

TRANSFORMED RENEWING MIND

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by Ron Kangas

Because human beings are tripartite—a composition of spirit, soul, and body—the Trine God in His complete salvation takes three steps to gain us for His corporate expression: regeneration in our spirit, transformation in our soul, and transfiguration in our body. God works from the inside out; therefore, He begins the process of His organic salvation (by which we mean salvation in life—Rom. 5:10) from the center of our being by regenerating us in our spirit (John 3:6). To be regenerated is to be born of God the Spirit in our spirit and thereby receive another life, the divine, uncreated, eternal life of God, in addition to our natural, created, human life. When we received Christ by believing into Him as the Son of God (1:12-13; 3:15), the Spirit of the Lord came into our spirit to regenerate us by dispensing Christ into our spirit as life. By this marvelous dispensing, based upon redemption (Rom. 8:10), our deadened spirit was enlivened (Eph. 2:1, 5), and the divine life with the divine nature was imparted to it, causing us to become genuine children of God possessing the life and nature of God. Thus, a tremendous change, a change of life, began to take place from the center of our being, our spirit.

It is God's intention and determination that the change of life which began in our spirit continue by spreading into our soul so that our mind, emotion, and will (the faculties of the soul) may be transformed. For our spirit to be regenerated is one thing; for our soul to be transformed is another. Our spirit has been enlivened and regenerated and has become a new creation, but apart from the gradual organic process of transformation, our soul with its mind, emotion, and will remains the same. This means that although we may have Christ as life in our spirit (Col. 3:4), we do not yet have this Christ in our soul. Our urgent need, therefore, is that the indwelling, pneumatic Christ—the Christ who is with our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22)—spread and expand from our regenerated spirit into our soul, with the result that every part of our soul is transformed into the image of the glorious, resurrected Christ to express Him (2 Cor. 3:18). The more our soul is transformed in such a way, the more we will think as the Lord thinks, love as He loves, and choose as He chooses. No longer will we be the same as God in our spirit but the same as unbelievers in our soul. Instead, we will be the same as God in life and in nature not only in our regenerated spirit but also in our transformed soul.

A Definition of Transformation

To be transformed is to have the pneumatic Christ, Christ in resurrection as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17), dispensed and wrought into our soul to replace what we are in the natural life so that our living by Christ may increase and our living by our natural life may decrease. In transformation the Christ who is in our spirit, the organ for contacting, receiving, and containing God, becomes the Christ in our soul, the organ

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for expressing God (Eph. 3:17). The function of the soul to express God is related to the image of Christ, according to which we were created (Gen. 1:26; Col. 1:15) and into which we are being transformed (2 Cor. 3:18). In transformation the element of the divine life in Christ (1 John 5:11-12) is dispensed into our soul so that we may have the outward expression of the image of Christ as the firstborn Son of God in resurrection. As the process of transformation takes place within us, the old element of our natural being is expelled and carried away, and the resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit is added into us to replace the natural element. This process is altogether organic, that is, a matter in the divine life with its nature and spontaneous function.

The process of transformation is not only organic but also metabolic. Transformation is not mere outward change, correction, adjustment, or self-improvement. Rather, transformation is absolutely an inward, metabolic change of our being, and to be transformed is to have an organic element wrought into our soul to produce a metabolic change inwardly that issues in the expression of the image of Christ outwardly. This metabolic change includes the supply of a new element, the replacing of the old element with the new element, and the discharge of the old element so that something new may be produced within our soul. “Therefore, we may define transformation as a divine, spiritual metabolism wherein a new element is added to the old to discharge the old and to produce something new” (Lee, *Conclusion* 1594).

Transformation and God’s Economy

Transformation is related intrinsically to God’s economy. The economy of God, we are delighted to point out once again, is God’s plan and arrangement according to the desire of His heart and the counsel of His will to dispense Himself in Christ as the life-giving Spirit into His chosen and redeemed people to make them His corporate expression, initially as the Body of Christ in this age and ultimately as the New Jerusalem in eternity. The outworking of such a mysterious economy requires not only redemption and regeneration but also transformation. We have emphasized the fact that transformation is a matter of inward metabolism issuing in an outward expression. Far from being an external, cosmetic change, transformation is a metabolic change in substantial form, an inward process to change us organically into different persons—mature brothers of Christ and sons of God conformed to the image of Christ, the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 8:29; Heb. 2:10).

In God’s economy transformation is related to the divine attributes, to the reproduction of the firstborn Son of God, and to the corporate expression of God. In the process of transformation, the Triune God works the divine attributes into us, the believers in Christ, and causes these attributes to become our virtues. In the process of transformation, there takes place within the believers the mass reproduction of Christ, the firstborn Son of God. The firstborn Son, the first God-man, is the prototype, and the many sons of God, the many God-men, are the reproduction of the prototype. As the process of transformation runs its course, the many sons are gradually transformed into the image of the firstborn Son. The result of this organic, metabolic process is the corporate expression of the Triune God in Christ. The more we are transformed in our soul, being saturated and permeated with the divine life, the more we, the reproduction of Christ, become the expression of God. This is the goal of God’s economy and the function of transformation in the carrying out of God’s economy.

This brings us to the subject of this article—“transformed by the renewing of the mind” (Rom. 12:2). If we would experience transformation as defined above, we must be renewed in our mind, even in the spirit of our mind (Eph. 4:23). Because the transformation of the soul is crucial and central to God’s economy and because transformation takes place by the renewing of the mind, we need to consider in detail a number of matters related to the renewing of the mind.

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The Normal Function of the Mind

The Bible reveals that man is a tripartite being: spirit and soul and body (1 Thes. 5:23). God created human beings with three parts so that we would be able to contact the three different worlds: the physical, the spiritual, and the psychological. We contact the physical world by our physical body through the five senses of hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and feeling. We contact the spiritual world by means of our spirit. In our spirit we have a spiritual sense with which to contact God and the spiritual things. There is also the psychological world, which we contact through our soul, the psychological part of our being. The mind, the main part of the soul, is for thinking, considering (Psa. 13:2), knowing (139:14), and remembering (Lam. 3:20). The mind also has a function in relation to God and the things of the Spirit. Although it is the spirit of man that directly contacts God the Spirit (Zech. 12:1; John 4:24)—the Spirit witnesses with our spirit (Rom. 8:16), and we are joined to the Lord Jesus in spirit (1 Cor. 6:17)—the mind is needed to understand spiritual things. Spiritual understanding is surely related to the mind. In our mind we may have wisdom and spiritual understanding (Col. 1:9; Rev. 17:9). However, although the mind can contact the psychological world directly, it contacts God and the things of the Spirit indirectly through the human spirit. We may say that the function of the mind is to receive impressions from the spirit and then express them as life. To put it simply, with the spirit we receive God, and with the mind we understand who and what we have received. To function normally according to God's view, the mind must be set on the spirit and be one with the spirit (Rom. 8:6). It was the disobedient and independent action of the mind that caused man's fall (Gen. 3:1-6; 2 Cor. 11:3).

