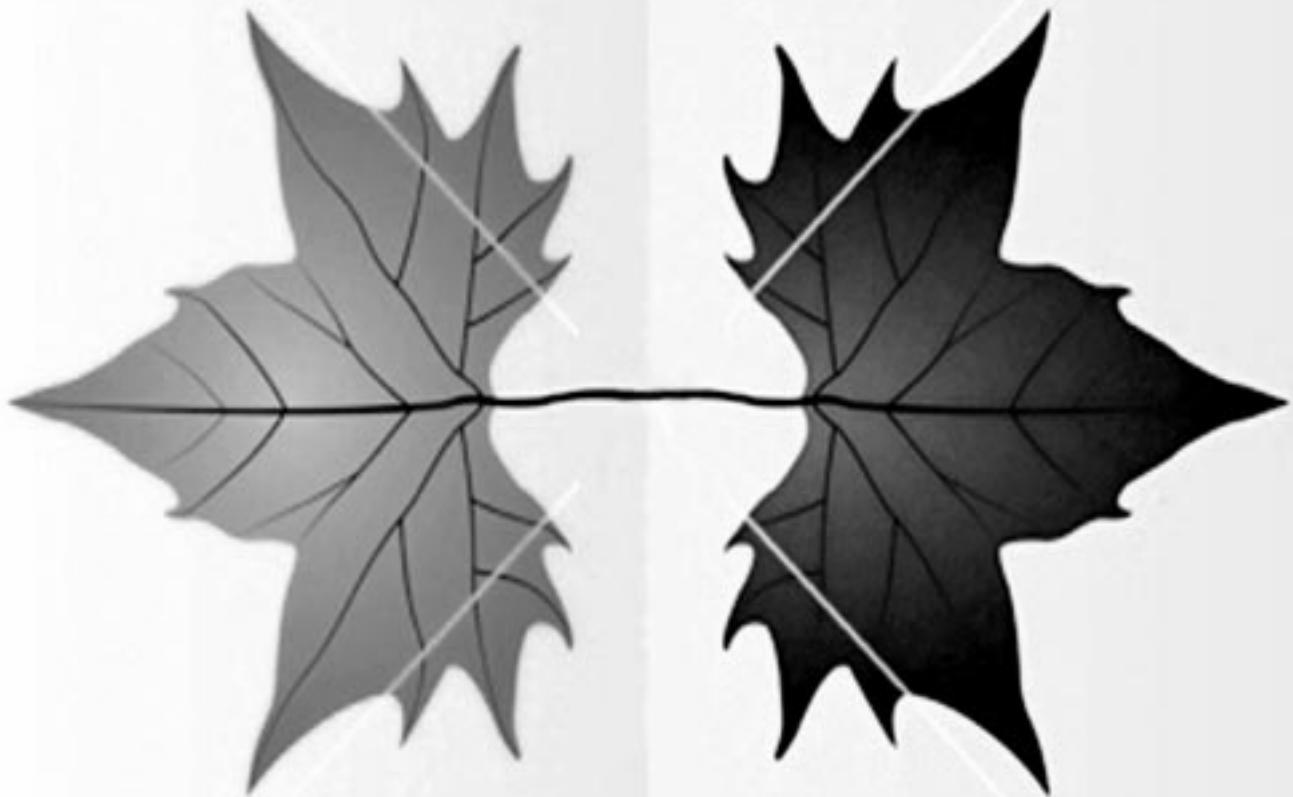


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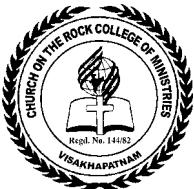
The Voice of the Indigenous Missions in India

Vol. 31, No. 1, Mar. - Aug. 2015

"Transforming Grace"



Titus 2:11-15



The Answer

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Late Apostle Dr. P.J. Titus
Founder

Publisher
Mrs. Helen Johnson
Editorial Board
Mr. Hirendra Prasad (Editor)
Mr. Viju Wilson
Mr. Suhas Dandey
Mr. Josfin Raj

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Ph : (08933) 200097 / 200182 / 9912132962 Email :info@otr.in / mktitus@hotmail.com

Editorial...

Any time can be a time of transformation. For us now it is a time of transformation, because COTR Theological Seminary, after a break, is adding one more volume to the earlier thirty volumes of the biannual official magazine of COTR College of Ministries, *The Answer*. The transformation takes place by the Grace of God alone. *The Answer* accentuates *Transforming Grace* in the present volume.

