

# The New Testament: The Great Transition

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The New Testament represents a great transition in humanity, from one humanity to another, from Adam to Christ, where Christ is the true vine and the true tabernacle.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 5:2, John 4:21, John 15:1, Acts 1:8, 1 Corinthians 15:45, 1 Corinthians 15:50, Colossians 3:9, Hebrews 2:5, Hebrews 8:5

**Topics:** "New Humanity", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

T. Austin-Sparks preaches about the transition from the old humanity to the new humanity in Christ, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive view of God's plan for humanity. He highlights the importance of recognizing the immense significance of Christ in God's universe and the necessity of a new captivation of Christ to experience true spiritual growth. The sermon delves into the concept of humanity as God's end, focusing on the transition from Adam to Christ, one nation to another, and one economy to another, as depicted in the Bible. T. Austin-Sparks urges listeners to embrace the full knowledge of Christ and allow Him to strip away earthly attachments to fill their lives with His presence.

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## Transcript

Our Father, our God, we ask Thee now that Thou, Who didst say "Let light be," will shine into our hearts at this time "To give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." It is that face we together have said we are seeking now. We seek Thy Face. We thank Thee that the veil is taken away. We thank Thee that the heaven is open. We thank Thee that the Holy Spirit has come. What we pray for is our need--so deeply conscious we are of it--our own impotence and helplessness, our inability to do anything, to say anything worthy of Thyself. O Lord, we confess utter dependence upon Thee, but we say to Thee, Lord, we trust Thee. Now make this then a time of entering into the good of that opened heaven, that anointing Spirit, that revelation in the Face of Jesus Christ. We ask it in His Name, Amen.

I want to lay the foundation for our meditation in this morning session, the first session of this week, by asking you to turn to several passages of Scripture from the Old Testament and from the New. Beginning in the Book of Genesis at chapter five, verse two, it states: "Male and female created He them, and blessed them, and called their name, man" (A.S.V.). Now come over to the New Testament in the First Letter to the Corinthians, chapter fifteen, verses 45-49: "So also it is written, the first man became a living soul. The last Adam 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 earthy, we shall (or let us) also bear the image of the heavenly" (A.S.V.).

And then, please, in the Letter to the Colossians, chapter three at verse nine: "Lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him That created him; where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all" (A.S.V.).

And finally, in the Letter to the Hebrews, chapter two at verse five, it says: "For not unto angels did He subject the world to come, whereof we speak. But one has somewhere testified, saying, 'What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? Or the Son of Man, that Thou visitest Him?' "

As I have said, in this morning session we are laying the foundation for our meditations. We shall be somewhat general and comprehensive and later work inward to get to the real heart of things; however, first it is necessary for us to have a comprehensive view and vision of what is before us.

I have no doubt that not a few of you who are here at this time have come with problems, and I find that Christians everywhere the world over are full of problems in our time. If it is not problems about their own spiritual life and themselves (as it is in many cases), it is problems about other Christians; or it is problems about the Church generally and, perhaps, locally. Also, there are problems about the world. These problems are manifold, and they are apt to drain our spiritual life and get us very much locked up and held up in our spiritual progress. It is like that. A lot of Christians are doing that today. They are missing the glory because their eyes are either turned inward or earthward: that is their problem.

You remember when the people of Israel were going over the Jordan into the promised land: the Word to them was this, "You shall set the ark, a space between you and the ark, of two thousand cubits, because you have not passed this way heretofore" (Josh. 3:3-4, paraphrased). There is a wealth, a mine of profound wisdom, in that simple prescription: "a space of two thousand cubits between you and the ark, because you have not passed this way heretofore." If you get too close to things, you will lose your perspective and you will lose your way. Do not get too near. Keep things in proportion, in perspective.