No proper Christian dismisses or downgrades the normal function of the mind. Although in this life "we see in a mirror obscurely" and "know in part" (1 Cor. 13:12), we may nonetheless have a certain amount of spiritual understanding in our mind today. Although we worship God in spirit and serve Him in our spirit (John 4:24; Rom. 1:9), we still need our mind to be opened to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). Furthermore, the Lord Jesus told us that we are to love God with all our mind (Mark 12:30). A clear, sober mind is absolutely necessary in understanding the Scriptures and the things of God. Paul said that God has given us a spirit of sobermindedness (2 Tim. 1:7). In order to understand the divine revelation in the Scriptures, we need a strong spirit and a clear mind. With our spirit we sense spiritual things, and with our mind we understand them. The things of God are sensed intuitively in the spirit, but they are understood in the mind. Although we may sense something of God in our spirit, we may have a problem with our mind and not be able to understand what is in our spirit. We definitely need a clear mind if we would interpret the sense within our spirit. We need the understanding in our mind to interpret what is in our spirit. After we sense the things of God by the function of the intuition in our spirit, they are understood by the renewed mind.

The function of the mind is also critical in understanding the will of God. Romans 12:2 reveals that transformation by the renewing of the mind is related to proving what the perfect will of God is. After praying and seeking the Lord concerning His will, we may sense something of the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the depths of our spirit. However, we still need a trained mind to understand what we sense within and to know the will of God in a practical way. Having contacted God and obtained the feeling in our spirit, we need our mind to interpret and comprehend God's will. From this we see that the interpretation by the mind is an indispensable factor in the understanding of God's will.

In order for the mind to fulfill its normal function, it must be enlightened and guided by the Holy Spirit. It must be willing to be led into all truth by the Spirit of truth (John 16:13). The Lord's thoughts are not our thoughts; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His thoughts higher than our thoughts (Isa. 55:8-9). It is an expression of humility to testify with Paul, "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and untraceable His ways! For who has

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known the mind of the Lord?” (Rom. 11:33-34). How we need the Lord to open our minds and to enlighten our understanding! In order for the disciples to understand what was written concerning Christ in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, the resurrected Christ had to open their minds (Luke 24:44-45). Only a God-opened mind can understand the Scriptures.

Paul’s experience recorded in Romans 7 testifies to the limitations of the human mind in spiritual matters. Paul said, “With the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin” (v. 25). In Paul’s mind was the natural life, the life we all received from God at birth. But in his experience Paul discovered that with the mind alone he could not succeed in serving God, for, as he testified, “But I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and making me a captive to the law of sin which is in my members” (v. 23). According to Paul’s own testimony, the law of sin in his members prevailed over the law of his mind. His only deliverance, and ours, is through the working of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus and through our cooperation by setting our mind upon our spirit (8:2, 6).

God created us with a mind, and we need to use it normally and properly. However, we also need to recognize the danger in a misguided or unguided intellect. “Intellect is not merely fallible, but the most dangerous of all gifts, unless it be guided by the Spirit of God. For it can call evil good, and good evil: it can put darkness for light, and light for darkness; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter” (Pember 78).

Because God’s thoughts are not our thoughts (Isa. 55:8), we need the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We must learn not to rely on our limited mental capabilities but humbly recognize that no one can be the Lord’s adviser, and that, if we would know Him and His Word, we need Him to open our understanding. To have such an attitude is humility, a proper dependence for understanding, as for all things, upon the One who created us and who upholds all things by the word of His power.

The Condition of the Fallen Human Mind

In the fall, humanity not only disobeyed God outwardly but was contaminated inwardly by Satan. The spirit died (Eph. 2:1, 5), the soul became the self (Matt. 16:24-26; Luke 9:23-25), and the body was transmuted into the flesh (Rom. 7:18, 23-24). Now sin, the nature of Satan, dwells in us. Paul said, “But if what I do not will, this I do, it is no longer I that work it out but sin that dwells in me” (v. 20). This indwelling sin can reign in our mortal bodies (6:12), lord it over us (v. 14), revive in us (7:9), take occasion through the commandment to deceive and kill us (v. 11), and make us do things against our will (vv. 17, 20). Therefore, we become captive to the law of sin in our members (v. 23). Surely the fall and the entrance of sin into our being have not left our mind unaffected. Although our mind can still think, reason, consider, imagine, and remember, it has been poisoned, and now it is powerfully influenced by the sin in our flesh. It is vital for every believer in Christ to see the state of the fallen, natural mind in the light of God’s Word. The result of such a vision of the condition of the fallen, natural human mind will encourage us to seek the Lord desperately for the renewing of our mind so that our mind, along with our entire being, may be recovered from the hand of the enemy and be used, as God intended, for the fulfillment of His purpose.

Let us now consider various portions of the Word that illumine the fallen condition of the mind of the natural man. First Corinthians 2:14 says, “A soulish man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he is not able to know them because they are discerned spiritually.” The soulish person, the man who lives in the realm of the soul, cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God. Since the natural mind is part of the soul, it also cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God. Rather, to one who trusts in the unenlightened natural mind, the things of the Spirit of

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God are foolishness. According to Jude, such people “revile the things that they do not know” and seem to have no spirit (vv. 10, 19). James 3:15 reveals that the wisdom of the natural person is “earthly, soulish, demonic.” This indicates that the wisdom of the soulish man is related to demons. Thus, the natural mind, part of the soul of the natural man, does not receive the things of the Spirit of God but regards them as foolish, speaks evil of things that it does not understand, and has a wisdom that is earthly and demonic.

Furthermore, the natural mind is under the direction of Satan, the prince of the power of the air. Ephesians 2:2 and 3 say, “In which you once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit which is now operating in the sons of disobedience; among whom we also all conducted ourselves once in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the thoughts.” Here we see that the working of Satan in humankind is of two aspects—in the flesh and in the thoughts. Before we repented and came to Christ, we all lived according to the ruler of the authority of the air, who manipulated and controlled our mind, although we had no consciousness of his activity.