Grace and mercy are two attributes of God, which are like two sides of the same coin. The two seem to have similar meaning, but they differ, the former is related to “what one doesn’t deserve, but receives it” (e.g. we don’t deserve heaven, but we get it); and the latter is related to “what one deserves, but does not receive it” (e.g. we deserve hell, but we don’t get it). Always ‘Grace’ is preferred to ‘mercy,’ because it includes the idea of the divine power which equips a man to live a moral life.

Grace of God, in the beginning of the Old Testament, served as an antithesis to the wrath of God. While God, in His wrath, destroyed the earth by flood, He showed grace to Noah. God, in His wrath, destined His people for captivity; but He also brought them back by His Grace.

Grace (through Jesus) is also considered as an antithesis to the Law (through Moses). The Law only served as the way to the knowledge of sin, good and evil, but it has no power to deliver humans from sin. Grace is beyond the Law, because when Law failed, Grace overtook that failure. Humans seek Grace in his/her failure to observe the Law. The Law only condemns, but Grace liberates, saves us from the condemnation of the Law, what is not achieved through Law is achieved by Grace.

Grace is an antithesis to work; a man is not saved by his works, but by Grace. Salvation is not earned by human effort so that man can boast; rather it is the Grace of God alone. But as an antithesis, the salvation which is received by Grace must be manifested to others by works.

Grace is of two kinds, common and efficacious. The former is that God has showered His Grace upon every living being to sustain them; while the latter is about the effect of Grace upon individual life. In other words, Grace is both objective (God sends his Grace upon everyone) as well as subjective (Grace changes everyone). Grace is transformative, the transforming nature of Grace is evident in the above mentioned “antithesis formula.” Grace has the power to change lives, individual and societal, Grace changed Abraham from the worshipper of idols to become a worshipper of God, Moses from an aggressive man to become a meek man, a barren woman like Hannah to become a mother, David from a shepherd boy to become the king of Israel, Ninevites from a wicked life to a repented life, a common Jewish woman Esther to become the queen of Persia, women like Rahab and Ruth from their former state in life to become the great grandmothers of Jesus Christ, Paul from the persecutor of the church to be persecuted for the church. Grace was prior to the Law, and was inevitable for the Israelites even in the midst of the Law. Christ fulfilled the Law and provided new Grace for every human being that changed Jews and Gentiles to become Christians and sinners to become righteous. Therefore, the Transforming Grace is essential for everyone.

*Mr. Hirendra Prasad is on the Faculty &
Co-ordinator of Evangelism and Moral Education of COTRTS*

Greetings from President...

Dear COTR Family, Friends, Prayer Partners, Alumni,

Greetings in Jesus name, we Praise God for all His Mercy and Grace in our lives and ministry. We thank you all for your continued prayers, counsel, financial support for the expansion of the Kingdom of God in India and all nations.

We again are sending out the Answer magazine after some gap in publication, our prayer is that the articles and reports bless and encourage you in your life and ministry. If you have any prayer needs, praise reports or articles you would like to publish in ***The Answer***, please send to us so we can share with all to keep in prayer and read about.

On behalf of the Titus family, Board Members, Faculty, NTC Pastors, staff, we give all Glory to God for the past year that He has sustained, protected, provided for all our needs. Mrs. Mary Titus is doing well in health and spirit; she also gives thanks and love to all.

It is with great joy that we have begun our 28th Academic Year in COTR Theological Seminary. We have 72 students from all walks and parts of India come to give their lives to study the Word of God, and to be equipped for future ministry.

We Praise God for the good news of a new Principal for our Seminary, Dr. Viju Wilson who has joined our leadership team. We have a committed, academic, talented team of faculty who are able to train our young people for ministry.

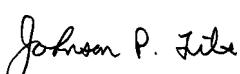
Nava Jeevan High School, and Jr. College also have begun classes and are going on well.

After much destruction from last year's cyclone "Hud-Hud" we are slowly rebuilding and are almost finished with all the remodeling and repair work. We thank all our prayer partners that have helped us physically and financially.

We praise God for 33 years of His ministry in India, we continue to seek your prayers and support for the future.

God Bless

In His Commission



Rev. Johnson Titus

President of COTR College of Ministries

Greetings from NTC President...