Now do you not agree with me that we have got too near things, and we have made things the everything? Is that true? Yes, even our Christian doctrine--and it is precious and important and vital and essential--yet, we have isolated our doctrines and made them the everything. We can make even the doctrine of the Cross the everything, and I can mention many other things which are like a circumscribed circle for many Christians today. They cannot see beyond that, and they cannot see anything more than that. If you talk to them, they have no interest in anything but that. They come back to it every time and hold you to it. This loss of proportion and perspective and vision in its entirety is the cause of many of our problems and much of our arrested spiritual life.

Now why am I saying this? For two reasons. You will have to get a larger vision than your personal problems and see them in a related way. I do not know very much about the science of relativity, but I come down very strongly on the principle of relatedness or relativity. We must see everything in its relatedness to everything else, and not just things as an end in themselves. I want to share with you this morning what is on my heart, and what is so much alive to me now is this comprehensive setting of the spiritual life, getting it in its greatness, its vastness, its immensity.

Now immensity can, of course, be awe-inspiring to the point of making you stand still and hold your breath. But immensity can also be an emancipating thing. You see the greatness of that into which we have been called in Christ! The Greatness of Christ! Oh, if we could this week get a new apprehension, grasp, of the infinitudes of our Christian calling, we would go away an emancipated people. And in that setting then, let us begin.

### Humanity Is God's End

This morning we have read many passages in the Bible, and I would have liked to have added many more of the same kind, but these are enough as a starting point. Do you recognize what they are all about? From Genesis, the beginning, right through the Scriptures, it is one thing: man. No, it is two men, and what we are going to be occupied with is this double humanity, or two humanities, for they are the subject matter of the whole Bible. The Bible is the story of God and man, and everything is gathered into that; nothing is in the Bible but what relates to that.

Of course, the Bible begins with God: "In the beginning God..." First we have the fact of God. This is where you start, and you are not far along before you come upon man. Human history begins with God, God as a fact--God initiating everything, taking the initiative; God at work--God's mind working out in action, in what He does. Remember that is a Bible principle. If you want to know the mind of God, you will come to know it by what God does and not always by what He says to do. More often, God's mind is revealed by how He deals with you than by what He says in words in your ear.

God is speaking in His actions, speaking very loudly in His works. God's mind is being revealed in His actions; God is at work, at work preparing everything for man. When He has made that preparation and brought man in, God says: "There is nothing more to do; at this stage, We can rest." And God is at rest when He has man introduced into his prepared place and scene.

That man Adam, the New Testament tells us, is a figure of Him that was to come, in Whom God will ultimately find His full rest. Man constituted; the man conditioned; the man environed; the man probationed. All God's interests are centered in humanity; not in things, as such. No thing is an end with God. Man is God's end. Humanity is God's end.

With this thought, we are right back there in the very center of the interests of God, humanity. But that man Adam disappointed God, failed Him, and was rejected by God. And at that point, God re-acted, re-acted with the intimation of Another One, Another Man. A Representative Man, Whom God had foreordained before the foundation of the world. This Man is foreordained and then forecast, foreshadowed; and that line of the reaction of God toward the Man, against this other man, runs all the way through like a red line through the Old Testament. In figure, in type, in prophecy, in the spiritual history of an elect line, all moving on toward that Other Man, that Other Humanity, the different Humanity, until we reach the New Testament.

The New Testament is the crisis of humanity. Have you thought of Christianity like that? Or have you thought of Christianity only in its parts, its fragments, such as the Atonement for a man's sin, man's personal salvation, man's securing of eternal hope and glory. These are all the parts of salvation, and we have made so much of them. Well, you cannot make too much of the parts, of course, until you reach the point where the parts become less than the whole; and, dear friends, we have got to readjust our conception and idea of Christianity at this point to see that with the coming of the Lord Jesus, a crisis in the whole history of humanity is reached. It is the crisis of the final word of rejection of a humanity, a kind

of man, and the introduction of an entirely different kind of Humanity with the Person of Jesus Christ. When you grasp that, your whole Bible is going to come alive; it will come alive.

