

## God as Savior in Regeneration and Renewing

In the previous installment of this department we looked at God our Savior in the New Testament. In this installment we explore how God our Savior operates in the initial steps of God's organic salvation—regeneration and renewing. As mentioned previously, God's full salvation in its organic aspect, which is focused on God's life, is carried out in six steps, affecting our tripartite being—spirit, soul, and body. Salvation contains an initial stage, in which our spirit is regenerated; an ongoing, progressing stage, in which our soul is renewed, sanctified dispositionally, transformed, and conformed to His image; and a consummate stage, in which our body is glorified (or transfigured, being conformed to the body of His glory).<sup>1</sup> Regeneration is the initial stage of God's organic salvation, and renewing begins at regeneration and continues into the progressing stage of God's salvation.

In this article we look at the meaning and use of Hebrew and Greek words indicating regeneration and renewing, including places in the Old Testament that promise or allude to these experiences in the believers, especially in God's action of creating something new (in their spirit) and renewing what is old (in their heart), by the operation of the Spirit. We also consider how God our Savior operates in the New Testament in His Trinity to bring us into the experiences of regeneration in our spirit and renewing in our soul.

### Regeneration and Renewing Promised in the Old Testament

There is some debate as to whether the experience of regeneration occurs in the Old Testament. One verse, Psalm 2:7, indicates how God would open the way for His people to experience regeneration, and at least three passages—Psalm 51, Jeremiah 31, and Ezekiel 36—point to God's people's experience of regeneration and renewing, which, according to Jeremiah 31, is an experience of the new covenant. Key verses from these passages are also quoted in the New Testament confirming the experience of regeneration and renewing in the believers.

Psalm 2:7 speaks of God's begetting in the Old Testament. God's begetting is of Christ, who recounts the decree of Jehovah, which is, "You are My Son; / Today I have begotten You." The word *beget* in Hebrew is *yalad*

("bear," "beget") translated γεννώ ("beget") in Greek. This is quoted by the apostle Paul in Acts 13:33, indicating that Psalm 2:7

refers to Christ's resurrection. After being cut off, crucified (Dan. 9:26), Christ, God's anointed One, was resurrected to be begotten in His humanity as the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 1:3-4; 8:29; Heb. 1:5-6). Through the same resurrection all His believers were born with Him to be His many brothers, the many sons of God (John 20:17; 1 Pet. 1:3; Rom. 8:29; Heb. 2:10). (Lee, *Recovery Version*, Psa. 2:7, note 1)

In resurrection Christ as the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), and as such, He can reproduce Himself by regenerating the spirit and renewing the heart of the believers.

Regeneration is implied in the use, in Hebrew, of the word *new*, which is more commonly associated notionally with renewing. Regeneration is a new creating, or a new birth, and renewing is a remaking of something old into something new. The Hebrew adjective *new* (*hadash*), the verb *renew* (*hiddesh*), as well as the noun *hodesh* ("new moon," "month") come from the same root *hdsh*, which means "new," or "fresh." The verb *hiddesh* occurs only in the piel (meaning literally "make something new," "bring something into a state of newness") and hitpael (meaning "make oneself become new," "renew oneself"). Newness comes particularly from God. He is the source of newness and freshness, and without Him things become old (Eccl. 1:9).

When God withdraws, things become old. When God hides His face, the inhabitants of the earth are troubled, and when He takes away the breath (Heb. *ruah*) from living things, it causes them to expire and return to their dust (Psa. 104:29). However, He also sends forth His Spirit (*ruah*), and they are created (*bara'*), and He renews (*hiddesh*) the surface (lit., "face") of the ground (v. 30). God makes, or does, a new thing, making a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert (Isa. 43:19).<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, He makes all things new (Rev. 21:5). God tells His people new things before they spring forth, hidden things, which they have not known (Isa. 42:9; 48:6). His

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people in return sing to Him a new song (Psa. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isa. 42:10). He gives His people a new name (62:2). His compassions are new every morning (Lam. 3:23). The notions of God's action of creating and newness are associated together a number of times (e.g., Isa. 48:6-7; Jer. 31:22; Psa. 51:10). His action of creating and renewing consummates in His creation of a new heaven and a new earth (Isa. 65:17). Creating and renewing are also seen in the New Testament with the new man being created on the cross but still needing to be renewed following its creation (Eph. 2:15; 4:24; Col. 3:10).

