

The Believers' Union with the Triune God in His Organic Salvation

by Ed Marks

Salvation is a term that we believers tend to either take for granted or trivialize because of our narrow view. May the Lord open our eyes to see the greatness of His salvation. Paul describes God's full salvation in Hebrews as being "so great a salvation" (2:3). It is "so great" because we cannot approximate how great it is. We want to take a look at the Triune God's full salvation for the believers, a salvation which accomplishes the eternal purpose of God according to His heart's desire. God's complete salvation has two aspects: a judicial aspect and an organic aspect.¹ When we use the word *judicial*, we are referring to the aspect of God's salvation which meets His legal requirements as the righteous God to redeem fallen mankind. The fulfillment of God's judicial requirement is the procedure of God's salvation. When we use the word *organic*, we are speaking of the aspect of God's salvation by and in His divine life which accomplishes His eternal purpose.

The procedure to satisfy God's judicial requirements is seen mainly in the Gospels in the earthly ministry of Christ. Through His redemptive work, we now have the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:47), the purification of sins (Heb. 1:3), justification (Rom. 3:24-25), reconciliation (5:10a), and positional sanctification (1 Cor. 1:2; Heb. 13:12). How wonderful redemption is! But we must see that this is merely the procedure of God's full salvation. The procedure of God's salvation was carried out by God becoming man. The goal of God's salvation is that man might become God in life and in nature but, of course, not in the Godhead and not as an object of worship. Athanasius, a great defender of the faith in the fourth century, said, "He was made man that we might be made God" (65). God became man to carry out His judicial redemption so that man might become God by His organic salvation. God's goal is to deify man for His expression (see "...that we might be made

God," pp. 21-31). This goal is carried out organically by the life of the Triune God being dispensed into the tripartite man to bring him into a complete union with the Triune God in his entire being. God's full salvation with both its judicial and organic aspects can be seen in Romans 5:10: "For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled." God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself through Christ's death on the cross (2 Cor. 5:19), accomplishing a marvelous redemption for man to satisfy God's judicial requirements. But this is not all. There is "much more." We need this "much more" Christian life—"much more we will be saved in His life." This "much more" organic salvation is the process of our being deified through regeneration, organic shepherding, dispositional sanctification, renewing, transformation, building, conformation, and glorification. This is the process of an ever-increasing organic union with the Triune God that begins with our spirit, proceeds through our soul, and finishes in our body at our glorification and transfiguration.

Regeneration

D. L. Moody once said that regeneration is the greatest miracle in the universe. In regeneration we receive another life, the divine, spiritual life of God in addition to our human life. Regeneration as the center and commencement of God's organic salvation brings us back to God's original intention. The first two chapters of Genesis reveal that God created man as a vessel to contain and express Him. Genesis 1:26 says that man was created in God's image and after God's likeness. Just as a glove is made in the image and likeness of a hand in order to contain and express a hand, so man was created in the image and likeness of God in order to contain and express God. All of the other creatures were

created after their kind, or species, but man was created, not after his kind, but after God's likeness and in His image. Mankind, before the fall, was actually "Godkind."

Because of God's purpose for man, He created man in a very particular way. Genesis 2:7 says, "The LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (lit.). This verse shows the tripartite being of man. The dust from the ground was formed into his physical body so that he could possess world-consciousness to contact the material universe. The breath of life breathed into his nostrils became his human spirit so that he could possess God-consciousness and contact the divine and mystical realm of God who is Spirit. The Hebrew word for breath in Genesis 2:7 is *neshamah*. Proverbs 20:27 says that "the spirit [*neshamah*] of man is the lamp of the LORD." This shows that the breath of life breathed into man is the spirit of man. The issue of the breath of life being breathed into man's nostrils was that man became a living soul. Man's soul possesses self-consciousness for him to have his personality and contact the things of the psychological realm. The organ that makes man distinct from the other creatures is his human spirit. Job 12:10 says that in God's hand is the "soul of every living thing and the spirit of all mankind" (lit.). The living creatures have a body and a soul, but only man has a spirit with which to contact and contain God. Blaise Pascal once said that there is a God-shaped vacuum in every man that only God can fill. This vacuum is man's innermost being, his human spirit. Because man possesses a spirit, he longs for meaning; that is, he longs for God. Furthermore, Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that God put eternity in man's heart. The Amplified Bible says that eternity here is "a divinely implanted sense of a purpose working through the ages which nothing under the sun, but only God, can satisfy." This is why King Solomon, after partaking of all the riches that human life had to offer, came to the conclusion that all under the sun is vanity of vanities (Eccl. 1:2). Man's spirit is for him to contact and contain God, whereas man's heart is for him to love God and enjoy God.