Greetings to all our partners from the New Testament Church of India! We pray that you are doing well in your family, ministry, and are in good health!

As the theme for this year is Transforming Grace, we are seeing many lives changed and transformed in the mission field. Many of the NTC pastors have sent their reports about the people who have been transformed by His Transforming Grace.

NTC has been going through some changes. Recently, while sharing my opening remarks at the pastors conference I said, "The world is changing, India is changing; USA, Europe and the rest of the world is changing and NTC also needs to change."

Change, not for the sake of change but to be more productive and fruitful. In order to experience change, old methods, perspectives and strategies need to change. What worked 35 years or 25 years or even 5 years ago may not be working, because society is going through a rapid change, politically, socially, economically and spiritually. It is visible in the church also. Are we prepared to change to be more effective in the changing context of mission? We need to adopt new methods to help us to improve. Although we live in a context that is changing fast, our Vision continues to be same: to plant churches, to reach the lost and to fulfill Christ's Great Commission.

We have 8 new pastors who joined NTC; two new church buildings were completed, and 6 churches affected by the cyclone were rebuilt. Ten more Churches are to be rebuilt. Many new souls are added to the NTC across India.

R. Elisha Rao, an early pioneer of NTC church planting, and Y. Eliya have been promoted to glory. These great servants of God pioneered the work in many unreached villages. We are grateful to God for the ministry of these pastors and their families. Please continue to pray for their families and ministries left behind.

The challenge to all the pastors today is to change and transform, and prepare new pastors and leaders as Paul was teaching Timothy; "And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2).

May we all be challenged to be transformed by Grace and to train and make disciples....



Jameson Titus

President of New Testament Church of India

Jesus of Nazareth: The Embodiment of Transforming Grace

Viju Wilson

The Christian faith is an action-oriented faith; it demands action which transforms life in an individual and community. Action and Faith are integrally related to the Christian understanding of faith. The former makes the latter meaningful in a context. The result of the translation of faith into action is transformation. Biblically speaking, this transformation is mediated by God's Grace. Therefore, Divine Grace is basically Transforming Grace. It is the Grace which transforms a person, a community or a society. Jesus of Nazareth is the embodiment of Transforming Grace. Jesus' redemptive or liberating action in the lives of the vulnerable underlines this fact. He placed the poor and needy, who needed holistic transformation, in the central focus of his life and ministry. He compassionately touched the lives of people who were less privileged and unrecognized in society. The manifestation of His compassionate nature was an outcome of the presence of God's Transforming Grace in Him. It also led him to risk his life and affirm the life of others. He crossed all barriers of religion, race and gender to help the people experience God's Transforming Grace. The poor and marginalized of his day such as the prostitutes, publicans, sinners, poor peasants, etc., were initial beneficiaries of God's Transforming Grace embodied in Jesus of Nazareth.

Transforming Grace strengthened Jesus of Nazareth to stand as a person for others who were less fortunate to enjoy life. Jesus' engagement with people was one of liberative engagement, which focused on the empowerment of people in all

aspects of societal life. This engagement was prophetic and inclusive in nature. He facilitated people irrespective of creed and culture to celebrate life in this world and the world to come. For J.D Crossan, Jesus' ministry was among the 'nobodies' and 'undesirables,' of the society. According to him, "His strategy...was the combination of free healing and common eating...miracle and parable, healing and eating were calculated to force individuals into physical and spiritual contact with God and ...one another. He announced, in other words, brokerless Kingdom of God." (Richard A. Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007, 37). It means Jesus' approach was simple and intelligible to the common people. It was not the status, but the condition of people decided Jesus' engagement. More clearly, Jesus' work was among the people who were excluded on cultic or ritual grounds (the sick), moral grounds (prostitutes), and religious and political grounds (tax collectors). (Richard A. Burridge, *Imitating Jesus*, 65). In spite of all the religio-cultural restrictions, Jesus upheld an inclusive mentality that embraces the excluded ones. Jesus' acceptance of people included touching those who are ritually impure such as lepers, hemorrhaging woman, and offering healing to the racially despised like the Samaritan leper and the Syrophoenician woman. This active involvement in the life of people was the result of experiencing transforming divine Grace in Him. As a person for others, Jesus risked himself to uplift the humans

from the sinful relations and conditions that make them spiritually and materially redundant. By risking his life, Jesus intended to bring renewal and transformation among entire humanity.

