



**The Church:  
A Community  
for  
Transformation**



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*The Church: A Community for Trans Formation*  
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# Transformation

*“<sup>1</sup> I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your rational service. <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this age, but **be transformed** by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

Romans 12:1-2

The subject matter is “**Transformation**”: We are going to ask the following questions: Transformation – **What** is it? **Why** is it needed? **How** does it happen? **Where** does it happen?

## What is “Transformation”?

The Greek word translated as “transformation” is *metamorphoo*: It is made up of two Greek words: *meta*, meaning *to change*, and *morphe*, meaning *form* – that is, *to change into another form*. Of this word, Greek scholar, W.E. Vine, says it means “*to undergo a complete change which under the power of God, will find expression in character and conduct.*” Vine says that the word *morphe* lays stress on inward change rather than outward conformity.<sup>1</sup> The Greek verb is in the present continuous tense, indicating that this is a **process**.

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<sup>1</sup> In Greek, *Metamorphoo* is distinguished from *suschematizo*, translated “conformed”, indicating an outward change.

## Why is Transformation Needed?

The Bible tells us why transformation is needed: Psalm 51:5 tells us that we were all **born in sin**. Romans 5:12 tells us that we were consequently **separated from relationship with God**. And Colossians 1:21 tells us that **our minds were alienated from God**.

This spiritual condition in which we were born was then further influenced and reinforced by significant people in our lives and also the surrounding culture – people, as well as spiritual forces, which are also separated and alienated from God.<sup>2</sup> For example:

- Our parents
- Our family
- Our friends
- Also, our education
- Our culture
- And our life experiences
- Ungodly perspectives and attitudes were formed in us by these experiences and influences. These are the things which are in need of transformation.

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<sup>2</sup> 1 John 5:19

## How does Transformation Happen?

“By the renewing of your **mind**”. By “mind” is meant:

- Your worldview
- Your perceptions
- Your perspectives
- Your attitudes
- Your self image & identity

“By the **renewing** of your mind.” W.E. Vine says that the Greek word *anakainosis* means “*not new in the sense of recent, but new in the sense of different. The adjustment of the moral and spiritual vision and thinking to the mind of God which is designed to have a transforming effect upon the life*”.

Titus 3:5 speaks about “the **renewing** (*anakainosis*) of the Holy Spirit”. Vine comments that this means “*the continual operation of the indwelling Spirit of God*”.

In another of his epistles, Paul explains how the Holy Spirit accomplishes this work of renewing and transforming:

2 Corinthians 3:18 reads: “And we all, with unveiled face, **beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed** into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

This is a powerful New Testament truth which tells us that:

By “beholding” we “are being transformed”. By beholding what? “The glory of the Lord.” The primary way the glory of the Lord has been revealed is in and through Jesus Christ. Just a little further down in this epistle Paul tells us that “God’s glory ... shines from Christ’s face.”<sup>3</sup>

The writer of the Book of Hebrews concurs when he says that Christ is the radiance or reflection of God’s glory.<sup>4</sup> In other words, when we get revelation of Jesus Christ, we are beholding God’s glory. The astounding thing is that Paul said we are **transformed** when we behold the glory of God revealed in Christ. In fact, he says that we are **transformed into the same image of the glory we are beholding** – in other words into the image of Christ. And lastly, he tells us this is an on-going process and a supernatural work done by the Holy Spirit.

## Where does Transformation Happen?

*We must ask the question: “Where does the Holy Spirit reveal Christ to us so that we behold the glory of the Lord and are transformed into that same image we are beholding?”*

Scripture is all about revealing Christ – we can behold Him in every book of the Bible – all 66 books – over and

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<sup>3</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:6 *God’s Word Translation*

<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 1:3

over again – “in many portions and in many ways”.<sup>5</sup> So, we can be transformed by beholding the glory of the Lord in the revelation of Christ in Scripture.

But God has also given us another place where the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to us so that we can **“behold the glory of the Lord” and be transformed into His image.** The apostle Paul said to the church: “You are an epistle ... to be known and read by all.”<sup>6</sup> The Church is to be “known and read by all”. The Holy Spirit reveals Christ to us **in the Church (Ekklesia)** so that we can **behold the glory of the Lord and be transformed into that same image we are beholding.** In other words, **beholding Christ in the Body of Christ<sup>7</sup> (the Ekklesia<sup>8</sup>)**

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<sup>5</sup> Hebrews 1:1

<sup>6</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:2

<sup>7</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:27

<sup>8</sup> For the sake of clarity, some thoughts on using the word “Ekklesia”: Not everyone identifying with the word “church” is part of the Ecclesia of God. There is only one true Church made up of those who have received the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9-10) - those who “possess the Son”. (1 John 5:11-12) However, contrary to what is in vogue today for some, I make no distinction between the Greek word, *ekklesia*, and its English translation, “church”. I use the two words interchangeably. If I use the word “church”, I mean the full and accurate biblical meaning of “ekklesia”. Simply using the Greek word, *ekklesia*, in and of itself, helps no one understand the biblical meaning. The biblical meaning will always require explanation for the unlearned. Therefore, I think the English words, “church”, or “assembly”, or “community” are adequate translations. When writing, I sometimes find myself leaning towards using terms like “the people of God”, or “the disciples of the kingdom”, or “the followers of Christ” - depending on the context. Furthermore, not identifying as “Church” does not “automatically” make us the “Ekklesia”. If we are going to identify as the “Ekklesia”, there must be the reality of being and living as “called out” and “gathered together” and engaged in matters of the Kingdom. (it’s the latter that is demonstratively lacking today.) Donning the Greek word is duplicitous and

transforms us into the image of Christ “from one degree of glory to another”.<sup>9</sup>