God created man in His image as a vessel with a human spirit with the intention that man would receive Him as life (*zoe*) to contain and express Him. After God created man as such a vessel, He placed this man in front of the tree of life to indicate man's need to take Him in as life (Gen. 2:9). What is the identity of the tree of life? The Lord Jesus said in the Gospel of John that He came that we might have life and have it abundantly (10:10b). Then He declared, "I

am...the life" (14:6). There are three Greek words for life in the New Testament. *Bios* refers to the physical life, and *psuche* refers to the life of the soul. The Lord did not come that man might have *bios* or *psuche*. He did not say, "I am the *bios* (or *psuche*)." The Lord came that we might have *zoe*, and He Himself is *zoe*. Man already has *bios* and *psuche*. What man needs is another life in addition to his human life and this life is *zoe*. *Zoe* is the divine, uncreated, indestructible, indissoluble life of God. The tree of life is actually the tree of *zoe*. *Zoe* is Christ as the embodiment of God (Col. 2:9). Even before the fall and apart from sin, Adam needed to receive this life. In other words, even Adam in his sinless state needed to be regenerated. He needed to have another birth by receiving the life of God. Adam was perfect and good, but God's desire is not to have a good man. What God wants is a God-man, a man with God as his content. Although Adam had the image and likeness of God, he did not have God as his content. Therefore, God placed Adam before the tree of life with the intention that he would receive Him as life.

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"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that every one who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life" (John 3:16). This shows us that the goal of God's loving us is the eternal life. When we

receive Christ as our life, we become the children of God, the members of the Body of Christ, which will ultimately consummate in the New Jerusalem. God's good pleasure is to have many sons (Eph. 1:5) and to have these many sons consummated as the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:7). It is significant that the revelation concerning being born again to have God's eternal life was spoken to Nicodemus in John 3. Humanly speaking, Nicodemus was a good man, but no matter how good someone seemingly is, he still needs another life by being born anew. The Lord said, "Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (v. 3). To "see" in verse 3 is to "enter into" in verse 5. In order to enter into any kingdom, one must have the life of that kingdom by being born into it. One must be born of the human life to enter into the human kingdom or be born of the animal life to enter into the animal kingdom. Similarly, one must be born of the divine life to enter into the divine kingdom, the kingdom of God. Furthermore, to be in the human kingdom is to belong to the human species. As those who have been born of God, we have entered into God's kingdom and now we belong to the species of God.

Paul told us that before we were regenerated, we were dead in offenses and sins (Eph. 2:1). God warned man in the garden of Eden that if he partook of the tree of knowledge, he would surely die (Gen. 2:17). When man disobeyed

God by partaking of this tree of sin, his entire being was transmuted because he received the sinful element of God's enemy, Satan. Man's body became the flesh of sin, his soul became the self, and his spirit became dead, causing him to lose the function which enabled him to contact God. Because of man's fall, the way for man to receive God as the tree of life was closed (3:24), but it was reopened by the crucified Christ. He is the reopened way for man to receive God as the tree of life (Heb. 10:19-20; Rev. 2:7). Now man can be born of God through regeneration.

Regeneration is a second birth, a new birth. In our first birth, we were born of the flesh. In our second birth, we were born of the Spirit. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). This verse shows us that regeneration takes place in our human spirit. Man's deadened human spirit becomes the receptacle of the life of God. Remarkably, through regeneration our spirit becomes life, *zoe* (Rom. 8:10). After regeneration the Lord as the Spirit of life is with our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22). Also, the Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16). Now according to 1 Corinthians 6:17, "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." The divine Spirit dwells in our human spirit, and these two are mingled together to be one spirit. The second birth makes us one spirit with God! What a wonderful new birth this is!

Paul Billheimer, in chapter two of his book *Destined for the Throne*, speaks of the supreme rank of redeemed humanity acquired through regeneration. (The reader should take note that we are referring to the 1975 edition of Billheimer's book. Billy Graham wrote the foreword to the 1975 edition, in which he tells the readers to carefully study and apply to their lives what is said by Billheimer. Billheimer died in 1984, and a new revised edition of his book was published in 1996. Regrettably, this revised edition has deleted and changed many crucial words and phrases in chapter two which convey the high peak of the divine revelation concerning regeneration.) Billheimer says the following:

Created originally in the image of God, redeemed humanity has been elevated by means of a *divinely conceived genetic process* known as the new birth to the highest rank of all created beings....

No angel can ever become a congenital member of the family of God. They are created, not generated, beings.... Angels can never have the heritage, the "genes" of God. They can never be partakers of the divine nature....

But this is not all. We tread softly here. With bated breath we read in 1 Corinthians 6:17: "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." This union goes beyond a mere formal, functional, or idealistic harmony or rapport. It is an organic

unity, an "organic relationship of personalities" (Sauer). Through the new birth we become bona fide members of the original cosmic family (Eph. 3:15), actual generated sons of God (1 John 3:2), "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), begotten by Him, impregnated with His "genes", called the seed or "sperma" of God (1 John 5:1, 18 and 1 Peter 1:3, 23), and bearing His heredity. Thus, through the new birth—and I speak reverently—we become the "next of kin" to the Trinity, a kind of "extension" of the Godhead. (33-35)

In speaking of regenerated men Billheimer says:

Here is a completely new, unique, and exclusive order of beings which may be called a "new species"...This is the order of beings which Paul called "the new man" (Eph. 2:15), the "new humanity" destined through the new birth to be the aristocracy of the universe. They form a new and exclusive royalty, a new ruling hierarchy who will also constitute the Bride, the Lamb's Wife....