The fallen natural human mind has a number of specific characteristics. It is a reprobate mind and a depraved mind—a mind absolutely disapproved of by God (Rom. 1:28). It is a mind filled with vanity and with the understanding darkened (Eph. 4:17-18). Such a mind causes one to be alienated from the life of God through ignorance and the hardness of the heart (v. 18). The natural mind is alienated from God and makes one an enemy of God in his mind (Col. 1:21). The natural mind is also puffed up by being set on the flesh (2:18). It is set on earthly things, not on things that are above (3:2). Furthermore, it is a mind set on the flesh, it is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God (Rom. 8:6-7), it is corrupt, and it causes people to oppose the truth (1 Tim. 6:5; 2 Tim. 3:8). According to Titus 1:15, the natural mind is also defiled. As Jessie Penn-Lewis says, “We therefore clearly see how, in the natural man, the mind is ‘darkened’, ‘puffed up’ by the flesh, empty and vain in its thoughts, carnal because governed by the flesh, and in all its activities—whether apparently ‘good’ or visibly ‘bad’—at enmity with God” (3-4).

The thoughts of the natural mind are also in a degraded state. Second Corinthians 3:14 indicates that such thoughts are hardened, and 4:4 reveals that “the god of this age has blinded the thoughts of the unbelievers that the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, might not shine on them.” The thoughts of the natural human mind are actually blinded by Satan, the god of this age. This blinding work of the enemy hinders the shining of the gospel of the glory of Christ into human hearts. Therefore, this blindness of thought produces gross inward darkness concerning the gospel of Christ. The thoughts of a natural, soulish person are not only hardened and blinded but also evil and disobedient (Matt. 9:4; 2 Cor. 10:5). Second Corinthians 10:4-5 reveals that the natural human mind, with its reasonings and thoughts, is a stronghold of the enemy. These reasonings need to be pulled down, and the disobedient, rebellious thoughts captured unto the obedience of Christ. This suggests that rebellion against God is basically in thought. The thoughts of the natural mind are surely in rebellion against God.

The judgment of Scripture on our natural reasonings is also unequivocal and absolute. The Word of God reveals that such reasonings are vain (Rom. 1:21) and evil (Matt. 15:19). In 1 Corinthians 3:20 Paul declares, “The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are vain.” As we read the Gospels, we see that the religious ones used the reasonings of their natural mind and darkened heart to strive and fight against the Lord Jesus. When the Lord said to the paralytic, “Child, your sins are forgiven,” the scribes and Pharisees reasoned in their heart (Mark 2:5-6; Luke 6:8). Mark 2:8 says, “Immediately Jesus, knowing fully in His spirit that they were reasoning this way within themselves, said to them, Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts?” The Lord Jesus, who lived and walked in His spirit, perceived the rebellious and blasphemous reasonings of the religious ones. Throughout the Gospels we see that the scribes and Pharisees assaulted the

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Lord Jesus Christ with their religious reasonings, attacking the One who lived and walked in spirit.

A number of experienced believers have come to the same verdict concerning man's natural reasonings as do the Scriptures. G. H. Pember says, "Reason is but an uncertain and deceitful instrument at the best, and the blinding pride of man makes matters still worse" (77-78). For those, whether believers or unbelievers, who insist that one should confidently employ reason in exploring the things of God, C. H. Mackintosh says,

It may be said, are we not to use our reason? If not, to what end was it given?...Our reason is not as it was when God gave it. We have to remember that sin has come in; man is a fallen creature; his reason, his judgment, his understanding—his whole moral being is a complete wreck; and moreover, it was the neglect of the Word of God that caused all this wreck and ruin. (788)

Pointing out that if reason were in a sound condition, it would "prove its soundness by bowing to the Word of God," Mackintosh goes on to say, "But it is not sound; it is blind, and utterly perverted; it is not to be trusted for a moment in things spiritual, divine, or heavenly" (788). Writing in the eighteenth century, William Law had this to say about human reason:

All religious knowledge that comes to us through the gateway of our own natural reason, great as men may consider it, is only great in vanity, emptiness, and self-deceiving folly. For all the evil and corruption of our fallen nature consists in this; it is an awakened life of our own will, under the power of natural reason, plotting and justifying its rebellion against the will of God. (98-99)

Speaking of God's call to a proper use of reason, Law remarks:

Reason is thus helpless in the spiritual realm; it is neither seeing, tasting, touching, smelling, nor hearing the things of the Spirit of God....And to think that reasoning about God from Scripture words is to know Him, is just as sensible as to think that reasoning about food is the same as to eat it....Reason...cannot substitute its thoughts about God for the experience of His love that can only be known by the soul and spirit of man....Reason may view through its own eyes what is done—whether in the physical or spiritual realms—but it cannot bring the experience of these realities either to man's body or to his soul. (101-102)

In his discussion of how natural reason opposes the spirit, Law points out the danger of trusting our reasonings about doctrine and Scripture:

To put a religious trust in our own reasonings about doctrines and Scripture words and our ability thus to persuade others, has a more foolish nature than the same idolatry that puts a religious trust in the sun, a departed saint, or a graven image. (104)

Law further says that "to believe only that which reason can verify is to live as a heathen under the power of the kingdom of darkness" (105). Law also declares, "Those who trust in reason alone are of the seed of the serpent, and real heirs of that confusion which happened to the first builders of the tower of Babel" (106).

The Scriptures and the supporting testimony of earnest believers issue a devastating indictment on the mind, thoughts, and reasonings of the natural, soulish person. Our natural mind is reprobate, vain, dark, alienated from God, puffed up, fleshly, corrupt, defiled, and at enmity with God. Our thoughts are evil, blinded, hardened, and disobedient. Our reasonings are vain, evil, and rebellious against the Lord and His move. The vain and darkened mind of the natural man even supposes "that what is divine is like gold or silver or stone, like an engraving of art and thought of man" (Acts 17:29). Therefore, God has

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said, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise” (1 Cor. 1:19). In the book of Romans, Paul clearly and forcefully summarized the state of the fallen human mind:

Because though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or thank Him, but rather became vain in their reasonings, and their heart, lacking understanding, was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of an image of corruptible man....Who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creation rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. (1:21-23, 25)

The Need for Repentance

If we receive the light of the Word of God upon our fallen, natural mind, thoughts, and reasonings, it will come as no surprise to us that the first word of the gospel in the New Testament is “repent.” Both John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus declared, “Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near” (Matt. 3:2; 4:17). The command to repent is directed at the mind. The Greek word rendered *repentance* is *metanoia*, which means a change of mind. As Harry A. Ironside says, “This is not simply the acceptance of new ideas in place of old notions. But it actually implies a complete reversal of one’s inward attitude” (15). Witness Lee has given a clear word on the meaning of repentance:

To repent is to have a change of mind issuing in regret....To repent is to have a change in our thinking, our philosophy, our logic. The life of fallen man is absolutely according to his thinking. Everything he is and does is according to his mind. When you were a fallen one, you were directed by your mind. Your mentality, logic, and philosophy governed your way of life. Before we were saved, we all were under the direction of our fallen mentality. We were far away from God, and our life was in direct opposition to His will. Under the influence of our fallen mentality, we went farther and farther astray from God. But one day we heard the preaching of the gospel telling us to repent, to have a turn in our thinking, philosophy, and logic. (*Matthew* 106-107)

It is worthy of notice that in the preaching of Jesus and of John the Baptist, the command to repent is related to the kingdom. We are not commanded to repent simply to escape from hell or to go to heaven. Rather, we must repent because the kingdom of the heavens, the rule of God, is at hand. In other words, in order to come under the rule of God, we must have a change of mind. This implies that our mind in its natural state is in rebellion, unwilling to be ruled by anyone or anything, including God Himself. Therefore, we must repent.

