

Parables are always written in the present tense – they refer to now!

St. Paul's *Letter to the Galatians* (quoted today) reveals how upset he was with a split among Christian believers. There were those out of the Hebrew tradition who remained attached to their Old Testament heritage – rules, dietary laws, practices like circumcision. This drove Paul almost crazy – why would you want to remain in the “schoolyard” when it's time to graduate into what it means to be fully adult; where maturity awaits you. (Could it be fear?) And once such a nostalgic stand was taken, it generates its own opposition: polarization!

Last week we saw such polarization happening between the inhospitable Samaritans and the disciples of Jesus – who on their part wanted to burn down their village! So what does Paul say? Let me paraphrase it. *It's hard for me to become entangled in your “absolutes” – for the Gospel of Christ has made of me a new creation.*

Or as the Gospel of John puts it: *that we might all be born again.* This confused old Nicodemus who wondered how we could be returned to our mother's womb to undergo a second birth. He couldn't understand the range of a mind like that of Christ; indeed Christ wondered how Nicodemus (being so “single-minded”) had ever become an authority on anything. Indeed single-mindedness seems to be what's upsetting our world to an extreme degree today. Of course Paul admits that becoming this new creation, being born again, felt like a crucifixion, a painful process when it happened, a fright. But it also can result in a perpetual resurrection and clear skies and discoveries of who and what we really are.

But now, remembering last Sunday's conflict between the Samaritans and the disciples of Jesus, let's anticipate next Sunday's parable of the Good Samaritan by way of E. E. Cummings's version of it – to see what it means to become a new creation (note: he writes in lower case).

*a man who had fallen among thieves
lay by the roadside on his back
dressed in fifteenthrate ideas . . .*

*fate per a somewhat more than less emancipated evening
had endowed him with a changeless grin*

*whereon a dozen staunch and leal
citizens did graze at pause . . .
then sought newer pastures . . .*

*one hand did nothing on the vest
its wide flung friend clenched weakly dirt . . .*

*brushing from whom . . .
i put him all into my arms
and staggered banged with terror through a million billion trillion stars.*

Geoff Wood