**I**n Psalm 51 David asks God to create in him a clean heart and renew a steadfast spirit within him (v. 10). This was David's desire after being exposed of his sin in which he coveted Uriah the Hittite's wife, committed adultery with her, lied to Uriah, and arranged for his murder so that he could take (i.e., steal) her for himself, thus breaking the last five of the Ten Commandments. Psalm 51 alludes to the New Testament experience of regeneration and renewing. After David's sins had been exposed, he repented and requested the blotting out of his transgressions, washing from his iniquity, and cleansing from his sin (vv. 1-2).<sup>3</sup> He also realized that he was brought forth in iniquity and conceived in sin, that he had a sinful nature from birth (v. 5).

Realizing that his corrupted, fallen, nature was the source of his sins, David asked God to do something new in his being—to create in him a clean heart and renew a steadfast human spirit within him (v. 10). By sinning, we become old; therefore, we need God's renewing through the application of His forgiveness and through His dealing and visitation in order that He would renew within us a spirit that is "steadfast, firm, constant, immovable, and unshakable so that we can never be tempted, seduced, or misled" (Lee, *Basic Lessons* 148). A steadfast spirit is not that which we had originally but is usually the result of God's visiting and dealing with us. In addition to a new heart and a new spirit, David also mentions the Spirit of God's holiness, which is God's presence, which he requests to not be taken away and to not be cast away from (v. 11).

Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel also desired that God would restore, or recover, Israel after their experience of apostasy and captivity. The recovery is both outward and inward. The outward recovery involves the return to the land (Ezek. 36:24) as well as the restoration (*hiddesh*) of the altar (2 Chron. 15:8), the temple (24:4), and the cities (Isa. 61:4). Just as it is in Psalm 51, the inward recovery in Ezekiel 36 involves the heart, the spirit, and God's Spirit (vv. 26-27), and in Jeremiah 31, it involves the inward parts, the heart, and God's law (v. 33), which in the New Testament is tied to God's Spirit (cf. the law of the Spirit of life, Rom. 8:2).

According to Ezekiel 36 God promised first to cleanse His people from filthiness and idols (v. 25). Then He promised to give them a new heart and to put a new spirit within them, taking away the heart of stone out of their flesh and giving them a heart of flesh (v. 26). He also promised to put His Spirit within them and cause them to walk in His statutes, and His ordinances they would keep and do (v. 27).

**E**zekiel 18:31 also speaks of the house of Israel getting a new heart and a new spirit after repenting of, turning away from, and casting away all their transgressions. Ezekiel 11:19 mentions the Lord Jehovah giving them one heart and putting a new spirit within them, taking the heart of stone out of their flesh and giving them a heart of flesh. On the significance of a new heart and a new spirit in these verses, Witness Lee states,

Our heart is our loving organ, and our spirit is our receiving organ. While we are in a fallen or backslidden state, our heart toward the Lord is stony and hard, and our spirit is deadened (Eph. 2:1; 4:18). When the Lord saves us or revives us, He renews our heart, making our stony heart a heart of flesh, a heart that is soft and loving toward Him (cf. 2 Cor. 3:3). Furthermore, He enlivens and renews our spirit with His divine life (Col. 2:13). As a result, we love the Lord and desire Him with our renewed heart, and we can contact Him, receive Him, and contain Him by exercising our renewed spirit. (*Recovery Version*, Ezek. 36:26, note 1)

According to Jeremiah, in the new covenant God puts His law in the inward parts (lit., "in their midst") of His people and writes it upon their hearts. He will be their God, and they will be His people, and all of them will know Him. He will forgive their iniquity, and their sin He will remember no more (31:33-34). Verse 33 is quoted twice in the book of Hebrews from the Septuagint translation, but with a couple of significant differences. *Law* (singular) becomes *laws* (plural), and *inward parts* becomes *mind* (διάνοια) (8:10; 10:16). As Witness Lee points out,

[the] one law...spreads to become a number of laws. This one law is the law of life (see *the law of the Spirit of life*—Rom. 8:2). Every life has a law. The higher the life, the higher is its law. The divine life that we receive of God is the highest life; therefore, it has the highest law, the law referred to here. By imparting His divine life into us, God puts this highest law into our spirit, whence it spreads into our inward parts, such as our mind, emotion, and will, and becomes several laws. (*Recovery Version*, Heb. 8:10, note 1)

After God imparts His laws into us, He also inscribes them on our hearts through our experiencing the law of

life. This refers to the work of our being constituted with the divine life.