A strong word concerning repentance is found in Isaiah 55:7: “Let the wicked forsake his way, / And the evildoer, his thoughts; / And let him return to Jehovah, and He will have compassion on him; / And to our God, for He will pardon abundantly.” If we sincerely seek the Lord and desire to turn to Him, we must forsake our way and our thoughts. To forsake our thoughts, as the Scripture enjoins, does not mean to become mindless. Rather, it means to forsake our natural thoughts, concepts, and opinions and to accept in their place God’s thought embodied in His Word. Only by forsaking our thoughts can we return to the Lord and receive His pardon. This is not only true when an unbeliever comes to the Lord for salvation; it is also true for Christians, who daily need to repent, to forsake their thoughts, and to return to the Lord. Just as Eve was deceived by the serpent, so may the thoughts of believers be seduced away from Christ (2 Cor. 11:3). In the epistles to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 the Lord Jesus Christ Himself commands the churches to repent. In Revelation 2:5 the Lord says, “Remember therefore where you have fallen from and repent and do the first works.” In 3:3 He says, “Remember therefore how you have received and heard, and keep it and repent,” and in verse 19 He continues, “Be zealous therefore and repent.” Thus, not only unbelievers need to change their mind, but even believers are called upon by the Lord Jesus to repent, to have a change of mind.

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The Need for the Renewing of the Mind

Many Christians may think that because they have repented and have received the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, they automatically have the mind of Christ and are no longer plagued by the fallen mind. This is far from the truth. The fact is that one's initial repentance does not *ipso facto* give one a totally new mind. Yes, he or she now confesses the need for Christ and His redemptive work on the cross. However, as both the Scriptures and our experience testify, genuine believers in Christ, true children of God, may continue to have their practical daily living in the sphere of the fallen natural mind the same as they did before they were saved.

Consider Paul's word in Ephesians 4:17: "This therefore I say and testify in the Lord, that you no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk in the vanity of their mind." Please pay attention to the words *no longer*. These words not only imply the possibility of continuing to walk in the same vanity of the mind that we walked in before we were saved; they present this possibility as a serious danger. Paul did not say, "It is no longer possible for you to walk in the vanity of the mind." Rather, he admonished the believers to do so no longer. Paul fully realized that one could be regenerated in his spirit yet still conduct the affairs of his daily life according to the flesh or according to the darkened understanding of the natural mind. Thus, Paul repeatedly enjoined the believers to walk in spirit (Gal. 5:16).

When one genuinely repents before the Lord and receives Him into his being, his spirit is regenerated by the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus said, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). When one is saved, one also experiences a change of mind and of heart. One begins to think differently about God and spiritual things and also has a heart to love the Lord Jesus. But this does not mean that the mind has been renewed. Remember Paul's word to no longer walk in the vanity of the mind. In verse 23 of the same chapter, Paul tells the believers to "be renewed in the spirit of your mind." Therefore, in Ephesians 4 we have a vivid contrast between the vanity of the mind and the spirit of the mind. The urgent need among all Christians today is the renewing of the mind. Without it, we will continue to walk like atheists and unbelievers in the vanity of the mind, being alienated from the life of God. Although we have been born of God in our spirit and the Lord Jesus is now with our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22), and although we have a heart to love the Lord, we may still conduct our practical daily life in the realm of the unrenewed natural mind. This is the clear testimony of the Word of God and the experience of a vast number of the Lord's people.

Paul also speaks of the renewing of the mind in Romans 12:2: "Do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect." In the book of Romans we see the human mind in various stages: the disapproved mind (1:28), the mind desiring to serve the law of God (7:25), the mind set either upon the flesh or upon the spirit (8:6), and the transformed and renewed mind. *Be transformed by the renewing of the mind* implies that this process is not yet completed. Paul did not say, "You have already been transformed by the renewing of the mind." No, he encouraged them to seek transformation by the renewing of the mind. A renewed mind is able to prove the good, well pleasing, and perfect will of God. Considering this verse in the context of the whole chapter, we see that the will of God is the Body. (Later, we shall point out that the one characteristic of the renewed mind is that a person does not "think more highly of himself than he ought to think" (v. 3), having a proper respect for the other members of the Body.) Therefore, in Ephesians 4 and Romans 12, both of which deal with the practical realization of the Body life, we are strongly exhorted to seek the renewing of the mind. Without this, God's eternal purpose cannot be fulfilled in a practical way on earth today. Our mind must be renewed, not merely for the sake of our personal spiritual growth but for the unity and building up of the Body of Christ.

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Just as many of the Lord's children have seen the vanity of man's natural mind and have testified to this fact uncompromisingly, so have they seen the need for the renewing of the mind. Recognizing that "the *mind of the Christian* is also the strategic centre of the 'war on the saints' which Satan wages with ceaseless and fiendish skill" (4), Jessie Penn-Lewis has this to say about the renewing of the mind:

Shall I put it crudely, and say that many get new "hearts", but they keep their old "heads"! They do not realise that unless the hold of the adversary, which he has through the fallen nature of man, is removed from the mind, he has a position of vantage in the life of the believer, for attack and *for hindrance in active service*. (5)

Penn-Lewis also says, "There is a great battle to-day over the use and control of the mind, not only in the world, but among the children of God" (2). She points out that many devoted children of God have "hearts full of love, but 'minds' full of all kinds of mixture—minds that have not been renewed and delivered from the interference of the enemy" (6). Confident in the Lord's ability to renew our mind, she goes on to declare, "God is able, not only to deliver the mind from the enemy's grip but also *to renew* it, so that it becomes as clear as crystal, with 'every rebellious thought brought into captivity'" (6).

