

TRANSFORMED.

"Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." – Rom. 12:2.

It should be noticed here that these words of the Apostle are not addressed to the unbelieving world, but to those whom he recognizes as brethren, as shown by the preceding verse – "I beseech you therefore, brethren,...that ye present your bodies living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God."

It is the prevailing idea among Christians that when a man is converted or turned from sin to righteousness, and from unbelief and opposition to God to faith, obedience and reliance upon him, that is the transforming Paul meant. Truly it is a great change – a transformation, but not the transformation that Paul here refers to. That is a transformation of character; but Paul refers to a transformation of nature promised to believers during the Gospel Age, on certain conditions, and was urging believers to fulfill those conditions. Had such a transformation of character not already taken place in those whom he addressed, he could not have termed them brethren – brethren, too, who had something "holy and acceptable unto God" to offer in sacrifice. Only those who are justified by faith in the ransom are reckoned of God as holy and acceptable.

This transformation of nature will result to those who during the Gospel Age present their justified humanity a living sacrifice, as Jesus presented his perfect humanity a sacrifice – laying down all right and claim to future human existence, as well as ignoring present human gratification.

The first thing to be sacrificed is our human will; and henceforth we may not be guided either by our own or by any other human will, but only by the divine will. Gradually then the divine will becomes our will, and we reckon the human will as not ours, but as the will of another, to be ignored and sacrificed. The divine will now having become our will, we begin to reason, to judge, to think, from the divine standpoint: God's plan is our plan, and God's purposes and ways are ours.

None can understand this transformation who have not in good faith presented themselves as sacrifices, and in consequence come to experience it. Hitherto we might enjoy anything that was not sinful, for the world and all its good things were made for man's enjoyment; the only difficulty was to subdue the sinful propensities. But the consecrated, in addition to the effort to subdue sin, must sacrifice the present good things and devote all their energies to the service of God. As through sacrifice we daily realize that this is not our rest, that here we have no continuing city, our hearts and hopes are turned to that "rest that remaineth for the people of God." And that blessed hope in turn quickens and inspires to continued sacrifice.

Thus through a sanctified will the mind is renewed, transformed; and the desires, hopes and aims begin to gravitate toward the spiritual and unseen things promised, while the human hopes, etc., die. Those thus transformed are reckoned as "new creatures," begotten of God and partakers to that extent of the divine nature.

Mark well the difference between these new creatures and those who are only justified. The latter class is still of the earth earthy, and their hopes, ambitions and aims are such as will be fully gratified in the promised restitution of all things. But the former class is not of this world, even as Christ is not of this world, and

their hopes center in the things unseen, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. The prospect [R626 : page 5] of earthly glory, so enchanting to the natural man, would not now be a satisfying portion to those begotten of this heavenly hope – to those who are now sharers of the divine mind.

We see, then, that it is a mistaken idea, though a common one, that all good men, such as Abraham, Moses, and the Prophets, were begotten of the spirit.

This new divine mind is now the earnest of our inheritance of the complete divine nature – mind and body. Some may be a little startled by this expression, a divine body; but we are told that Jesus is the express image of his Father's person, and that the overcomers shall be made like unto his glorious body. "There is a natural [human] body, and there is a spiritual body," and we have no idea that either our divine Father or our Lord Jesus are only great minds without bodies. They are glorious spiritual bodies, though it doth not yet appear how great the glory, and shall not until we also shall share the divine likeness.

While this transforming of the mind from human to spiritual is a gradual work, the change from a human to a spiritual body will not be gradual, but instantaneous. (1 Cor. 15:52.)

It may be difficult for some to see in this change of mind the beginning of a change of nature; but a little consideration, we think, makes it very clear. That there is a change of nature for the church is scriptural truth; and it is also as clearly taught that the change of this class begins here and is completed in the resurrection. (2 Cor. 1:20-22; 1 Cor. 15:52.)

Now, as Paul says, we have this treasure (the divine mind) in earthen vessels, but in due time the treasure shall be in a glorious vessel, the spiritual body.