The Hebrew word *qirbam*, translated “inward parts,” is literally “in their midst,” which is vague as to which inward part or parts it is referring to.<sup>4</sup> The Septuagint, which is quoted twice in the book of Hebrews, translates *qirbam* (διάνοια, “mind”). However, the Hebrew word *qirbam* could refer also to the human spirit as the initial place where the law of the Spirit of life is imparted. The law of life starts off by being imparted into our spirit; then it spreads into the other parts of our heart, including the three parts of the soul—the mind, emotion, and will.

Jeremiah prays in the book of Lamentations that Jehovah would turn the Israelites back to Him and that He would renew their days as before (5:21). His compassions are new every morning (3:23). The notion of daily renewal is picked up in the New Testament also: though our outer man is decaying, our inner man is being renewed day by day (2 Cor. 4:16). Jehovah satisfies the prime of life of the youth with good so that they renew their strength like the eagle (Psa. 103:5; cf. Isa. 40:31).<sup>5</sup>

The notion of renewing and the eagle also occurs with another Hebrew word, *halaf*, translated “renew” in Isaiah 40:31. *Halaf* means “to pass on or away” or “to change,” e.g., the changing of the elements of the heavens and the earth is likened to changing worn-out clothes (Psa. 102:26). It is also used to indicate the coming up anew of another generation of human beings after one generation dies (falls asleep), which is likened to the sprouting again of vegetation (90:5-6). In the hiphil it means “to cause to change,” e.g., a tree cut down has hope, for it will sprout again, i.e., cause itself to send forth new shoots (Job 14:7). In Isaiah 40:31 and 41:1 it means “to renew strength” (*koah*).

Although youths and young men (those at the peak of their physical strength) will faint and become weary and will collapse exhausted, they can, by waiting on Jehovah, change from their natural strength, prone to tiredness, weariness, and exhaustion, to renewed strength empowered by the resurrection life. As Delitzsch states, “Even though this [youths collapsing exhausted] may happen, it is different with those who wait for Jehovah, i.e., those who believe in Him; for the Old Testament applies to faith a number of synonyms denoting trust, hope, and longing” (156). The same verb of renewing with the noun

*strength* also occurs in Isaiah 41:1, which has a similar thought related to renewing: “Listen to Me in silence, O coastlands. / Let the people renew their strength; / Let them approach, then let them speak; / Let us come together for judgment.” Listening to Jehovah in silence precedes the renewing of strength.

Those who wait on Jehovah and renew their strength will mount up with wings like eagles; they will run and will not become weary; they will walk and will not faint (40:30-31).<sup>6</sup>

To wait on the eternal God (v. 28) means that we terminate ourselves, i.e., that we stop ourselves with our living, our doing, and our activity, and receive God in Christ as our life, our person, and our replacement. Such a waiting one will be renewed and strengthened to such an

extent that he will mount up with wings like eagles. He will not only walk and run but also soar in the heavens, far above every earthly frustration. This is a...regenerated and transformed person in the new creation. (Lee, *Recovery Version*, v. 31, note 1)

REALIZING THAT HIS CORRUPTED, FALLEN, NATURE  
WAS THE SOURCE OF HIS SINS, DAVID ASKED GOD  
TO DO SOMETHING NEW IN HIS BEING—  
TO CREATE IN HIM A CLEAN HEART  
AND RENEW A STEADFAST  
HUMAN SPIRIT WITHIN HIM.

These verses in the Old Testament prepare us for the New Testament experience of regeneration and renewing. They point to God the Savior’s creating and renewing work within His people, especially in their spirit and their heart, not to just saving them from outward situations of oppression and captivity.

### Regeneration in the New Testament

In another article in *Affirmation & Critique*<sup>7</sup> we discussed the words for regeneration. In this article we will look at the words more from the perspective of God as the Savior, the agent of our regeneration, as well as from our perspective in terms of what we need to do to receive it.