But from all eternity God purposed to have a family circle of His *very own*, not only created but *also generated* by His own life, incorporating His own seed, "sperma," "genes," or heredity....Christ is the Prototype after which all other sons are being fashioned. In John 1:12-13 we learn that the plan of redemption was inaugurated to set up *a unique and original generative method* by which these "many sons" would be born and progressively disciplined by a sanctifying process in order to bring them to glory. "But as many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13). *Here is a distinct reference to two parallel generative methods, one human, the other divine.* In and through Christ alone does God realize and fulfill His paternal longing for a generic family relationship. *But for this plan, God's family relationship would have been forever confined to the Trinity.*

Those who have worked on an assembly line know that a proto-type is first designed, handcrafted, and tested before it is committed to the assembly line. They also know that the purpose of the assembly line is to produce exact duplicates, perfect copies of the original. This is God's purpose in the plan of redemption—to produce, by means of the new birth, an entirely new and unique species, exact replicas of His Son with whom He will share His glory and His dominion, and who will constitute a royal progeny and form the governing and administrative staff of His eternal kingdom....

Christ is the divine Prototype after which this new species is being made. They are to be exact copies of Him, true genotypes, *as utterly like Him as it is possible for the finite to be like the Infinite.* As sons of God, begotten by Him, incorporating into their fundamental being and nature the very "genes" of God, they rank above all other created beings

and are elevated to the most sublime height possible short of becoming members of the Trinity itself....

By these means God has exalted redeemed humanity to such a sublime rank that it is impossible for Him to elevate them any further without bringing them into the inner circle of the Godhead itself...As bona fide sons, generated by the very life of God Himself,...as members of His Body of which He is the Head, and, as spirit of His Spirit, how can we ever be brought nearer? (35-38)

Billheimer points out that by saying that the children of God have the “genes” of God, no physical relationship is implied (35). This is a spiritual reality. First John 3:9 says that God’s seed abides in everyone who has been begotten of God. The Amplified Bible says for this verse: “His principle of life, the divine sperm, remains permanently within him.” The word for *seed* here is the Greek word *sperma*. When we repent to God and receive the Lord Jesus by believing into Him, we are born of God to become the children of God, possessing His heredity with His very life and nature. Now according to 2 Peter 1:4 we are partakers of the divine nature.

In describing his experience of being born again, D. L. Moody said, “To become a partaker of the divine nature is the greatest blessing that can come to any man this side of heaven...I got God’s nature, a new nature, distinct and separate from the old nature” (89).

Then at the end of his message he admonishes:

Oh, man, woman, you may be deceived about ten thousand things, but do not be deceived on this one thing! *Make sure you have the divine nature*, that you have been *born from above*, that you have been *born of God*, that you have a life that has come from God, distinct and separate from the natural life, *a new life, a new creation.* (92)

Organic Shepherding

In our first birth, we receive the human life and nature of our earthly father. In our second birth, we receive the divine life and nature of our heavenly Father. After our first birth, we need to grow in our human, physical life. After

our second birth, as newborn babes we need to grow in the spiritual, divine life by feeding on the guileless milk of the Word (1 Pet. 2:2). We also need the Lord to shepherd and feed us organically so that we may grow in His life. He is the Chief Shepherd (5:4), the great Shepherd (Heb. 13:20), and the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls (1 Pet. 2:25). Thank the Lord that after we are born of Him, He is our Shepherd (Psa. 23:1) to feed us that we may grow in the divine life and become mature sons of God.

Also, out of our love for Him, we need to be one with Him to feed His lambs and His sheep (John 21:15-17). The apostle Paul left us a wonderful pattern of one who shepherds the Lord’s sheep by ministering

Christ as life to them. In his final meeting with the elders in Ephesus, Paul charged them to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood (Acts 20:28). As a pattern among them, Paul reminded them that he did not withhold anything that was profitable to the believers in Ephesus. He declared to them the entire counsel of God (v. 27) by teaching them publicly and from house to house (v. 20). This shows that we should minister Christ not merely publicly in large meetings but also in the homes of the believers. Furthermore, Paul reminded them that for three years, night and day,

he did not cease admonishing each one of them with tears (v. 31). As those who are under the headship of our Chief Shepherd to be one with Him, we should have personal contact with each of the Lord’s lambs, the new believers, to feed them with Christ as their green pasture, their spiritual life supply. This organic feeding results in the believers’ maturity in the divine life, which is needed for them to be built up in the Body of Christ.