Jesus, in His actions and words, revealed a God whose concern was the holistic salvation of humans, and the celebration of human life in its fullness. Jesus of Nazareth knew the value of human life, He helped people to get back the normal life. Jesus' identification with the subalterns of His time shows that God whom He revealed is a God who is not of legalism but of transformation. Jesus' reinterpretation of laws clearly underlines the transforming grace of God in Jesus. It is said, "...He showed that God relaxes his own law regarding the Sabbath in order to meet a human need."(Fr. Thomas D'SA, "Contemplating the Faces of Jesus," Vidyajyoti, Vol 67\No 8 (August, 2003): 666). For Him, human need is more important than blind adherence to doctrinal statement. Creed should not become an obstacle to channelize Transforming Grace. Human needs are the locations where Transforming Grace embodied in Jesus Christ works as liberative energy. Still, it works through people who are willing to touch the life of others in their desperate conditions. The followers of Jesus Christ have to manifest the Transforming Grace in society. The Son of God revealed precisely not the 'secrets of the divinity' but the 'secret of being authentically human.'(J.B. Chethimattam, "Asian Jesus: The Relevance of Jesus Christ in the Asian World of Religious Pluralism," JeevadharmaVol XXVII\ No. 160 (July, 1997): 306). As Son of God, whose consciousness is shaped by the divine mission of transforming the people, He found His place outside the walls where the untouchables were forced to live and suffer. Outside the walls of religious and cultural institutions Jesus met the breadless crowds, the broken, the crippled and

handicapped men and women, the exploited working class, the people who suffer from poverty, ignorance and disease. The rationale behind Jesus' people-centered prophetic spirituality is His *Abba* experience, an experience of Transforming Grace. His *Abba* experience gave him an outlook that considers the entire humankind as the community of the children of God. The *Abba* experience inspired Him to get Himself involved in the world.

The Transforming Grace manifested in Jesus Christ gets in touch with all people irrespective of their group, position, possessions and actions. Jesus never encountered the people at theoretical level. Rather, He met them at their concrete situations, and touched the untouchable, loved the unlovable and forgave the unforgivable. He executed the Transforming Grace to reclaim the lost in society. Since He was more concerned about the redemption of human life, His priorities, attitudes and preferences always stood against the interests of the powerful in the society. Jesus came down to uphold the human life in its fullness. His healing touch and confrontation was the outward expressions of Transforming Grace that was internalized in His life. Christian faith is founded on the Transforming Grace manifested by Jesus Christ. The genuine followers of Jesus Christ will identify themselves as ambassadors of Transforming Grace manifested in Jesus of Nazareth today. They are agents of Transforming Grace in their respective fields. The Christian community is called to follow the footsteps of Jesus Christ to channelize Transforming Grace in this world. Authentic faith in Jesus of Nazareth brings forth actions that will release the energy of Transforming Grace in the Church and society. Jesus of Nazareth, the embodiment of Transforming Grace, stands as a unique model to take initiatives to bring changes in the life of people.

Viju Wilson is on the Faculty & Principal of COTRTS

Failure is not Fatal

Mrs. Helen Johnson

In the New Testament, Peter, who was originally named Simon, was an ordinary, uneducated fisherman from Galilee. His brother Andrew recognized Jesus as the Messiah and introduced Peter to Jesus (Jn. 1:35-42). Peter is frequently portrayed in the Scriptures as being rash and impulsive, but he was always motivated by his deep devotion to Jesus Christ and his many good intentions. At their first meeting, Jesus changed Peter's name from Simon to Peter (Cephas), which means rock (Jn.1:42). A new name meant that there were going to be changes and new challenges in Peter's life.

Peter was the eyewitness of amazing power through Jesus' healing of the sick, driving out demons, feeding multitudes, power over nature, power over death, and in His death, resurrection and ascension. In fact Peter seems to have been specially chosen to be both the witness and the future proclaimer of the Resurrection (Mk. 16:7; Lk. 24:34; 1Cor. 15:5).

Despite the wealth of teaching, the amazing display of countless miracles, and Jesus' continual example of love and compassion (Jn.21:25), the disciples frequently did not understand it. This seems to be especially true for Peter and perhaps he was the only disciple honest enough to voice his numerous misunderstandings (Mk. 9:32). Peter often acts as the spokesman for the disciples. The Gospel of Mark, in particular, frequently reveals the slowness of the disciples to understand Jesus. In Mark's gospel Peter also recounts the story of his denials as personal testimony of his failure.