The Scriptures show us that the human nature is a likeness of the spiritual (Gen. 5:1). For instance, man has will, so have God and angels; man has reason, so have they; man has memory, so have they. The character of the mental operations of each is the same. With the same data for reasoning, and under the same circumstances these different natures are able to arrive at the same conclusions: hence God can say to men, "Come, let us reason together."

Though the mental faculties of both natures are similar, yet we know that the spiritual nature has powers beyond and above the human – powers, we think, which result, not from different faculties, but from the wider range of the same faculties, and the different circumstances under which they operate.

From all that we can gather, we conclude that the human nature is a perfect earthly image of the spiritual nature, with the same faculties, only confined to the earthly sphere, with ability and disposition to discern only so much beyond it as God sees fit to reveal for man's benefit and happiness.

The divine is the highest order of the spiritual nature; and how immeasurable is the distance between God and his creatures! We are only able to catch a glimpse of the glory of the divine wisdom, power and goodness as in panoramic view he causes some of his mighty works to pass before us. But we can measure and comprehend the glory of perfect humanity. Truly there is a vast difference between the divine and the human nature; but, as the Scriptures teach, there is a likeness, else God and man could have no communion, no fellowship. It is because there is not a likeness of God in the lower animals that they cannot know or commune with him.

With these thoughts clearly in mind, we are able to more fully understand how the change from the human to the spiritual nature

is effected – viz., by carrying the same mental powers over to higher conditions. When clothed with the heavenly body we shall have the heavenly powers which belong to that glorious body. We shall also have the range of thought and scope of power which belongs to it. The change of mind from human to spiritual which we experience here we see is the beginning of that change of nature. True it is but a very small beginning, but the begetting, as this is termed, is always but a faint, a small beginning; yet it is the earnest or assurance of the finished work. (Eph. 1:13,14.)

Some have said, How shall we know ourselves when changed? How shall we then know that we are the same beings that lived and suffered and sacrificed that we might be partakers of this glory? Will we be the same conscious beings? Yes, most assuredly. The Scriptures declare that if WE be dead with Christ, WE shall also live with him. (Rom. 6:8.)

Changes which daily occur to our human bodies do not cause us to forget the past nor to lose our identity, so the promised change from human to spiritual bodies will not destroy either memory or identity, but will increase their power and range. The same divine mind that now is ours, with the same memory, the same reasoning powers, etc., will then find its powers expanded to immeasurable heights and depths, in harmony with its new immortal or incorruptible body, and memory will trace all its career from earliest human infancy, and we will be able by contrast to fully realize the glorious reward of our sacrifice. But this could not be the case if the human were not a likeness of the spiritual.

These thoughts may help us also to understand how Jesus, when changed from spiritual to human conditions, viz., a human body and earthly limitations, was a man; and though it was the same being in both cases, under the first conditions it was spiritual; under the second condition it was human.

Because the two natures are separate and distinct, yet the one is a likeness of the other, therefore the same mental faculties (memory, etc.) being common to both, Jesus could remember his former glory which he had before becoming a man, but which he had not when he had become a man, as his words prove – **[R627 : page 5]** "Father, glorify me with the glory I HAD with thee before the world was" (John 17:5), the glory of the spiritual nature. And that prayer is more than answered in his present exaltation to the highest form of the spiritual, viz., the divine nature.

Referring again to the words of our text, we notice that Paul does not say, Do not conform yourselves to this world, but transform yourselves into the divine likeness; but he says, "Be not conformed...but be transformed." That is well expressed, for we do not either conform or transform ourselves; but we do submit ourselves either to be conformed to the world by the worldly influences around us, or else we submit ourselves to the will of God, to be transformed by the heavenly influences exercised through his word and his spirit.

You that are consecrated, what influence are you submitting to? The transforming influences lead to present sacrifice and suffering, but the end is glorious. If you are developing under these transforming influences, you are proving daily what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. To such the will of God is made plain. May grace divine enable us to walk according to the will of God through suffering, until ushered into the promised glory – until fully transformed into his glorious image!