### Words Denoting Regeneration

Regeneration, or rebirth, is expressed primarily in the New Testament by the use of the Greek word γεννάω (“beget” or “bear”). The verb γεννάω is used more than fifteen times in John’s writings to imply regeneration. It is also the root of two compound words in which the notion of regeneration is more explicit—the noun *regeneration* (παλιγγενεσία, Titus 3:5; Matt. 19:28) and the verb *regenerate* (ἀναγεννάω—1 Pet. 1:3, 23). Etymologically, παλιγγενεσία contains the thought of rebirth. It is a compound of two words—πάλιν (“again”) and γενεσία

(γένεσις, meaning “origin,” “source,” “birth,” which is related to γεννάω (“to be born”). Even though these compounds, occur only twice each in the New Testament, regeneration is a very crucial concept in the New Testament, being the first stage of the organic aspect of God’s full salvation.

### *The Divine Birth*

The use of γεννάω with *God* as the subject emphasizes regeneration, or the divine birth. The divine birth involves two parties, God our Savior, the source of the divine birth, and us, the recipients of this birth. This is seen clearly in the first mention of the divine birth in John 1:12-13. By receiving Him (God as the Word incarnated to be a man), believing into His name, we become children of God. This is a birth not of blood (of the physical human life), of the will of the flesh (of the fallen human life), or of the will of man (of the created human life) but of (ἐκ, “out of”) God, the source of this birth. John 3 develops how this divine birth can take place. It is a birth in which we are *born from above* (γεννάω ἄνωθεν, vv. 3, 7) and *born of water and the Spirit* (vv. 5-6, 8). Ἄνωθεν is a compound consisting of the preposition ἀνά, meaning “up,” “above,” as well as “again” (similar to the English prefix *re-*), and the adverbial suffix -θεν, carrying the notion of “from there.”

**I**n a spatial sense it indicates the origin (from above) and the nature of the birth (heavenly). However, it is clear from Nicodemus’s response that he understood these words to mean to enter his mother’s womb a second time (v. 4). Jesus then defined this birth “from above” as a birth of (ἐκ, “out of”) water and the Spirit (v. 5) rather than another human birth (i.e., to be born of the flesh). *Born of water* refers to the terminating work of baptism, and *born of the Spirit* refers to the germinating work of the Spirit. This new birth takes place in our human spirit with the Spirit as its source (v. 6). A regenerated person, or one born of the Spirit, is likened to the wind (πνεῦμα, the same Greek word as that for the Spirit) blowing where it wills (v. 8), recognized but beyond understanding.

When Nicodemus questioned Jesus as to how these things could be, Jesus directed Nicodemus away from the earthly, physical realm (“the things on earth”) to the heavenly, spiritual realm (“the things in heaven,” v. 12) and more particularly to Himself as the Son of Man who descended out of heaven (v. 13) and to the process of His death and resurrection to become the One who could impart eternal life to perishing humanity (vv. 15-18). In verse 31 Jesus is also presented as the One who comes from above (using the same Greek word ἄνωθεν as in verses 3 and 7, i.e., from heaven). Six verses in John’s first Epistle also mention the divine begetting (γεννάω), which comes from believing that the man Jesus is the

Christ and is associated with our faith (5:1, 4). According to 1 John, being begotten of God enables us to practice righteousness and to not practice sin (2:29; 3:9), to love one another and to love God the Father (4:7; 5:1), to overcome the world (v. 4), and to not sin, but to keep ourselves and to keep the evil one from touching us (v. 8). The reason for this is that the divine life and nature received at the time of regeneration automatically practices righteousness, loves God and man, does not sin, and is victorious over the world and the evil one. If we live by the life that we received at regeneration, our life will spontaneously have the same issue. As Witness Lee states,

Through such an amazing divine birth we have received the divine life, which is the eternal life (1:2), as the divine seed sown into our being (3:9). Out of this seed all the riches of the divine life grow from within us. It is by this that we abide in the Triune God and live out the divine life in our human living, i.e., live out the life that does not practice sin (3:9) but practices righteousness (2:29), loves the brothers (5:1), overcomes the world (5:4), and is not touched by the evil one (5:18). (*Recovery Version*, 2:29, note 7)

**R**egeneration with its birth from above brings a transmission from Christ in heaven to us on earth by means of the all-inclusive Spirit. Therefore, we can seek the things which are above (τὰ ἄνω), where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God, and set our mind on the things which are above (τὰ ἄνω) (Col. 3:1-2). This transmission sustains us to live the human life by the divine life with all its characteristics, mentioned above.

