious" and "carnal") Christians. There are only those who participate in "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:5). Thus, the believer is said to participate in "the powers of the age to come" through Word and Sacrament (Heb. 6:5). Of course, looks can be deceiving, especially when we see the signs of death, decay, sin, and evil all around us -- and, sadly, in our own lives. And yet, because we have been baptized into Christ (past tense) we can live in the Spirit (present tense) in hope of the glorification that awaits us (future tense). The Spirit unites us to Christ, taking that which belongs to him and making it ours day by day. There is a lot of "already" to the salvation God has accomplished for us. The new creation has dawned and we have been incorporated into it. Inward renewal (regeneration) will be followed by outward renewal (bodily resurrection). "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16). The resurrection, that "new creation," begins when we are united to Christ and continues until the whole person is raised at the last day.

"Not Yet" (Romans 7)

But then there is Romans 7 to remind us of the "not yet" part of the equation. Whether we are talking about the individual believer or the kingdom of God more generally, there is a "not yet" that keeps us hoping for a fuller redemption. As marvelous as justification is, as precious as our new birth and sanctification are to us, as remarkable as the gains of Christ's kingdom may be in the world of sin and death, yet still weakness, despair, frustration, struggle, and even failure are too abundant for us to deny the reality of ongoing setbacks in the strife.

In spite of various attempts to understand Paul to be referring in Romans 7 to something other than his own Christian experience, numerous clues in this chapter -- for instance, its being framed in the present tense, in the first-person singular, in the context of the logic of Paul's argument as it begins in chapter 6 and stretches through the transition into chapter 8 -- lead us to accept the most obvious interpretation. Here Paul is, I believe, clearly focused on his own experience as a Christian. After all, while he speaks in the present tense of his being "sold under sin," he also says about himself what he elsewhere tells us cannot be said of any unregenerate person, namely, that in his sinning he nevertheless wants to do the good. "I have the desire to do what is right," he writes in verse 18. Indeed, he declares, "I delight in the law of God, in my inner being," even though "I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind" (7:22-23). Someone who is "dead in...trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1) and who consequently "does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him" (I Cor. 2:14) cannot be said to struggle in the way that Paul declares he is struggling here. "I do not understand my own actions" (7:15). Because the things he said in Romans 6 are true, he expects victory over sin. And yet he finds that the war rages on. It is only because he is regenerate that he can have this real struggle against sin. And so the "already" of Romans 6 is somewhat qualified by this "not yet" of Romans 7.

Most challenges to the claim that Paul is here describing his own Christian experience have been motivated by theological difficulties with the apparent defeat that Paul sets before us. (After all, what search committee would call a pastor who conceded so much failure in his Christian life?) In the churches of my youth, Romans 7 was typically said to describe the "carnal Christian" as opposed to the believer who was living in "victory." Someone could be converted and begin to live the "victorious Christian life," but then fall into sin and suffer a setback. As a "backslider," such a person would still be "saved," but he would be failing to live "the higher life." But Paul is not presenting us with such a time line here. The entire chapter is in the present tense. What the apostle is saying -- as shocking as it seems -- is that every believer who is united to Christ is currently and simultaneously living in the "already" of chapter 6 and the "not yet" of chapter 7. Even as I seek to grow in godliness, pride crouches at the door waiting to claim the prize. Even in my prayers, I can all-too-often identify with the hymn writer's words, "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the one I love." In moments of peak piety I am still a struggling believer, and in moments of great transgression I am still baptized into Christ's death and resurrection and thus a citizen of the "new creation" that has dawned with Christ's victory over sin and death and his sending of the Spirit. In this way, Romans 7 describes the normal Christian life! Every believer is simultaneously in Romans 6, 7, and 8! Renowned Scottish preacher Alexander Whyte is said to have repeatedly reminded his congregation, "As long as you are under my charge, you will never leave Romans 7."

While we never leave Romans 7 during this earthly pilgrimage, it is also worth reminding ourselves and others that we also never leave Romans 6. Whatever progress someone is making in the Christian life and no matter how many setbacks he or she suffers, no matter how weak is someone's faith and repentance, each person who is united to Christ is already dead to sin and alive to righteousness. Paul here is reciting that cycle that Scripture and Christian experience teach only too well: the law accuses us and we die; the gospel raises us and we live; the law guides us in gospel-driven sanctification and yet we find that our former master, sin, is trying desperately -- even if finally unsuccessfully -- to reclaim us. "It ain't over till it's over" -- and so we are always left hoping for more, for liberation not only from sin's guilt and tyranny but also from its very presence. The "new creation" -- that kingdom of God in Christ -- has come and has already swept us into its marvelous light; and yet it is present now in weakness and not yet in glory.

So Look to Christ and Live in the Spirit (Romans 8:1-17)

But look at Christ! This is Paul's answer to his own disappointment with the quality of his own Christian life. He answers his plaintive cry, "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" at chapter 7, verse 24, with "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (7:25). This marks the transition in his argument from the "not yet" of present victory over sin and death to the certainty of the hope that awaits us. Look to

Christ! He is "the firstfruits" of the full harvest (1 Cor. 15:20-23). Paul is in effect saying, "See your head at the Father's right hand, your captain and brother directing the battle from his seat of victory." Paul's introspection in chapter 7 leads to despair but when he looks outside himself to Christ he is once again able to lift his head. In this section from 8:1-17, the apostle reasserts the "already" of chapter 6, the "already" of the Spirit's inward activity. Not only is Christ in heaven directing this warfare, he has sent his Spirit into our hearts to lead the "ground campaign." And so this section begins by announcing again that "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (8:1; cf. 5:1). Paul knows what fans a flickering candle into a dancing flame: it is a fresh glimpse of Christ and the gospel that indicates not only what God has done for our salvation, and what he is even now doing, but also what he will do in the future when he consummates his kingdom.