Watchman Nee also has some striking things to say regarding the need for the renewing of the mind. Testifying to the fact that the church is composed only of that which comes out of Christ, not out of man's talent, ability, thought, and self, he says this about the mind:

We may also meet some people who are very clever. Their minds are exceptionally keen. Before they were saved, they used their mind to study philosophy, science, and literature. After they are saved, they simply use their mind to study God's Word. But we must ask, "From where does this keen mind come? Has it been dealt with by the cross? Is it under the control of the Holy Spirit? Or is it just that mind which they had originally?" If this is so, it is simply something out of the earthly Adam, out of the man himself, the human nature; it is something of the flesh. Although these people have changed the subject, their mind is still the same old mind! And when they use this mind to study the Bible, instead of helping the church, they will cause the church to suffer loss. (*Church* 30-31)

Further testimony to Paul's word concerning the need for the renewing of the mind is found in the writings of Witness Lee: "In our spirit we are entirely different from the people of the world, but I am afraid that in our mind...we are still exactly the same" (*Economy* 84). Commenting on Romans 12:2, he says,

You have been regenerated, but, may I ask, has your mind been renewed? Do you have a new mind, or do you still have the old mind? If our mind remains old, it means that we are not being transformed in the soul. It is quite possible for us to be regenerated in the spirit, but still be old in the mind, emotion, and will. There is no change in our thinking, our loving, and our choosing. In these things we are just the same as the unbelievers. The only difference is that we have been regenerated in the spirit and they have not. As far as the soul is concerned, our way of thinking, our way of loving, and our way of choosing are the same as theirs. This is the reason Romans 12:2 says: "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye *transformed by the renewing of your mind*." If our mind is renewed, then our soul will be transformed. (*Parts* 19-20)

Before we consider the way the mind is renewed and the characteristics of the renewed mind, let us briefly point out the tremendous difference between the renewed mind and the unrenewed mind. Watchman Nee says:

Indeed, the difference between a renewed and an unrenewed nous [Greek word for mind] is as the difference between a shiny glass window and a dirty glass window. The unrenewed nous of a believer is unable to think and to do what the renewed nous is capable of

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thinking and doing. His renewed nous will increase at least several times its thinking capability. Its power of thinking will be greatly improved. So that the difference between a renewed nous and an unrenewed one is as the difference between life and death, heaven and earth. Were we to deal with our nous in the same fervor as we once sought salvation, we would live under an open heaven. (*Knowledge* 103)

Witness Lee points out how the renewing of the mind brings about a change in our thoughts:

We have Christ as life within our spirit, but now we need Christ to spread into the inward parts of the soul and saturate them with Himself. This will transform our soul into His very image. The image of Christ will then be reflected in our thoughts. In whatever we think and consider, our renewed mind will express the glorious image of Christ. The understanding of our mind will then be spiritual. It will be very easy for the mind to understand the things which we sense in our spirit. (*Economy* 85)

Such testimonies regarding the renewing of the mind should encourage us to diligently and earnestly seek the Lord concerning this. We know from the Scriptures that the function of our spirit is to contact God and receive Him and that the function of our body is to enable us to relate to the physical world. The function of our soul, however, is to express the Lord (Luke 1:46). The more we are transformed, changed into His image from glory to glory, the more we express Him (2 Cor. 3:18). But whether or not our soul can magnify and express the Lord in our spirit depends upon the renewing of the mind.

The Process of the Renewing of the Mind

How is the mind renewed? The renewing of the mind takes place through the inward working of the Lord's life to transform a believer from within. To be transformed is to undergo a metabolic change in life. This does not come about through any form of coercion or mind manipulation. It occurs as the Christ who dwells within our spirit makes His home in our heart (Eph. 3:17). Our heart, composed of the mind, will, emotion, and conscience, is to be Christ's home. The more Christ makes His home in our mind, the more our mind with its thoughts, reasonings, memories, and imaginations is renewed. A crucial verse concerning the process of the renewing of the mind is Ephesians 4:23: "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind." Discussing the function of the cross in the renewing of the mind, Jessie Penn-Lewis says:

But for full renewal of the mind we have to go to the Cross, and learn its message that "our old man was crucified" with Christ. This is inclusive of the old carnal, darkened, fleshly mind. This comes out clearly in the words of Ephes. 4.22/23, as following the Apostle's description of the darkened and empty mind in vv. 17 and 18. The "old man" crucified is here bidden to be "put off" by the believer, so that he may be "*renewed in the spirit of his mind*"....The first need is the knowledge of the state of mind by nature, and that a "change of mind" at conversion does not go deep enough to deliver the soul from the power of the enemy in his thought life, and mental activities. Then there must be a deliberate and definite "putting off" of the "old man" in the aspect of the old carnal mind, for the bringing captive to Christ of every thought. What is wanted, then, is to recognise that the *unrenewed mind is part of the old creation* that has to be put off at the Cross. (8)

Witness Lee also has a very clear word on the renewing of the mind according to Ephesians 4:22-24:

The putting away of the old man is the work of the cross, and the putting on of the new man is the work of resurrection. Between the work of the cross and the work of the resurrection is verse 23, "be renewed in the spirit of your mind." The renewing of the mind includes the work of the cross with the resurrection. It means that our natural mind must

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be crossed out and renewed in resurrection. The death of the cross is not the end, but a process leading to an end, which is resurrection....Death to the natural mind leads to a resurrected mind. We will then have a renewed mind in resurrection. This renewed mind is in the spirit and under the control of the spirit; it is filled with the spirit and full of the spirit. Hence, the spirit becomes the spirit of the mind. Then our mind will not only be a renewed mind, but also a spiritual mind with spiritual understanding. (*Economy* 86)

In order for the mind to be renewed, thereby becoming the spirit of the mind, the mind must stand with the spirit. Romans 8:6 speaks of the mind of the flesh and the mind of the spirit. We may have either the mind of the flesh or the mind of the spirit. The mind is neutral. When our mind cooperates with the flesh, it becomes the mind of the flesh; when it cooperates with the spirit, however, it becomes the mind of the spirit. If our mind submits to the spirit, it will be controlled by the spirit and become the mind of the spirit. "Because our mind stands with the spirit, the spirit will rule over the mind, saturate the mind, and become 'the spirit of our mind.'...When the spirit controls and saturates the mind, the spirit becomes the spirit of the mind" (*Economy* 84). When our mind submits to the spirit, becoming the mind of the spirit, and when our spirit saturates our mind, becoming the spirit of our mind, we have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16). Witness Lee has a helpful word concerning how our mind becomes the mind of Christ:

Since Christ is in the spirit, when our mind submits to the spirit, it is submitting to Christ. Thus, He is given the opportunity to expand *from* our spirit into our mind. Formerly, nothing of Christ was within our mind, but when our mind submits to the spirit, the Lord has the opportunity to permeate, fill, and renew our mind with Himself. In this way our soul is transformed by the renewing of our mind. Our mind, thus, will be filled with Christ. This is why Paul is able to say in 1 Corinthians 2:16, "We have the mind of Christ." When we are regenerated in our spirit, we have the Spirit of Christ. When our mind submits to the spirit and lets Christ as the Spirit occupy it, we have even the mind of Christ. (*Parts* 20-21)

We have pointed out that our mind needs to be renewed and that it is renewed by experiencing the death of the cross and the resurrection of Christ. Crucial to the renewing of the mind is the setting of the mind upon the spirit (Rom. 8:6). Only by setting our mind on the regenerated spirit can our spirit permeate our mind and make it the mind of Christ. In the beginning Adam had the choice of eating either the tree of life or the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Today we also have a choice: the choice of setting our mind upon our spirit, which is life and peace, or of setting our mind upon the flesh, which is death. According to Romans 8:6-7, the mind set on the flesh is not only death but also enmity against God. Therefore, where a Christian sets his mind from moment to moment is of tremendous significance in his practical life.