Dispositional Sanctification

Our salvation in the divine life to further our organic union with the Triune God continues with dispositional sanctification. Positional sanctification is through the redeeming blood of Christ for our separation unto God judicially (Heb. 13:12), whereas dispositional sanctification is by the Holy Spirit for our saturation with God organically (Rom. 6:19, 22). Sanctification is not merely an outward matter; it is also an inward matter. According to 2 Peter 1:4, the

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believers have been made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust. This verse shows us that the believers in Christ should be “partakers” and “escapers.” The more we partake of the divine nature, the more we escape the worldly corruption. Also the more we escape, the more we partake of the divine nature. This is a cycle of partaking and escaping. To escape the world is to be sanctified positionally; to partake of the divine nature is to be sanctified dispositionally through the holy nature of God saturating our crooked, perverted, and fallen human nature.

Ephesians 1:4 and 5 say, “Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love, predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” This portion of God’s Word shows us that sanctification is for sonship. God chose us to be holy by predestinating us unto, or for, sonship. Only God is holy. Only He is unique and distinct from everything that is common. How wonderful it is that He chose us to be holy! How can we be as holy as the holy One? It is only by the holy God imparting Himself into us with His holy nature to make us holy. In this way He sanctifies us, and this sanctifying makes us the sons of God. Hebrews 2:10 and 11 reveal that God in Christ is leading many sons into glory by Christ’s sanctifying them. Christ is the One who sanctifies, and we are the ones who are being sanctified. The process of sanctification is the process of our being led into glory. First Thessalonians 5:23 shows that God wants to sanctify us in our entire tripartite being, from our spirit through our soul to our body. When the sanctifying process reaches our body that will be the time of our glorification, our being led fully into the glory of God. Thus, dispositional sanctification is the dispensing of God’s divine, holy nature into our entire being to “sonize” us for God’s good pleasure. We coin the verb “sonize” because we are in the process of being made sons of God in a full way. Notice what John says in his first Epistle: “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been manifested what we will be. We know that if He is manifested, we will be like Him because we will see Him even as He is” (3:2). On the one hand, we are the children of God now. On the other hand, it has not yet been manifested what we will be as the full-grown sons of God. In this sense, we are “eagerly awaiting sonship, the redemption of our body.” (Rom. 8:23). “This sonship began with the regeneration of our spirit, is continuing with the transformation of our soul, and will be consummated with the redemption of our body” (Recovery Version, Rom. 8:23, note 3). The sanctifying of our spirit, soul, and body is the process of our being “sonized” in spirit, soul, and body.

Now we want to consider how this dispositional sanctification takes place. The sanctifying work of the Triune God in this age is spoken of by Paul in Ephesians 5:25-27:

“Christ...loved the church and gave Himself up for her that He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word, that He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish.” These verses show us three stages of Christ. First, the incarnated Christ, the Christ in the flesh, died to satisfy the judicial requirements of God to redeem the church. Second, the pneumatic Christ, the Christ as the life-giving Spirit, sanctifies the church organically by the washing of the water in the word. Third, the returning Christ, the Christ as the Bridegroom, presents the church to Himself as His glorious bride. Christ gave Himself up for the church for a purpose—that He might sanctify her. Christ sanctifies the church for a purpose—that He might present her to Himself as His deified, glorious bride.

We are sanctified dispositionally by the washing of the water in the word. In John 17:17 the Lord prayed, “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.” This shows how critical it is for us to remain in the Lord’s holy word. The word for “washing” in Ephesians 5:26 is literally “laver.” We are sanctified by the laver of the water in the word. The priests in the Old Testament were required to wash in the laver before they could enter into the Holy Place of the tabernacle (Exo. 30:18-21). This laver was made of the brass mirrors of the serving women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle (38:8). Brass signifies God’s judgment. The Bible with its sixty-six books is the fulfillment of the laver as a type in the Old Testament. When we read the Bible prayerfully, we experience the reality of the laver. The Bible becomes like a brass mirror to us. We are enlightened by God to see our real condition, and all the things within us that do not match God’s holy nature are judged by God.

Also, we are cleansed by the water in the word. The “word” here is *rhema* in Greek. Within the *logos*, the written and constant Word, is the *rhema*, the Lord’s living and instant word to us. The Lord’s instant word is the life-giving water which metabolically cleanses our inner being to dispositionally sanctify us with the divine nature of God. In John 6:63 the Lord Jesus said, “The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.” The Lord’s instant words, which are based on His constant Word in the Bible, are spirit and life to us to sanctify us. This is why we need to read the Bible in a prayerful way. We should receive the word by means of all prayer (Eph. 6:17-18). When we pray over and with the words that we read, the Lord’s words become spirit and life to us to metabolically sanctify us. The divine sanctification by the washing of the water in the word is our preparation to be the bride of Christ. This metabolic washing purges away the spots of our natural life, the wrinkles of our old man, and anything within us that does not match Christ. It also saturates us with His holy nature so that we can become His glorious bride.