What have we come into? What is regeneration? You call it conversion, being "born again," or you call it regeneration. What is it that we have come into?--It is generation into Another Humanity altogether different as a member of a different race of creatures, a different species of Humanity. With the New Testament, this immense crisis in human history is introduced, a crisis of humanity. Another Humanity is introduced with our New Testament, the full and final type of Humanity that God is going to have; and, the tremendous thing is, all that belongs to the perfection of man is found in this Representative One. That is introduced with our New Testament.

Jesus stands in a unique relation to the human race, and do you not see how rays of light focus upon this great fact? What is it that God is doing?--with you, with me, as a bit of this humanity. What is He doing? What is He after? What is the explanation of our experience under the hand of God?

When we get under the hand of God, we are going through it. What are you expecting this week? When you go away from here, you will meet friends and they will say, "Have you had a happy time?" I think I told you before of a conference I was at once. At the end, testimonies were asked for from the ministers as to what the conference had meant to them; one and another got up and said, "Oh, I have had a wonderful time; I have had a glorious time; this has been the best time of my life...", and so on. And then one man got up, his eyes were red, his face was strained; he said, "I do not understand this; I have had an awful time. This week has meant devastation to me. Everything that I held as important is gone. I am left with a necessity for a new Christ, a bigger Christ than ever I have known." What are you expecting this week? Well, I hope you have a good time! But your "good time," dear friends, in the light of eternity may be a very bad time. When it comes to seeing the real fruit, it may come out of a devastation.

What is God doing?--He is devastating one kind of humanity. We are going to see that as we go on from day to day. He is doing it. I do not know what your experience is, but I know it is mine. I know it is the experience of many of the most used and blessed servants of God--that they are going through a terrible time. Spiritually they have come to the place, where if the Lord, the Lord does not really stand by and take over and see them through, it is an end even of their long spiritual experience. All the past will not stand unless the Lord comes in in a new way. Is not that true with many? Yes, that is what He is doing. He is working on this very ground of the two humanities--one being that which we are by nature; and the Other, that which we are in Christ.

So, what we are to be occupied with at this time is first of all, to behold the Man, to behold The Man. And I would pray, and do pray, that when this week is finished, we shall be able to truly express our hearts in those wonderful words of a poet known to many of you. These are some lines from that wonderful poem,

"Christ"

I am Christ's, and let that Name suffice me.

Aye, and for me He greatly hath sufficed.

Yea, through life, through death, through sorrow,

and through sinning,

He shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed.

Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning.

Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.

Those words express what we would all like to be the issue of this time--Christ.

A New Captivation Of Christ.

A New, Wonderful Appreciation Of Christ.

A New Seeing Of The Significance Of Christ In God's Universe.

Now for these remaining few minutes of the introduction, I want to just pinpoint this one thing. Have you recognized, (perhaps you have without putting it in these words) have you recognized that the very heart and pivot of our Bible is an immense transition? The heart of the Bible is where the Old Testament ends and the New Testament begins, for here are two halves of human history, of humanity. Right there, at that point we come on this great immense transition. The New Testament is wholly taken up with the meaning and the nature, the fact of this transition, this movement from one thing to Another in humanity.

You will recall so much in your New Testament when I just mention these things. First of all it is a transition from one man to Another, from Adam to Christ. We read that in 1 Corinthians 15: "the first man," He called "him"...? No, He called "them" man (Gen. 5:2). That is racial; that is humanity. He called them. That is very simple--the first man, Adam. It is the same thing, "Adam" and "man," as you noticed in the margin of Genesis 5. "He called them 'man'." And the New Testament wholly bears upon this transition from one humanity to Another, from one racial head and inclusive person to Another. It is a New Humanity, going beyond transition then, which is a racial one, from Adam to Christ, from the first man to the last Man.

Secondly, there is a transition from one nation to Another. I know there is room for a lot of controversy there about Israel; nevertheless, the New Testament and Christ Himself came down on this quite emphatically: "The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you (that is, Israel), and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Heavenly Fruit, not earthly. Transition from one nation to Another.