Peter often spoke too hastily before he has understood the situation. He did this at the Transfiguration (Mk. 9:2-9; Lk. 9:28-36); when Jesus washed the disciples feet (Jn. 13:1-17); just after Jesus had explained that he would suffer, die and rise again (Mt. 16:21-23; Mk. 8:31-33); and there is also the temple tax incident (Mt. 17:24-7; 26:31-35). Peter's unreliable bravery caused him to cut off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest (Mt. 26:51-54; Mk. 14:47; Lk. 22:49-51; Jn. 18:10-11).

After Jesus' arrest, Peter did have the courage to follow Jesus into the courtyard of the High Priest's palace, but then he became frightened by the questions of a servant girl. Fearing he would be recognized as a follower of Jesus, and perhaps be subject to the same brutal treatment Jesus was presently receiving, Peter denied his relationship with Jesus, just as Jesus had foretold. Peter was bitterly sorry for this failure (Lk.22:61-62). This incident is an example of Peter's ready enthusiasm, but also of his rapid collapse in the face of difficulties.

After His resurrection, Jesus lovingly and patiently restored and transformed Peter, and He charged Peter with the care of his flock (Jn. 21:15-17; 1Peter 5:1-4). Peter, with all his faults, as well as his strengths, was Jesus' choice as the future leader of the church (Mt.16:18-19).

When Jesus returned to heaven, Peter took over the leadership of the community of believers.

There were at least 120 believers at that time, and after waiting in Jerusalem as Jesus had commanded, they were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. During this Jewish festival of Pentecost many people had come to Jerusalem to celebrate and these people heard the believers all speaking in foreign languages that were recognized by the pilgrims who had travelled to Jerusalem. Peter, newly baptized with the Holy Spirit, addressed the crowd boldly. Peter, who was trained under Jesus, who was an excellent and powerful teacher was now to put his training to use, aided supernaturally by the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:26, 15:7-14). As a result of Peter's message, 3000 were baptized and added to the church.

Within a short space of time the number of believers had risen to 5000 (Acts 4:4). This was mainly due to the working of the Holy Spirit through Peter. Peter confidently defended his faith before the Jewish council, and the Jewish elders were amazed at Peter's courage. Peter's messages in Acts after the Pentecost are full of wisdom and insight. There is no trace of foolishness in Peter, who continually misunderstood Jesus' teachings. Peter's transformation and his courage no longer failed him, despite the difficulties, threats and persecutions that were to follow (Acts 4:18-21, 5:18, 5:40, 12:1-11).

When God forgives, He removes the sin and restores the soul. As said in Titus 2: 11, 12 "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age."

Sometimes, however, we let our failures define us. After Peter repeatedly denied that he knew Jesus, he went out and wept bitterly (Matt. 26:75; John 18). This is the Transforming Grace of God

that brings salvation to all men. Peter was no longer unstable and unwise. Through Peter's ministry thousands of people became Christians.

Failure is not fatal. God lovingly restores those who turn back to Him. The life of Peter is a study of human weakness transformed by the power and the love of God. Peter maintained his enthusiasm and devotion to Christ right up to the end. It is traditionally believed that he was martyred in Rome around 65 AD for his unwavering and steadfast faith.

Peter's transformation is remarkable as we can see that within the space of two months the man who had denied Jesus was now standing before some of the same crowd proclaiming Him. He is a wonderful example to us of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, which changed a careless fisherman into a powerful apostle and a successful preacher of the Gospel. Peter's life and legacy are unique and has left an invaluable impact on the church today. Thank You Father, for Your forgiveness and transforming grace along with Your mercy and grace which are freely given through the shed blood of Your Son Jesus on the cross of Calvary, which transforms any life.

*Mrs. Helen Johnson is on the Faculty of COTRTS
& the Principal of Nava Jeevan Junior College*

"So God supplies perfectly measured grace to meet the needs of the godly. For daily needs there is daily grace; for sudden needs, sudden grace; for overwhelming needs, overwhelming grace. God's grace is given wonderfully, but not wastefully; freely, but not foolishly; bountifully, but not blindly."