Renewing

Titus 3:5 speaks of the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. When we were regenerated, the renewing of the Holy Spirit began to take place within us. “The washing of regeneration purges away all the things of the old nature of our old man, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit imparts something new—the divine essence of the new man—into our being” (Recovery Version, Titus 3:5, note 4). Spiritually speaking, only God is new. The new

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creation has the divine life and nature of the new God (2 Cor. 5:17), whereas the old creation does not. When we were regenerated, God made us a new creation by dispensing His divine life and nature into us. Ezekiel 36:26 reveals that when we were regenerated, God gave us a new spirit and a new heart. We were given a new spirit because God, who is ever new and who makes all things new (Rev. 21:5a), came into our spirit to dwell there. Our unregenerated spirit was old and dead, but now it is new because the God who is new dwells there. We have a new spirit to contact God and a new heart to love God. At our regeneration God began to make His home in our heart (Eph. 3:17). Our heart before regeneration was hard, evil, and full of hatred and discord. Through regeneration we began to have a heart that is soft, pure, loving, and at peace with God and man. This is a new heart.

On the one hand, we have such a heart by being born again. But the Bible tells us we need a daily renewing. Our heart needs to be renewed day by day or it can become hard and old. It is like soil that needs to be cultivated daily to make it the good earth in which the life of God can grow (Matt. 13:19-23). In order for our heart to be renewed day by day, we need to constantly turn our heart to the Lord. Whenever the heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away, and we can behold the Lord with an unveiled face (2 Cor. 3:16, 18). To turn our heart to the Lord is to repent, and to repent is to have a change of mind by turning from all things other than God to God Himself. Also, we need to be those who seek purity. We want to pursue the Lord with those who call on Him out of a pure heart (2 Tim. 2:22). “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). To be pure in heart is to have Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God, as our only goal. Like Paul we pursue toward this goal, which is the wonderful person of Christ Himself, whom we want to gain and be found in day by day (Phil. 3:8-9, 14). To seek purity by holding Christ as our unique goal keeps our heart in the renewing process.

“Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16). The outer man consists of our body and our soul. The soul is the life and person of our outer man, and our body is its organ. The sufferings which come to us in a daily way through our environment are tailor-made by the sovereign God to consume our outer man. But thank the Lord that while this outward consuming is going on, there is a renewing taking place in our inner man. The inner man consists of our renewed soul and our spirit. Our spirit is the life and person of our inner man, and our soul is its organ. Our inner man is renewed day by day with the fresh supply of the resurrection life of Christ in the renewing Holy Spirit.

We need to be revived every morning to be renewed day by day. To be renewed day by day every believer should build up a life habit of having a personal and affectionate time with the Lord every morning to receive His new mercies (Lam. 3:22-23, KJV). In this personal time we can take in the Lord as our new and fresh element through receiving His word with prayer. Also, we need to deny and reject the soul as our life and person so that we can live and walk by the Spirit as our life and person. As we live and walk by the Spirit in our spirit, the faculties of our soul—the mind, emotion, and will—are uplifted and renewed. Furthermore, we need to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4) and serve in newness of spirit (7:6) to build up the Body as the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), the new man (Eph. 2:15), with the ever new Triune God to consummate the New Jerusalem.

Ephesians 4:23 says that we are to be renewed in the spirit of our mind. The Holy Spirit mingled with our human spirit spreads into our mind to become the spirit of our mind. Philippians 2:5 says, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” The mind of Christ can actually be “in us.” His mind is dispensed into our mind by the mingled spirit spreading into our mind. Our mind is thus renewed with the mind of Christ, making us one with Him in His thoughts. We are “transformed by the renewing of the mind” (Rom. 12:2). The renewing of our mind takes place by our receiving the thoughts, concepts, and logic of God through the teaching of the Scriptures and the enlightening of the Holy Spirit. In this way our mind is changed by the purging away of our old concepts and the infusing of God’s new concepts into our mind. The renewing of our mind issues in our transformation.

Transformation

Transformation is “the inward, metabolic process in which God works to spread His divine life and nature throughout every part of our being, particularly our soul, bringing Christ

and His riches into our being as our new element and causing our old, natural element to be gradually discharged” (Recovery Version, Rom. 12:2, note 3). Let us consider how this transforming work takes place in us. Second Corinthians 3:15 says, “...a veil lies on their heart,” and verse 16 says, “Whenever their heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” Then verse 18 says, “We all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.” We must be impressed that it is not a small thing for us to keep turning our heart to the Lord throughout the day, because whenever our heart turns to Him, the veil is taken away from our heart, and we can behold the Lord’s glory with an unveiled face.