## *A Community for Transformation*

The concept of the **Church as a Community for Transformation** can go into great depth and detail<sup>10</sup>, but here I will just introduce the general principles of the concept: The Church is the community in which the Holy Spirit dwells and carries on His transforming work of “renewing” or making “different”. The Church is a community which provides a **different environment offering different experiences and influences**. In the same way the spirit of the world conformed us through the experiences and influences of our parents, family, friends, education and culture, the Holy Spirit desires to use the church community to transform us through experiences and influences in our relationships with:

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inconsistent. If that were the thing to do, why aren't we using Greek words to communicate 100s of other New Covenant truths? Moreover, don't the words “congregation” and “assembly” also conjure up images of people sitting in a building? Doesn't the term “ekklesia” conjure up the connotation “ecclesiastical” (man-made church systems)? We also have to reckon with Paul's injunction: “Solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers.” (2 Timothy 2:14) What do we do with that? I think we are still “missing the mark” and “falling short” with all of this.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:18

<sup>10</sup> Specifically, with regards to the out-working of the Great Commission to “make disciples”. (Matthew 28:18-20)

- Spiritual parents like elders who shepherd and oversee the church<sup>11</sup>
- A spiritual family who are our brothers and sisters in the Lord
- Christian friends
- A spiritual education through systematic Bible teaching

When we are reborn of the Spirit, we have available to us a new identity in Christ which transforms and takes us beyond who we were conformed to be through our natural parents, family, education and culture.<sup>12</sup>

Colossians 1:13 says: “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.” When we come to Christ, a kingdom transfer occurs: We are transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Christ. This transfer is the beginning of the process of transformation.

In Christ we become new creatures and are incorporated into the New Creation<sup>13</sup> – which is the Church – a new society through which the Holy Spirit does a work of “spiritual re-socialization” in order to transform us – making us **spiritually different** from the spirit of the world.

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<sup>11</sup> Acts 20:17 & 28

<sup>12</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17

<sup>13</sup> Ephesians 2:15

I Peter 2:9 says we are “... a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a **peculiar people**; that (we) may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called (us) out of darkness into His marvelous light.”<sup>14</sup>

Together we are **citizens of a different country** – Hebrews 11:6 says it is a “better country, that is, a heavenly one” – a country which has the culture of heaven.

Philippians 3:20 in the *Revised Standard Version* states that “Our commonwealth is in heaven....” In the *New Century Version*, it says, “Our homeland is in heaven....”<sup>15</sup> James Moffett translated Philippians 3:20 in this way: “**We are a colony of heaven....**”<sup>16</sup> Someone has even referred to the Church as “an outpost of heaven”. I think these terms, “colony of heaven” and “outpost of heaven” are quite descriptive.

There is a story and picture in the Old Testament which also communicates the idea of a “heavenly culture”: A picture of the Church as a “Colony of Heaven” – an “Outpost of Heaven” – the story of “Jacob’s Dream” or “Jacob’s Ladder”:

“<sup>10</sup> Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. <sup>11</sup> And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because

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<sup>14</sup> KJV + ESV

<sup>15</sup> Greek: *politeuma*: The administration of civil affairs or a commonwealth.

<sup>16</sup> *A New Translation of the Bible by James Moffett (1926)*

the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, **he put it under his head** and lay down in that place to sleep. <sup>12</sup> And he dreamed, and behold, there was **a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.** And behold, **the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!** <sup>13</sup> And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. <sup>14</sup> Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. <sup>15</sup> Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." <sup>16</sup> Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." <sup>17</sup> And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than **the house of God**, and this is **the gate of heaven.**" Genesis 28:10-17

We might interpret the "stone" as Christ. And the fact that Jacob "put it under his head" might be understood as *the renewal of the mind to the mind of Christ.*

We see a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and the angels of God – that is, the messengers of God – going up and down carrying messages to and from – so that "God's will be done here on earth as it is in heaven".

As Jacob declared: "This is the house of God" – the Church – "and this is the gate of heaven".

As the King of the Kingdom came down from heaven, and as the New Jerusalem will come down from heaven, everything in the Church should be “born from above” that the Church might be a people who are ambassadors of “a heavenly country” representing “a heavenly culture”.

“... a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a **peculiar people**; that (we) may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called (us) out of darkness into His marvelous light.” 1 Peter 2:9

Bill & Frances Furioso  
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Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years making disciples, establishing churches, and training church leaders. Over a span of 40 years, they also traveled extensively in an itinerant Bible teaching ministry which took them to hundreds of gatherings on four continents ministering in churches, conferences, spiritual formation seminars, and home gatherings. They have shepherded several churches, disciplined many to Christ, and mentored church leaders in the USA and abroad.

Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done both formal and informal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed worldwide. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, he can no longer travel, so their ministries of writing, recording, distributing, mentoring, and correspondence are now shared primarily via the Internet... [www.AtChristsTable.org](http://www.AtChristsTable.org)

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W.D. Furioso ~ At Christ’s Table ~ ~ ACTpublications (2010)

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