And Peter, oh, Peter! I am amazed at Peter, are you not?! That erstwhile Judaistic traditionalist who had a battle with the Lord over Gentiles in Cæsarea, going to the house of Cornelius and even saying in a contradiction of terms to the Lord, "Not so, Lord." You cannot put those words together --"Lord" and "Not so." The other man, Paul, you remember when he met Christ, said: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" But Peter has not got out of his tradition quite yet; and even at Antioch--dissimulation. When James and the elders came down from Jerusalem, Peter withdrew himself from eating with the Gentiles. He has still got a little bit of grave clothes left on him, but marvel of marvels, when you come to his letters he is out. "Ye are an elect race." Who?--The saints scattered throughout Pontius, Galatia, Cappadocia, and Bithynia. An elect race. He is out of the one nation, now into the Other. The transition has been consummated in this man. But it was a battle. Always a battle over this old association with the natural man. We are going to see much more of that.

Then it is a transition from one economy to the Other. Your letter to the Hebrews is one solid argument for this transition. I am so impressed with the constant recurrence in the New Testament of one phrase which leads out with linking words: the phrase is "Not, But." John began that, did he not? Christ said to the

woman of Samaria: "Not in this mountain, nor at Jerusalem, but in spirit" (John 4:21, 24 paraphrased). "Not, nor, but"--and you find that occurring again and again.

And here you come to this great transition from one economy to Another, the old economy taking in the great ministry of angels: that is a subject for a morning in itself. The ministry of angels in the old economy. The law was given through angels. Angels came again and again to Gideon, to Daniel. The archangels, marvelous ministry of angels--but the Letter to the Hebrews opens up, "Not unto angels... but"--"Not, But"--what a change! And the following argument is that this New Economy infinitely transcends the ministry of angels.

And as you get on toward the end of that letter to the Hebrews, you have another of these transitory phrases: "You are not come unto a mount, a palpable mount, that burned with fire... but ye are come..." --how vast is this movement from that old economy to the bringing in of the New Economy. There is one thing only in your New Testament, introduced by Christ in the Gospels and followed out by the apostles; and in this letter to the Hebrews, the solid object of the whole letter is the transition from one economy to Another. Oh, read it again and glory in it. Read that letter again to the Hebrews. Glory in this: "My, what a thing we have been brought into." Tabernacle? Yes, says the writer, there was a tabernacle on this earth, and for the time being... until the time. That is all gone, he says, and now we have come into the True Tabernacle not made with hands, which God has made, a Heavenly Tabernacle. See how wonderful the transition is!--the passing over from one economy to Another.

I must pause to ask, is this where Christendom has gone astray?--

Is it still holding on to the old economy?

Is it still in the grave clothes?

Is it still that old Mosaic economy with its forms and ways?

Is it not emancipated into the Heavens?!

That is what the Lord wants to do with us here.

From one nation to Another: Abraham to Christ, Moses to Christ. From one sovereignty to Another: we know how full the New Testament is of David and His Greater Son--full of it. But it shows the transition from one earthly sovereignty to Another Heavenly Sovereignty in Jesus Christ.

And so we could go on marking these aspects of the transition. And if you want a key to the Gospel by John, remember John wrote the whole of that gospel on one thought only. The key to the whole of that gospel is this transition from one to Christ. He has taken over. That is why the many "I Am"s. You notice those "I Am"s have a reflection upon the old. I am not the vine, "I Am the True Vine." Israel was a vine, but He has taken over as the True Vine. Israel was a false vine--did not bring forth the fruit.

Now, I am not going to start with John's gospel, but I give you the key. When you move from the introduction of this Other Humanity in the Person of Christ in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, (and this is the key to them all) and come through the desolation of the Cross, you come into Acts, and what are you in? Oh, this marvelous emancipation--transition, transition--in the Book of the Acts. What desolation was made in that whole system because through the desolation of the Cross, there is the emergence into this Other side--this New Humanity. Watch how the Lord is working on this old humanity to wind it up,

progressively now bringing it to where He has put it.