Matthew 16:21-26 is a powerful portion of the Word related to the mind of a believer. These verses reveal that by the improper use of our mind, the mind may actually become one with Satan. In fact, we may be the practical expression of Satan himself. Let us examine Matthew 16:22 and 23. After the Lord explained in verse 21 that He would suffer many things of the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and be raised up the third day, "Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, God be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by no means happen to You!" As soon as Peter spoke these words, the Lord Jesus turned and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men" (v. 23). In his love for the Lord, Peter rebuked the Lord, wanting Him to have pity on Himself. But in making this suggestion, Peter's mind was set on the things of men, not on the things of God. In doing this Peter expressed an opinion, a thought, that was actually the embodiment of Satan. Therefore, the Lord turned and, addressing Peter, said, "Get behind Me, Satan!" The Lord called Peter "Satan" because at that moment Peter was one with Satan in his mind and was the practical expression of Satan.

Today we have a choice: setting our mind upon our spirit, which is life and peace, or setting our mind upon the flesh, which is death. Where a Christian sets his mind from moment to moment is of tremendous significance in his practical life.

The Lord's own words explain how Peter could be one with Satan: "You are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men." In verse 24, the Lord spoke about the need to deny the self, take up the cross, and follow Him. Then in verse 25 He went on to say a word about losing the soul-life. In these verses, four things are related: Satan, the mind, the self, and the soul-life. Because Peter spoke out of himself, setting his mind on the things that are of men, his speaking was also Satan's speaking. Whenever we speak from the self with a mind set on the things of men, we are one with Satan, and the Lord can justly rebuke us, calling us by name and saying, "Get behind Me, Satan!" Whether we stand with Satan or with God depends on where our mind is set.

Who can deny that Peter believed in the Lord Jesus and loved Him? He had just received from the Father the revelation that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16-17). If Peter could be one with Satan in a practical way by minding the things of men, then how about us? We must be seriously warned from this portion of the Word to set our mind on the things of God and to deny the self with its satanic opinions. If we do not deny the self, we may still attempt to speak of God and for God, yet in our speaking we shall be the expression of Satan. Seeing this danger will motivate us to set our mind upon the spirit and to allow the spirit to permeate our mind, to renew it, and to transform it into the mind of Christ.

The Characteristics of the Renewed Mind

In the New Testament we see many characteristics of the renewed mind. One characteristic is that the renewed mind does not trust in itself, but in the Lord. Paul said, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. 3:5). Paul, one with a renewed mind, did not reckon on anything as out of himself. His competence was of God. He had learned not to trust in himself, but in God who raises the dead (1:9).

Another characteristic of the renewed mind is that it is open to all the truth of God. As Watchman Nee says, "An opened mind is very crucial to our spiritual life. If our mind is fully occupied with opinions...about the truth...there will be no way for the truth to enter into our mind or life" (*Man* 565-566). Commenting further on a closed mind, he says, "A closed mind hinders the truth from reaching the spirit. A closed mind means a mind occupied with opinions. Whatever disagrees with its thoughts is opposed and criticized" (566). Jessie Penn-Lewis says, "Whenever you find a man *prejudiced* over some truth he does not understand, it always means that there is some activity of the old mind" (7). Although a closed mind is prejudiced against the truth and refuses to let it in, an open mind receives the truth.

This open mind comes through our experience of the resurrected Christ. In Luke 24 we have a threefold opening: the opening of the eyes (v. 31), the opening of the Scriptures (v. 32), and the opening of the mind (v. 45). It was by experiencing the resurrected Christ that the disciples experienced this threefold opening. Today we also need our eyes opened to see the resurrected Christ, we need the Scriptures opened that the Lord may speak to us in a way to cause our hearts to burn, and we need our minds opened that we might understand the Word of God. The more our mind is renewed through the indwelling Christ as our resurrection life, the more it will be open to all the truth of God, no matter how much this truth may conflict with our natural concepts and opinions.

Another characteristic of the renewed mind is seen in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5: "The weapons of our warfare are not fleshly but powerful before God for the overthrowing of strongholds, as we overthrow reasonings and every high thing rising up against the knowledge of God, and take captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ." Here we see two traits of the renewed mind: first, it is a mind in which the strongholds of reasonings have been overthrown so that the mind may be gained by the Lord out of

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the hand of the enemy; second, it is a mind in which every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. The natural mind is fortified with reasonings, and hidden within the reasonings are the thoughts. In the renewed mind the fortifications of reasonings are overthrown and the thoughts are captured. Speaking of the mind as the stronghold of Satan, Jessie Penn-Lewis writes:

The stronghold of the mind of man is therefore the strategic centre of the “war” with the “god of this age”, because it is primarily *through the mind* that he holds his captives in his power, and through the mind of those captives transmits his (1) poison into the minds of others, and his (2) plans and schemes for arousing those souls to active rebellion against God. (4)

What a vast difference between the renewed mind and the unrenewed mind! In the renewed mind every thought is subject to Christ. When such a deliverance and renewal take place, our thinking is no longer independent from Christ. Every thought is one with Him.

In the book of Romans we see several other features of the renewed mind. It is a mind filled with life and peace, for it is a mind set on the spirit (8:6). This reminds us of Isaiah 26:3: “You will keep the steadfast of mind / In perfect peace / Because he trusts in You.” The renewed mind is a transformed mind, a mind that has undergone a metabolic change through the inward working of the Spirit of life (Rom. 12:2). As a consequence, a person with a renewed mind regards himself soberly; he does not regard himself more highly than he ought. Paul says, “For I say, through the grace given to me, to every one who is among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to be soberminded, as God has apportioned to each a measure of faith” (v. 3). In verse 16 Paul goes on to say, “Be of the same mind toward one another, not setting your mind on the high things but going along with the lowly; do not be wise in yourselves.” Thus, a renewed mind does not mind high things in a proud way but goes along with the lowly. If our mind has been renewed in this way, we will not be wise in ourselves.

Those with a renewed mind have in them the mind “which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). The context of Philippians 2 discloses that one with the mind of Christ will empty himself and lower himself, not exalt himself, just as Christ emptied and lowered Himself but was exalted by God.