These verses show that in the divine realm and according to the divine perspective, our real face is our heart. A veil lies on our heart until it turns to the Lord; then the veil is taken away, and we have an unveiled face, an unveiled heart, to behold the Lord. God does not look on man’s outward appearance or beauty; God looks on the heart, which is man’s real appearance (1 Sam. 16:7). Our heart, our face, needs to be turned to the Lord in prayer. There is another face implied in 2 Corinthians 3:18, and this is the face of Christ. According to 2 Corinthians 4:6, the glory of God is in the face of Christ. This is the glory we behold when we turn our heart, our face, to the Lord. When we turn our heart to the Lord, we are beholding Him face to face.

His face, His person, is the indwelling treasure in our spirit. Second Corinthians 4:6 says that God is “the One who shined in our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Then verse 7 says, “But we have *this* treasure in earthen vessels...” (emphasis added). *This* treasure, according to verse 6, is not a doctrinal Christ, but the face of Christ. It is the presence of Christ, the actual person of Christ, the face of Christ, which is our priceless treasure. We are earthen vessels who are worthless and fragile, but within our spirit we contain a priceless treasure, the face, the person, of Christ Himself. In Greek the word for *face* is the same word for *person* used in 2 Corinthians 2:10 (Lee 1325). This word signifies “the part around the eyes; the look as the index of the inward thoughts and feelings, which shows forth and manifests the whole person” (Recovery Version, 2 Cor. 2:10, note 3).

To turn our heart to the Lord is to turn to Him as the indwelling One, that is, to turn to His face in our spirit. Then we are beholding His face, our treasure, with our face, our heart. Our heart is like a mirror beholding and reflecting the glory of God in the face of Christ. As we gaze on Christ, we are being transformed from one degree of

glory to another until we become exactly like Him in life, nature, and appearance to express Him in glory. As we are beholding Him face to face, we are in the process of being transformed into His glorious image until one day “we will be like Him because we will see Him even as He is” (1 John 3:2). When we behold Him as He is, we will reflect Him as He is because we will have been transformed to become exactly like Him. This is the wonderful metabolic process of our deification, our “Christification.” Such a wonderful process to accomplish God’s eternal economy depends entirely on our turning our heart to the Lord. This must become our daily experience.

Witness Lee speaks of our experience of the Lord’s face as our treasure in this way:

This can never be just a kind of saying. We all can say that we are the earthen vessel, and Jesus is the treasure within. But we can say this without any sense of the reality within us. It is only when we are living in His presence, looking at the index of His being, that we will sense that He is such a treasure to us. In the whole universe, there is nothing so precious as to behold the face of Jesus. This is something of personal experience and enjoyment. The more we live in His presence, the more sense we will have of the preciousness of Jesus. This is just the enjoyment of His indwelling. This very Jesus indwells us. This is a living reality, not merely a saying.

If we would all learn to forsake our old person, taking Him as our person by looking at the index of His face while enjoying His presence, we would have a sweet sense of the preciousness of the indwelling Jesus. This would make us so shining, a shining which is the reflecting of His glory. I can assure you that if you ever have this kind of experience, others will see how shining you are. It is not that you are merely happy, but you are shining. Something from within shines out, and that is the reflection of Jesus. This was Paul’s experience of the indwelling Christ. (1325-1326)

*We are earthen vessels who are worthless
and fragile, but within our spirit
we contain a priceless treasure, the face,
the person, of Christ Himself.*

We need to continually look away to Jesus, the indwelling Author and Perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2), by turning our hearts to Him to behold Him. Then as the divine life, He dispenses Himself into every part of our being to gradually become our new element and to discharge our old, natural element. This results in an outward manifestation of the inward metabolic function of life within us. This outward

manifestation is the image of Christ into which we are being transformed. Only that which is the manifestation of the life within us is real beauty. When we are in the process of being transformed day by day, Christ is becoming our real glory and our real beauty, our real clothing for His radiant and glorious expression, just as the clothing of the Old Testament priest was for his glory and beauty (Exo. 28:2).

Even humanly speaking, a person's genuine health and real beauty are the manifestation of the metabolic function of life within him. If someone is pale and sickly looking, he needs to eat some healthy food so that he can have the supply of life. The food is eaten, digested, and assimilated by him to become his constitution and to eventually cause him to have a radiant expression. We are what we eat, and we express what we eat. It is the same in the spiritual realm. This is why the Lord charged us to eat Him: "He who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me" (John 6:57). Christ as the Spirit is the bread of life for us to eat. As the Spirit, He is embodied in His words. "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (v. 63). Jeremiah 15:16 says, "Thy words were found and I ate them." When we eat the Lord by eating His words, in which He is embodied, we spiritually digest and assimilate Him in our inner man. Then we become Him in life and nature for His expression through us. We live by and are transformed with the Christ whom we have eaten.