Here, in Romans 8, Paul does not warn people about becoming "carnal Christians." He simply repeats the triumphant indicative: "You, however, are not in the flesh [i.e., carnal] but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you" (8:9). "Flesh" and "Spirit" never mean for Paul an opposition between our bodies and souls. Rather, they represent human life under the dominion of sin and death -- "in the flesh" - - and human life under the dominion of righteousness and life -- "in the Spirit." Of course, it is the Holy Spirit -- and not our human spirits -- that is in view. The war between the flesh and the Spirit is cosmic in scope (as we will see), but we see it played out in our own individual lives as those who have been claimed by the Spirit in baptism and who yet await the consummation of the new creation. In the meantime, Paul says, take comfort in the fact that the Holy Spirit already indwells you and liberates you from "the spirit of slavery" that can cause us "to fall back into fear" (8:15). It is by the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit that we cry out "Abba! Father!," confirming that we have been adopted by God (8:15-17).

The Hope of Glory (Romans 8:18-30)

With all of this "already," we can await the "not yet" in full assurance. Here is how Paul lays this out before us.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience (8:18-25).

This links the salvation of individuals to the history of redemption. The great hope is not that our souls go to heaven when we die. The separation of soul and body at death is unnatural, part of the curse. Rather, we confess, "I believe...in the resurrection of the body and the life of the world to come." We cannot speak of "the real me" apart from our embodiment. This is why Paul links our final adoption to the resurrection of our bodies and not simply to the regeneration of the "inner person." The ancient Greeks ranked physical reality pretty low on the scale of being. The second-century Gnostics went even further in opposing matter and spirit. Their goal was to escape "the late great planet earth," to escape their bodies -- "the prison-house of the soul" -- and the transitory history into which the innocent soul had been thrown. How different is Paul's description here of the consummation that awaits us! Not only is our salvation incomplete until our bodies and souls are reunited in glorified and unified incorruptibility, it is incomplete until the whole creation shares the new creation with us! Adam was supposed to bring the human family into the everlasting Sabbath that God had promised with the Tree of Life. Instead, his rebellion drew the entire creation under the curse. By contrast, Christ -- the second or last Adam -- succeeded in this task and is now bringing with him not only "many sons" (males and females are included under that title) but also the whole creation.

Sometimes we are more Gnostic than Christian. We tend to think of salvation in terms of souls instead of whole persons ("soul-winning," "saving souls," etc.) and in terms of individual human beings to the exclusion of the cosmic scope of the redemption that actually awaits us. Salvation, according to Scripture, is not escape from our bodies or from the natural world but the redemption of both. This is why the Christian life should not be seen in purely individualistic and "spiritual" terms but as a foretaste of the glory that awaits us and all creation.

Yet just as Paul tempered our enthusiasm over the announcement that we are forever free from the dominion of sin and death with the reality of his own ongoing struggle, now in chapter 8 he moves from the triumphant indicative of our future life to the reminder that "hope that is seen is not hope... But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience" (8:25). With both our individual sanctification and our stewardship of creation, we are neither defeatist (because of how much of the future consummation has already broken into our present) nor triumphalistic (because we wait patiently for Christ's return). Romans 6 challenges every form of defeatism; Romans 7 every form of triumphalism; and Romans 8 every form of escapism. We live in the tension of "already" and "not yet" of our redemption. Christians strive against sin in the power of the Spirit who has baptized us into Christ, and yet we know that there will be weakness and frustration to the end even as we also know that in the end we will wear the conqueror's crown.

We live for others. Gnostic piety is self-centered and purely introspective; biblical piety is chiefly extroverted. If the shape of final redemption is cosmic and not just individual, so too should be the shape of our hope as we relate to the world as citizens of "the age to come." It is not by monkish escape from the world and its problems, but by humble service to Christ and our neighbor that we anticipate the Second Coming. When asked what he would do if he knew that Jesus were to return the next day, Luther is said to have replied, "I'd plant a tree." While our feverish activity cannot bring about the promised consummation, either in relation to our own sanctification or to that of the creation more generally, we can -- indeed, we must -- keep our post wherever God has placed us in our callings as parents, children, employers, employees, friends, and neighbors. If it is only the salvation of souls that we are promised, planting a tree could only be regarded as a distraction from a higher calling. Yet if it is this world that will join us in the triumphant procession into the full consummation of "the age to come," our ordinary daily activity can become an arena for anticipating that day.

The Fruit of Praise (Romans 8:31-39)

At last, the Protean self is chained, required to face itself for what it really is, accepting death in order to receive new life. At last, it is seen that no more self-invention, self-transformation, self-making, or self-indulging can satisfy creatures who were made for everlasting communion with God. Once in Adam and then constantly striving for rebirth according to the pattern of this age, we are now in Christ and born again unto a living hope. All rats become a choir of those who have passed from death unto life, so that they may proclaim the glories of the one who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. As we finish examining Romans' eighth chapter, we find that Paul has penned a great doxological summation of all of these great truths about redemption and the new creation. What is left but for us to join him in reciting it?

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died -- more than that, who was raised -- who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:31-39)