The compound noun παλιγγενεσία (“regeneration”) in Titus 3:5 relates regeneration to the organic salvation of individuals: “He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.” The other occurrence of παλιγγενεσία, in Matthew 19:28, corresponds to the more common classical use of παλιγγενεσία, meaning “restoration,” referring to the restoration of things during the coming millennial kingdom (cf. Acts 3:21). This new birth mentioned in Titus 3:5 renders a washing to the believers and links it to the second step of organic salvation—renewing—as Witness Lee states:

The washing of regeneration begins with our being born again and continues with the renewing of the Holy Spirit as the process of God’s new creation, a process that makes us a new man. It is a kind of reconditioning, remaking, or remodeling, with life. Baptism (Rom. 6:3-5), the putting off of the old man, the putting on of the new man (Eph. 4:22, 24; Col. 3:9-11), and transformation by the renewing of the mind (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23) are all related to this wonderful process. 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)

The other compound, the verb ἀναγεννάω (“regenerate”), is rare, first occurring in Greek in the New Testament. It occurs twice in chapter 1 of 1 Peter. Verse 3 states that God “has regenerated us unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” According to Alford, “the resurrection of Christ, bringing in life and the gift of the life-giving Spirit, is that which potentiates the new birth unto a living hope” (333). Regeneration enlivens us with God’s life, bringing us into a relationship of life, an organic union, with God. Verse 23 says that we have “been regenerated not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the living and abiding word of God.” Here Peter indicates that regeneration takes place through the word of God, which is equated with a seed containing life. The word of God, as the incorruptible seed, contains God’s life. God’s living and abiding word of life conveys God’s life into our spirit for our regeneration.

James 1:18 contains a thought that is similar to that in 1 Peter 1:23. It states that God has brought us forth by the word of truth to be the firstfruits of His creatures. *Brought forth* (ἀποκυέω) means “to bear young.” Κυέω means “to conceive,” “to bear in the womb,” “to be pregnant,” and ἀπό (“from”) strengthens the idea of coming forth. God regenerates us to be the firstfruits of His new creation by imparting His divine life into our being through the implanted word of life. This is the beginning of His new-creation work.

These verses indicate that regeneration as a new birth is the result of the operation of the Triune God. Our begetting has its source in God the Father and comes from above. It is a birth out of water and out of the Spirit in our spirit, it is a washing by the Holy Spirit, and it is accomplished through Christ’s resurrection and by the imparting, or implantation, of the word of God. This birth brings us into a new relationship. God the Creator, our Savior, now also becomes our Father. We become brothers of the firstborn Son and enter into a new family with fellow believers as our brothers and sisters. In regeneration the believer receives the divine, eternal life, partakes of the divine nature, and is enabled to grow unto full growth, or maturity. This new life also brings a change in desire and conduct. There is a desire for God’s word, prayer, and fellowship as regeneration issues in a walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4), in the light (1 John 1:7), as

children of light (Eph. 5:8), in truth (2 John 4), and in love (Eph. 5:2).

### Renewing in the New Testament

Renewing follows regeneration. Whereas regeneration brings the divine life with the divine nature into our spirit, renewing is carried out by the spreading of that divine life and nature from our spirit into our mind, the leading part of our soul.

### Words Denoting Renewing

There are two different Greek verbs used for *renewing*. The most common word is ἀνακαίνωσις meaning literally “to make new again,” “to renew in nature.” It is a compound of ἀνα- (“up” or “again”) and καινός (“make new”), coming from the adjective καινός (“new in nature”). We are made new in nature through the imparting of a new element. The second word for *renewing* is ἀνανεοδύμαι, meaning “to make new again,” “to renew in time.” It is a compound of ἀνα- (“up” or “again”) and the verb νεόω (“make new”), coming from the adjective νεό (“new in time,” “more recent”). We are made new in time by the addition of the divine element, received later in time than the human element we received in our physical birth.

In addition, there is the noun ἀνακαίνωσις (“renewing”), coming from the verb ἀνακαινοῦμαι, which means literally “the process of renewing in nature.” It occurs two times in the New Testament.

### The Renewing of the New Man through the Renewing of the Mind

The renewing mentioned in Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3 is related to the practical existence of the one new man. The new man (καινός) was created in Christ on the cross, where the ordinances that divide the old man were abolished (Eph. 2:15; Col. 3:10). However, the renewal of the new man is still going on. This renewing is a process related to the putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new man. We have already put off the old man (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9) and put on the new man through believing into the Lord and being baptized (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10); now we need to live in the reality of this and allow our mind to be renewed by having God’s new element added into our being. In the universe, only God is new. When He infuses His ever new essence into our

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being, we become new. God infuses His element of newness into us through the renewing Spirit and makes us a new creation.