Building

Our transformation by the renewing of our mind is so that we can practice the Body life revealed in Romans 12. By the practice of the Body life, the building up of the Body of Christ can take place. Our transformation issues in building. This can be seen in the built-up jasper wall of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:18). Jasper is a precious stone, and the light of the New Jerusalem is "like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone" (v. 11). Also, God as the One sitting on the throne is like a jasper stone in appearance (4:3). This shows that the holy city as the wife of Christ bears the appearance of God through the process of transformation. While we are being transformed into precious stones for God's building, we are being joined and built up together, just as the jasper stones are joined and built up into the wall of the holy city.

Our growth in life causes our transformation in life, which issues in the divine building up of the Body in life. This is seen in Ephesians 4:15 and 16:

*Many Christians
like to say that all things
work together for good,
without understanding
what the "good"
is in Romans 8:28.
The "good" here is not
something in our temporal
and physical life; it is our
transformation and conformation
to the image of Christ,
the firstborn Son of God.*

But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ, out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

These verses reveal that the growth of the Body in the divine life is the building up of the Body. The church as the Body of Christ is the

organism of the Triune God, not an organization of human beings. A lifeless building is built by the addition and organization of inorganic material. The organic body of a living person is built by his growth in life through his enjoyment of the supply of life. As the members of the Body of Christ, we need to grow in the divine life by daily feeding on the milk and food of the Word (1 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:13-14). Then we need to dispense this life supply, either as joints of supply or as operating parts, to the other members for their growth in life. This is our ministry of Christ to others for the organic building up of the Body of Christ. This building will consummate in the holy city, the New Jerusalem, the built-up wife of Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God (Rev. 21:2, 9).

Conformation

Romans 8:28-30 says,

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers; and those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Many Christians like to say that all things work together for good, without understanding what the "good" is in Romans 8:28. The "good" here is not something in our temporal and physical life; it is our transformation and

conformation to the image of Christ, the firstborn Son of God. Conformation is the shaping of life as the consummation of the believers' transformation in life. Romans 8:29 reveals that Christ as the firstborn Son of God is the prototype and that we as His many brothers are His mass reproduction. As His many brothers born of God, we need to be conformed to the image of God's firstborn Son.

First, we need to see that as the Son of God, Christ has two statuses. On the one hand, He is the only begotten Son of God from eternity possessing merely divinity (John 1:18). As the only begotten Son of God, He put on humanity. His human part needed to be brought into His divine sonship. This took place in His resurrection. Romans 1:4 tells us that He was "designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead." Christ was already the only begotten Son of God from eternity. But He needed to be designated the firstborn Son of God in resurrection. In His resurrection His humanity was brought into divinity, into the divine sonship, and He was born as the firstborn Son of God (Acts 13:33). As the firstborn Son of God, He possesses both divinity and humanity. First Peter 1:3 shows that from the divine viewpoint, all of the believers were regenerated through Christ's resurrection. Thus, resurrection was a great birth—the birth of the firstborn Son of God and the birth of His many brothers, the many sons of God. As the many sons of God, we possess both humanity and divinity.

Now we need to be conformed to the image of the firstborn Son. This is so that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers. On the one hand, Christ is the Firstborn according to the divine primogeniture. On the other hand, He must be manifested as the Firstborn *among* many brothers. This can occur only by our being conformed to His image. Suppose that there is a big, husky man with five small, thin brothers. If this man said that these five were his brothers, no one would believe him. They need to be conformed to his big, husky image so that he can be manifested as the firstborn brother among them. Similarly, we need to be conformed to the image of our eldest Brother, Christ, so that we can match Him. Then He can really be the Firstborn among us.

Mary McDonough in her book *God's Plan of Redemption* speaks of the meaning of conformation as the consummation of transformation:

"Conform" means "to shape in accordance with." For illustration: The metal worker pours hot metal into a mould and as it cools, it assumes the shape of the mould. The house-keeper pours fruit juice into a jelly mould and when it hardens, the jelly is in the shape of the mould. The metal and the fruit juice are conformed to their respective moulds. It is very easy for Christians to be influenced by the great

world-system all about us. Unconsciously, Christians follow the ways of the world in matters of business and educational methods, social customs, dress, expenditure, recreation and conversation, while professing to follow Christ, and in many cases really desiring to put Him first. Christians are not to be conformed to this mould of Satan but to be conformed to God's mould, *the likeness of His Son* (Rom. 8:29), *i.e.*, the glorified humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice that the word *transform* indicates a change in the elemental substance; while "conform" denotes a change in form only. The metal is unchanged in substance when conformed to the mould. The jelly is precisely the same variety of fruit juice that was placed within the mould to harden. No real transformation can take place, only conformation is realized.