Because a renewed mind is a mind permeated with the Spirit, in one who has a renewed mind, the mind becomes “the mind of the Spirit,” and the spirit becomes the spirit of the mind (Rom. 8:27; Eph. 4:23). The Spirit of God desires to have full possession of our minds. This does not take place through any forfeiture of the function of the mind but through the inward working of the Holy Spirit in the heart and soul of a believer. In order for the Spirit to possess our mind and be expressed through it, all hindrances in the mind must be removed. Jessie Penn-Lewis remarks:

If the *mind is the vehicle of the Spirit* it is absolutely necessary that the Spirit of God should have full possession of it, with every “rebellious thought” brought into captivity to Christ. The Holy Spirit, dwelling in the spirit, needs the mind as a channel for expression, but it may be so blocked up, and filled with other things that He is unable to transmit all He desires to do. A “blocked” mind means the spirit unexpressed, and a spirit unexpressed is a stoppage of the outflow of the Spirit of God to others. (5)

The Spirit of God will not force Himself upon us or into us. At the time of Christ’s baptism, the Spirit of God *descended* as a dove upon *Him*. The Spirit also works in us as a gentle dove. He does not require that anyone forfeit the function of his mind. Rather, He patiently waits for the believer voluntarily to surrender and abandon himself to the Spirit so that, with the active cooperation of the believer’s intellect, the Spirit may spread into the mind, renew it, and flow out through it to give life-giving words to satisfy the

The Spirit waits for the believer voluntarily to surrender and abandon himself so that, with the active cooperation of the believer’s intellect, He may spread into the mind, renew it, and flow out through it to give life-giving words to satisfy the thirst of others.

thirst of others. How refreshing it is to be with those with such a Spirit-saturated mind! When these Christians “express their thoughts and ideas, we sense the presence of the Lord Spirit. Because their minds are under the control and direction of the spirit, the Lord Spirit has the opportunity to saturate and occupy their mind” (*Parts 21-22*).

A mind that has been so renewed through being permeated by the life-giving Spirit will surely be set on the things above, not on the things on earth (Col. 3:2). Through the setting of the renewed mind upon the things in heaven, the believer is able to maintain experientially his position of ascension.

A significant word regarding the renewed mind is found in Hebrews 10:16: “This is the covenant which I will covenant with them after those days, says the Lord: I will impart My laws upon their hearts, and upon their mind I will inscribe them.” As 8:10, a sister verse, indicates, when this takes place, the Lord will be our God and we will be His people. As the Lord inscribes His laws upon our minds, we gain the inward subjective knowledge of God. Eventually, we will no longer need teachers in an outward way, for we will all know the Lord in an inward way. Verse 11 says, “They shall by no means each teach his fellow citizen and each his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all will know Me from the little one to the great one among them.” How marvelous to have a mind inscribed with the laws of God! This is an outstanding characteristic of the renewed mind.

The Lord renews our mind by permeating it with “the full knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (Col. 1:9). Spiritual wisdom and understanding are of the Spirit of God and involve our spirit and our renewed mind. “Wisdom is in our spirit and is for us to perceive God’s eternal will; spiritual understanding is in our mind, renewed by the Spirit, and is for us to understand and interpret what we perceive in our spirit” (Recovery Version, note 2). Regarding spiritual understanding Witness Lee says,

This renewing work of the Holy Spirit begins first in our spirit and then expands to our soul to renew the understanding of our mind that we may know the things of the spirit. The more the understanding of our mind is renewed by the Holy Spirit, the more we can comprehend spiritual things and understand the will of God. (*Knowledge 167*)

This spiritual understanding of the renewed mind gives us the capability to understand the teaching of the anointing mentioned in 1 John 2:27: “As for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him.” The anointing is the moving of the Holy Spirit within us, and the teaching of the anointing is the interpretation by the mind of this moving of the Spirit within. To know the teaching of the anointing within us, our mind must function in a proper, normal way. In his discussion of the teaching of the anointing and the understanding of the mind, Witness Lee says,

The teaching of the anointing is the interpretation and understanding of the mind with regard to the anointing in the spirit. Therefore, if we desire to follow the teaching of the anointing, we should have not only a keen feeling in our spirit, but also an experienced and spiritual mind. Such a mind includes the renewing of the mind, the exercising of our comprehension in spiritual matters, and the collecting of spiritual knowledge. These require that we love the Lord more, seek spiritual experiences, live in fellowship, study the Bible, read spiritual books, and listen to messages. Through these, our mind will receive spiritual unveiling and become enriched in knowledge; thus, it will be able to comprehend the meaning of the anointing in our spirit. Consequently, we will realize the teaching of the anointing. (*Experience 143-144*)

The apostle Paul exhibits still another characteristic of the renewed mind in 1 Corinthians 7. In writing to the church in Corinth, he says, “Now concerning virgins I have no

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commandment of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who has been shown mercy by the Lord to be faithful” (v. 25). Not claiming to have a word from the Lord, Paul proceeds to give his opinion. However, as we read 1 Corinthians 7:26-39 today, we regard it as the word of God. Thus, Paul’s utterance of his opinion was actually the speaking of God’s word. Paul’s mind was so renewed and filled with the Spirit that even his opinion became the inspired word of God. Paul concludes this chapter by saying, “But she is more blessed if she so remains, according to my opinion; but I think that I also have the Spirit of God” (v. 40). In this portion of the Word we have no self-assured expressions such as, “The Lord told me this!” On the contrary, we see a person filled with Christ, whose opinion was so one with the Lord that it became the word of God. The transformation that had to take place in Paul’s mind in order for his opinion to be God’s word is nothing less than astounding. The opinions of the natural mind are the embodiment and expression of Satan, but here is one whose opinion is God’s word! What a remarkable characteristic of the renewed mind and what a marvelous testimony to the renewing power of the life of God in the believers!

There is one further characteristic of the renewed mind that we need to consider, and this is perhaps the most significant of all. The renewed mind is able to be of one mind with other believers. In fact, those with a renewed mind can even be of the same opinion. Listen to Paul’s word in 1 Corinthians 1:10: “Now I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion.” Here Paul urged the believers in Corinth to be of one mind and one opinion. Apparently it was no offense to Paul for the believers in a locality to be the same in their concept. Rather, it was normal and a prerequisite to the maintenance of the oneness of the church in a practical way.