Paul uses the two different verbs for *renewing* to describe this process and the two different adjectives for *new* to describe the new man. The new man in nature (καινός) needs to be renewed in time (ἀνανεοῦμαι, Eph. 4:23) by partaking of the humanity of Christ, who is the second man (1 Cor. 15:47), rather than living out the corrupted humanity inherited from the first man Adam. In Christ we become a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), distinct from the old creation, and we consummate in the New Jerusalem, of which the old city of Jerusalem is a type. We are renewed in time in the spirit of our mind; this spirit is

the regenerated spirit of the believers, which is mingled with the indwelling Spirit of God. Such a mingled spirit spreads into our mind, thus becoming the spirit of our mind. It is in such a spirit that we are renewed for our transformation. (Lee, *Recovery Version*, Eph. 4:23, note 2)

**O**ur mind needs to be renewed. Our old concepts and considerations concerning ourselves and one another should not be according to our adamic nature or our background and culture but new and fresh (up to date), reflecting our new humanity mingled with the Triune God.

In Colossians 3:9-10 Paul uses the adjective νεός and the verb ἀνακαινώνω to refer to the process of the renewing in quality of the new man in time. We should not lie to one another, since we have put off the old man (the adamic fallen man) with his practices and have put on the new man (νεός, created on the cross), which is being renewed (ἀνακαινώνω) unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him. The new man here is humanity that is new in time, more recent (that is, the uplifted humanity of Christ the second man rather than the fallen humanity of Adam the first man). Yet it is not sufficient to merely put on humanity that is more recent in time; we also need to be renewed in nature by receiving the dispensing of the divine nature. The phrase *unto full knowledge* also indicates that the renewing takes place mainly in our mind (cf. Eph. 4:23; Rom. 12:2).

God our Savior also arranges our environmental circumstances to renew us. Little by little, day by day, our outer man (the soul-life expressed in the human body) is consumed, but our inner man (the spirit with the faculties of the soul as the organ of the spirit) is being renewed (ἀνακαινώνω, 2 Cor. 4:16).

As was mentioned above, the noun ἀνακαίνωσις occurs twice in the New Testament. Titus 3:5 says that our Savior

God “saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.” This verse links the washing of regeneration with the renewing of the Holy Spirit as the process of God’s making us a new man by reconditioning, remaking, or remodeling us with life. In Romans 12:2 Paul charges us to “not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that [we] may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.” The renewing of the mind is one of the means to accomplish transformation.

All the verbs related to renewing are present tense (a present infinitive, Eph. 4:23; a present participle, Col. 3:10; and a present indicative, 2 Cor. 4:16) with a durative aspect, indicating that renewing is an ongoing process beginning from our regeneration and is the means to bring us transformation. In contrast, the punctiliar actions of aorist *put off* (Col. 3:9) and *put on* (v.10) are viewed as a whole. The noun ἀνακαίνωσις, with the -σις ending, also indicates that renewing is a process. This process begins from regeneration, occurring at the initial stage of salvation (Titus 3:5), and proceeds through transformation, occurring in the progressive stage of salvation (Rom. 12:2).

**R**enewing also involves the Triune God. The element of newness is that of God the Father (symbolized by an evergreen fir tree, Hosea 14:8); the unique person of the new man is Christ the Son (Eph. 3:17), who as a man incorporated the Father’s person as His person (Luke 22:42); and the essence of newness is imparted into us by the renewing Spirit (Titus 3:5).

## Conclusion

Regeneration and renewing are the first stages of God’s organic salvation. The Triune God operates as our Savior to bring us these experiences of God’s organic salvation. God the Father begets us, Christ the Son as the seed of life contained in the word sows Himself into us, and the Spirit applies and makes real, the divine birth in our spirit. Renewing takes place mainly in our mind; we are renewed when the mingled spirit spreads into our mind, transforming our mind through the Holy Spirit’s renewing, imparting the Father’s new nature and element, and making real the Son as the unique new person of the one new man.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Renewing and conformation link the stages together. Renewing begins in the initial stage with our regeneration (Titus 3:5) and continues in the progressing stage, accompanying our

transformation (Rom. 12:2). Conformation is at the end of the progressing stage, in which we are conformed to the Lord's image (Rom. 8:29), continuing our transformation into the same image (2 Cor. 3:18). Conformation is also linked to the consummate stage of salvation, to glorification, in which we will be conformed to the body of His glory (Phil. 3:21). As Witness Lee states,