### The Climax Of The Full Knowledge Of Christ

You know, friends, God always works backward towards something. Well, in the creation, He was working backward. Read it again. Why have we in the New Testament so many words which begin with the little prefix "re," regeneration, reconciliation; all have that little prefix "re," for He is working back.

Things have gone away, gone wrong, got out of God's way, and God is returning to where they went wrong. God usually does that with us. And so what is God's beginning?-- It is His Son before the foundation of the world. Right back in the Eternal counsels His Son was made the beginning, God's starting place. Men have all gone astray, because of history, "all of us like sheep have gone astray."

God gets back to His beginning, His Son. Christendom has gone astray, and the only way of saving Christendom is to get back to God's beginning, a true and right apprehension of His Son.

I do not want to just go on with material. There is an application of this to us. I am convinced, I know it is true, that what the Lord is doing with so many of us is stripping us, stripping us of the things which we have taken on or we have gotten into; He is stripping them off and bringing us down to the place where it is the Lord Jesus or it is nothing! If the Lord Jesus fails, there is nothing to live for, and some of us have come to the place where we have said to the Lord, "Lord, if You are not going to come in and fill this place, please take us away: there is nothing more to live for." Is that exaggeration?

I believe the Lord is doing that with many of His people today, taking away their ministry, taking away the fellowships on which they rested so much, taking away the things, even the Christian things--their work, their preaching. When you start preaching there becomes a fascination about preaching; you get over that as you get older... you say, "Lord, don't let me preach unless You're going to do the preaching." The Lord is doing that sort of thing, just stripping us, stripping us of things, even Christian things; and He is going to fill the place Himself.

Now is not that the real climax revealed?! Put it into these words of the Apostle Paul, "Till we all attain unto..." what? Oh, what a pity our translators have not given us an exact translation! They have said, "until we all attain to... the knowledge of the Son of God." No! it is "to the full knowledge of the Son of God... to the measure of the stature of..." what? A Man. The climax of the knowledge of Christ, the full knowledge of Christ, is our attainment. And what is it?--a kind of a Man which is the reproduction of, if I may put it this way, Jesus Christ the Man. And so we are coming more and more to this--that it is only the Lord: it is Christ.

I Am Christ's, Let the Name Suffice.

Oh, if only we have got

A large enough apprehension of Him!

Well, now I am going to break off here, and if the Lord wills, continue from that point getting nearer to this tomorrow morning. With all this greatness of setting, of background, in which we are if we are in Christ, does not that very phrase open up to this conception of God's purpose that in Christ there is Another Humanity?!

This is what the Lord is doing with you, with me, making something different; oh, it is too slow, I know, for us. We do not seem to be making much progress that way, but He is undoing and He is adding.

But, what do we know? But, what do I know? Oh, I feel worse than ever I did in my life in myself. If it were not for Christ, I would not be here today. No, I would have gone out; I would not be here through all the stresses, all the strains, all the experiences, all the devastations, all those times when down in the dust I have simply said, "Lord, You have made a mistake, You've made a mistake, I am Your great mistake. You ought never to have brought me into this position." It always seems like that in our experiences; but here we are. We have survived, and more than survived; we are here. And we believe we are here by the power of God in Jesus Christ. That we do know, and so we can say, "It is Christ, it is Christ, and it is a mighty Christ in our history."

Well, this is enough for this morning. See what He is doing?! May He show us that He has marvelous thoughts for what He has conceived--Humanity as His crown and His goal. Shall we pray...

Lord, we do beseech Thee, we entreat Thee, to open the eyes of our understanding. Do not let this be so much more talking, teaching--certainly not an end in itself. But Lord, bow us in Thy presence. We know that the real discovery of whether we are in with Thee at this time will not just be in our attending the meetings; it will be in the prayer that is behind, outside of the meetings, in our rooms, in our hearts. Lead us, we pray Thee. Deep exercise about this matter of what Thou art working toward, and why Thou art dealing with us as Thou art. So help us, by Thy grace, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, Amen.

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