Such a word about oneness of mind is not an isolated occurrence. Romans 15:5 says, “Now the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind toward one another according to Christ Jesus.” To be of the same mind means “to mind the same thing.” In 12:16 Paul encourages the believers by saying, “Be of the same mind toward one another.” Once again, this is an exhortation to mind the same thing. In 2 Corinthians 13:11 Paul says, “Finally, brothers, rejoice, be perfected, be comforted, think the same thing.” In Galatians 5:10 he expresses the confidence that all those in the churches in the region of Galatia would “be of no other mind,” expecting that there would be no differences in thinking. In Philippians 2:2 Paul says, “Make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing.” In 3:15 Paul continues, “Let us therefore, as many as are full-grown, have this mind; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, this also God will reveal to you.” In 4:2 Paul exhorts Euodias and Syntyche “to think the same thing in the Lord.” Again and again Paul appealed to the believers to be one in mind, to think the same thing, indicating the possibility of such an issue from renewed minds.

The genuine likemindedness among the believers comes not from outward coercion but from the inward working of the same Holy Spirit who indwells us all. When we all deny the self with its prejudices and biases and turn to the Lord in our spirit, we spontaneously have the same mind, even the same opinion. A stanza from one of Charles Wesley’s hymns expresses the joy of such oneness: “When all are sweetly joined / (True followers of the Lamb), / They’re one in heart and mind, / They think and speak the same; / When all in love together dwell, / The comfort is unspeakable!” (*Hymns*, #1244).

This was the situation in the first local church, the church at Jerusalem. “The heart and soul of the multitude of those who had believed was one” (Acts 4:32). This was, to be sure, the initial fulfillment of the oneness for which the Lord Jesus prayed in John 17. If we allow the Lord to transform our soul by the renewing of the mind, we will enter, experientially, into such glorious oneness.

Genuine likemindedness among the believers comes from the inward working of the same Holy Spirit who indwells us all. When we all deny the self with its prejudices and biases and turn to the Lord in our spirit, we spontaneously have the same mind.

The Spirit and the Mind

At this juncture we need to comment further on the relationship between the spirit and the mind. God created man with both a spirit and a mind, and both are to be used properly and normally. It is the function of the spirit to receive God, to contact God, to worship God, and to serve God (Rom. 1:9). It is in the spirit that we have fellowship with the Lord. In spirit we have divine revelation (Eph. 1:17), we are built into God's dwelling place (2:22), we are filled with the Holy Spirit (5:18), and we pray the prayer of spiritual warfare (6:18). The Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is with our spirit (Rom. 8:16; 2 Tim. 4:22). The grace we need for our daily living is also found in our spirit (Gal. 6:18). Only by living, worshipping, fellowshiping, working, and walking in the spirit can we be proper Christians before God.

According to the Scriptures the renewed mind has a crucial function. It is in the mind that we understand and grasp and interpret spiritual things. It is through the mind that we are able to edify the church of God by speaking the things of the Spirit to others (1 Cor. 14:14-19). However, the mind in and of itself cannot grasp God, because God is Spirit, not a thought or concept to be received directly into the mind. Likewise, the spirit needs the mind in order to understand the things of the Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 14:15 Paul, speaking of the abuse of tongues in Christian gatherings, says, "What then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray also with the mind; I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing also with the mind." Today we should follow Paul's example. In the meetings we pray with the spirit and with the mind also; we sing with the spirit and with the mind also. In fact, every aspect of the proper church life is a matter of the spirit and the mind also. What Witness Lee says regarding this is helpful:

Whenever God makes something known to us in the intuition of our spirit, the understanding of the mind can immediately understand. When we have a strong and alert spirit plus a renewed and clear understanding, we can then have a full inward knowledge of the nature of God and of all His guidance and revelation. (*Knowledge* 169)

We need both an exercised spirit and a renewed mind, a strong and alert spirit plus a renewed and clear understanding.

At this juncture we need to point out that using the mind with the spirit is utterly different from walking in the vanity of the mind (Eph. 4:17), that is, living and having our being in the realm of the natural mind apart from the spirit. Both the Scriptures and the experience of Christians testify that Christians in fact frequently exercise the mind with no regard to the spirit, often in rebellion against the inner sense of the Lord in the spirit. When we do this, we grieve the Spirit (v. 30). We need to be delivered from the control of the natural mind and set the mind on the spirit to contact God in a living way. Thinking about God is not the same as contacting Him. Reasoning about God is not the same as experiencing Him. Conceptualizing about God is not the same as enjoying Him. There is a great difference between accumulating information about God in the mind and knowing God by contacting Him in the spirit and simultaneously receiving a spiritual understanding of Him in the renewed mind. According to the testimony of Scripture and our experience, we worship God in spirit, and we understand the things of God through a renewed mind set on the spirit.

The Renewing of the Mind, the Body of Christ, the One New Man, and the New Jerusalem

The central thought of this article is that the transformation of the soul is by the renewing of the mind. The renewing Spirit (Titus 3:5) is mingled with our regenerated spirit to form the mingled spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). This mingled spirit needs to spread into our mind

There is a great difference between accumulating information about God in the mind and knowing God by contacting Him in the spirit and simultaneously receiving a spiritual understanding of Him in the renewed mind.

to become the spirit of our mind and to renew our entire being not mainly for our personal spiritual development and maturation but primarily for the Body of Christ, the one new man, and the New Jerusalem. As the context of Romans 12 makes clear, the renewing of the mind, like all genuine spirituality, is a Body matter, that is, a matter for the function and the building up of the organic Body of Christ. Immediately after Paul speaks in verse 2 of transformation by the renewing of the mind, he exhorts us in verse 3 not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think but “to think so as to be sober-minded.” Then in verses 4 and 5 he continues, “For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.” Without the renewing of the mind in verse 2 and the sober mind in verse 3 we cannot have the reality of the Body of Christ in verses 4 and 5 or the practice of the Body life in verses 6 through 21. The principle is the same with the one new man and the New Jerusalem. When the Lord Jesus died on the cross for our redemption and to release the divine life for our regeneration, He broke down the middle wall of partition, abolished the law of commandments in ordinances, and created one new man. This new man is a corporate entity composed of both Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:14-15). Although the one new man has been created and exists as a fact, we nevertheless need to put on the new man practically and experientially (4:24). For this, we need to put off the old man and be renewed in the spirit of our mind (vv. 22-23). The more we are renewed through the spreading of the mingled spirit into our mind, the more the element of the new man—the corporate God-man—saturates and permeates our mind and the more we put on the new man and become parts of the expression of the new man. Hence, the renewing of the mind is for the practical existence of the one new man. The ultimate consummation of the church as the Body of Christ and the one new man will be the New Jerusalem. As the eternal corporate expression of the Triune God, the New Jerusalem must be new even as God Himself is new. Even today we are in the process of becoming the New Jerusalem by being renewed in our mind, in our soul, and in our entire tripartite being. We thank the Lord that in His organic salvation (Rom. 5:10) we are being transformed by the renewing of the mind and that this renewing is for the Body of Christ, the one new man, and the New Jerusalem. 

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