Conformation is the end result of transformation. It includes the changing of our inward essence and nature, and it also includes the changing of our outward form, that we may match the glorified image of Christ, the God-man. He is the prototype and we are the mass production. Both the inward and the outward changes in us, the product, are the result of the operation of the law of the Spirit of life (v. 2) in our being. (*Recovery Version*, Rom. 8:29, note 3)

<sup>2</sup>Isaiah 43:18-21 probably refers to God's new act of delivering Israel from the Babylonian captivity—an act that “eclipse[s] even the memory of the exodus from Egypt” (*New American Bible*, Isa. 43:18, note 1). In Isaiah He makes rivers in the desert to quench the thirst of His journeying people; this is in contrast to Exodus, where He made the water into dry land for His people to cross over. “The comparison of the return from Babylon to the exodus from Egypt recurs throughout...Isaiah (cf. 41:17-20;...48:20-21; 49:8-13; 51:9-11)” (note 1).

<sup>3</sup>David realized his need for cleansing, washing, and forgiveness (based on God's judicial redemption). These are necessary prerequisites for the experiences of regeneration and renewing and indeed all the steps of God's organic salvation (see my article, “The Experience of Redemption,” *Affirmation & Critique*, vol. 23, no. 2, Fall 2018, pp. 68-76). As Witness Lee states, the

complete salvation of God is composed of God's judicial redemption and His organic salvation. God's judicial redemption is the procedure of God's complete salvation for the believers to participate in God's organic salvation as the purpose of God's complete salvation. (*Crystallization-study* 9-10)

<sup>4</sup>*Qereb* translated “within” or “inward part,” is related to or parallel to *spirit*, e.g., “a steadfast spirit within me” (Psa. 51:10; Isa. 19:3; 26:9; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26; Zech. 12:1); *heart*, e.g., “my heart writhes within me” (Psa. 55:4; Jer. 23:9; Lam. 1:20) and “man's inward thought / And heart are deep” (Psa. 64:6; Prov. 14:33); and *soul*, e.g., “Bless Jehovah, O my soul; / And all that is within me, bless His holy name” (Psa. 103:1). The Septuagint translators were not always so precise when it came to translating the words for the human faculties, sometimes confusing the

spirit and the parts of the soul. For example, *ruah* (“Spirit”) in the expression *who has directed the Spirit of Jehovah* (Isa. 40:13) is translated νοῦν (“mind”) in the expression *who has known the mind of the Lord* (Rom. 11:34).

<sup>5</sup>The Hebrew word *neshet*, translated “eagle,” may also refer to a vulture. The Greek word ἀετός also may be translated “eagle” or “vulture,” particularly in Matthew 24:28, where the vultures, referring to the overcoming believers, gather together (gathering together is more a characteristic of vultures than eagles) to clean up the stinking corpse of Antichrist and his armies at Armageddon at the end of the age.

In the Scriptures both the Lord and those who trust in Him are likened to an eagle (Exo. 19:4; Deut. 32:11; Isa. 40:31), and the swift, destroying armies are likened to flying eagles (Deut. 28:49; Hosea 8:1). Hence, the vultures here, being predatory birds of the eagle kind,

refer undoubtedly to Christ and His overcomers, who will come as a swift, flying army to war against Antichrist and his armies and destroy them at Armageddon, thus executing God's judgment upon them. (Lee, *Recovery Version*, Matt. 24:28, note 1)

RENEWING INVOLVES THE TRIUNE GOD.  
THE ELEMENT OF NEWNESS IS GOD THE FATHER,  
THE UNIQUE PERSON OF THE NEW MAN  
IS CHRIST THE SON, AND THE  
ESSENCE OF NEWNESS IS IMPARTED  
INTO US BY THE RENEWING SPIRIT.

<sup>6</sup>Some consider—following the Septuagint, which translates the verb *'alah* “go up” as πτερο-φύω “grow feathers”—that the verb *mount up* could also be understood as “grow wings” and connect this notion to the renewing of molting eagles, who shed their old feathers and sprout new ones. However, this understanding of *'alah* is not used elsewhere in the Old Testament with this notion.

<sup>7</sup>Good, Roger. “The Language of Regeneration.” *Affirmation & Critique*, vol. 6, no. 1, April 2001, pp. 46-50.

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