No human being can become conformed to God's mould until there is a change from within, *i.e.*, *the introduction of a new life* into the human personality. This new Life is for the purpose of permeating the entire personality, until transformation shall have resulted in complete conformation. (77)

In order to be conformed to Christ's image, we need to be conformed to His death in all things through the power of His resurrection (Phil. 3:10). The first God-man's living is a model of what our living should be. He lived a life of humanity not by His human life but by the divine life. He died to His natural human life in order to live by the Father's life. Such a crucified life, a life of dying to live, has become the mold to which we need to be conformed. The book of John shows us that Christ did not do anything out of Himself (5:19); He did not do His own work (4:34; 17:4), He did not speak His own word (14:10, 24), He did not do His own will (5:30), and He did not seek His own glory (7:18). He lived a crucified life from the manger to the cross, always denying and putting to death His human life to live by the Father's life. He spoke the Father's word, did the Father's work and will, and sought the Father's glory. The Father was the source of all that He did and said. Such a God-man is the prototype for the many sons of God, the many God-men. We need to be conformed to the death of Christ by living a crucified life by the power of His resurrection. The power of His resurrection life enables us to live such a life of continually denying ourselves to live by Christ. We can do all things in Him, the One who empowers us (Phil. 4:13).

Glorification

Our glorification is our "graduation" in God's organic salvation. It is the believers' growth to maturity in Christ's life as they let the glory of His life and nature spread forth through them. The Triune God is the God of glory (Acts 7:2)—the Father of glory (Eph. 1:17), the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:8), and the Spirit of glory (1 Pet. 4:14). The God of glory regenerates us in our spirit, transforms us in our soul, and ultimately, saturates our body with the glory of His life

and nature to transfigure our body, making us the same as Christ in all three parts of our being. Philippians 3:21 says that Christ “will transfigure the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of His glory, according to His operation by which He is able even to subject all things to Himself.” Today our body is a body of humiliation, full of weakness, sickness, sin, and death. But when the Lord returns and is glorified in His saints (2 Thes. 1:10), our body will be conformed to His glorious body, and we will become exactly like Him in our entire tripartite being. Today Christ lives in us as the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). Through His organic salvation from regeneration to glorification, we will be manifested with Him in glory at the redemption of our body (Col. 3:4; Rom. 8:23). This is described in the following hymn (*Hymns*, 874-5):

- 1 Myst'ry hid from ages now revealed to me,
 'Tis the Christ of God's reality.
 He embodies God, and He is life to me,
 And the glory of my hope He'll be.
 Glory, glory, Christ is life in me!
 Glory, glory, what a hope is He!
 Now within my spirit He's the mystery!
 Then the glory He will be to me.
- 2 In my spirit He regenerated me,
 In my soul He's now transforming me.
 He will change my body like unto His own,
 Wholly making me the same as He.
- 3 Now in life and nature He is one with me;
 Then in Him, the glory, I will be;
 I'll enjoy His presence for eternity
 With Him in complete conformity.

God has called us into His eternal glory (1 Pet. 5:10), and through His organic salvation in Christ's life, He is leading many sons into glory (Heb. 2:10). “The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed upon us” (Rom. 8:18). Our momentary lightness of affliction throughout our human life works out for us more and more surpassingly an eternal weight of glory as the weight of the God of glory with His life and nature is dispensed into our being (2 Cor. 4:17). When we are glorified in our body, death will be swallowed up in victory, the victory of the resurrection life of Christ (1 Cor. 15:54). At that time our mortal bodies will be “swallowed up by life” (2 Cor. 5:4). With our glorification, our being fully prepared to be the bride of Christ, in view, we should give ourselves fully to the Lord so that He can save us in His life day by day. This salvation in life brings us into a glorious organic union with the Triune God. This union begins with our spirit, continues with our soul, and is consummated in our body.

God's organic salvation as the contents of His economy

involves both the Triune God being processed and consummated and His chosen and redeemed people being processed and consummated. First, the Triune God was processed by becoming a man (John 1:14), the physical Jesus, the Lamb of God (v. 29), to pass through human living and accomplish God's judicial redemption through His all-inclusive death seen in the four Gospels. Then in His resurrection, the physical Jesus became the pneumatic Christ, the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b), to accomplish God's organic salvation seen in the Epistles. This life-giving Spirit is the consummation of the processed Triune God. When Christ as the Spirit enters into God's chosen and redeemed people, they begin to pass through a process of becoming God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead and not as an object of worship. Christ as the Spirit deifies them through the process of regeneration, organic shepherding, sanctification, renewing, transformation, building, conformation, and glorification until they are built up as the organic Body of Christ and consummated to be the bride of Christ. At the end of the Bible, there is a marvelous couple: The Spirit as the consummation of the processed Triune God marries the bride as the consummation of the deified tripartite man (Rev. 22:17a). God and man become an eternal couple, a pair of lovers of the same kind, mingled together as one entity for the full expression of the Triune God in the universe. This is the ultimate consummation of the believers' organic union with the Triune God in His full salvation. AFC

Notes

¹The primary source for this article is *The Organic Aspect of God's Salvation* by Witness Lee, published in Anaheim, CA by Living Stream Ministry, 1996.

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