—John Blanchard

Christ: The Centre of Transforming Grace

Hirendra Prasad

The meaning of the word “Grace” is unmerited favour and it refers to a divine- human relationship. It is the action of a superior being (God) towards the inferior (human beings). We are not defined by what we do, rather by what God has done for us. Every work of God is the manifestation of His grace. So when the work of God that changes any aspect of life can be construed as “Transforming Grace.” It was constrained to Israel alone; but later it was extended to the Gentiles too. In the New Testament, there is a theological shift in understanding the concept of “Grace,” where Grace is not alone a reference to the work of God as in the Old Testament, but it has an inference to Christ Himself. Titus 2:11-14 deliberates the Christocentric aspect of the Transforming Grace, although this passage is Christological, Soteriological, and eschatological in nature, yet Christ is dominant within these doctrinal frameworks. These doctrinal elements have been framed within three periods of time: past, present, and future which are delineated below.

1. Past:

Incarnation-Christological (v.11) - God’s salvation, characterized by His Grace, “appeared” at a given time in history. The incarnational Christology is in view here; “The Grace of God” was revealed and personified in Jesus Christ. Therefore, Grace is not only to be understood as the act of God, but as Christ himself. The physical manifestation of Christ

was for “all men” (e.g., Jew and Gentile, slave and free). The point is that salvation is universally offered to all without exception. In the New Testament the word “saving,” when preceded by the article and used as a noun, means “salvation” in the spiritual sense, in Titus 2:11 the meaning of salvation is deliverance from sin. Grace came to make us alive when we were dead in sin, so it is the Transforming Grace, and the incarnation of Christ is the foundation of the Transforming Grace in the New Testament.

Redemption-Soteriological (v.14) - The “Incarnated Grace” sacrificed Himself. The purpose of Jesus’ self-sacrifice is twofold: redemption and purification. Redemption is expressed in terms of ransom; this ransom payment delivers humanity “from all wickedness”. The term “purify” suggests the cleansing by the “blood of the covenant” which was central to Old Testament religion and has the idea of moral and religious cleansing.

The purpose of redemption and purification is again twofold: first, Christ prepares “a people for himself”. This is the covenantal formula of God in Old Testament: “they will be my people, and I will be their God.” Second, they will be “zealous of good works” as “their proper response to God’s Grace revealed and made effective in the saving death of Jesus Christ.” Christ’s redemption transformed our hostility to become God’s people and his purification transformed our defilement

from sin toward a motivated Christian life defined by good works.

2. Present:

Sanctification- Soteriological (v.12)

One of the underlying factors about Grace is that of its continual operation in the lives of Christians as an instructor. The verb “instruct” is from the same term as is the noun “pedagogue”. A pedagogue leads and guides students step by step. Grace gently leads and guides with specific instructions, it instructs first negatively; it corrects “human behavior” which by nature stands in opposition to God. Then positively, Grace instructs about the “Christian’s relationship” to himself (sensibly), to others (righteously), and to God (godly). This instruction of Grace is for “the present age” which indicates that God’s grace does not simply prepare us for the age to come (v. 13), but also saves us for the present and teaches us how to live now. This is nothing but the present sanctification, which keeps one away from the power of sin and helping to live righteously in our daily life; Grace that transforms sinful life to live a righteous life for God, self, and others in the present age.

3. Future:

Glorification-Eschatological (v.13)

While living in the present sanctified life, the believers are also waiting for the future, blessed hope and glorious appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. The concept of “hope” is regarding “the anticipation that Christians have for the unseen and sure, but not yet realized, spiritual blessings that they will possess in the future in Christ.” Many misunderstand the “great God and Savior” as Father and Son. But

Granville Sharp’s rule renders it to one person. The rule says that when two nouns of the same case are connected with the conjunction *Kai*, the first having article and the second being *anartharus* (without article), then both refers to the same person, provided that neither noun is impersonal, plural or a proper name. Therefore, this renders to Christ alone and his second coming when Christ himself will finally appear glorified before mankind and the believers who are now being saved from the power of sin will be saved completely from the actual presence of sin (in heaven), known as “the glorification.” Their physical body will be transformed into a glorious body.

In summary, Titus 2:11-14 teaches us that Christ is the Grace of God and has the power to bring various transformations; the Grace of God in Christ has brought salvation to all men while they were in moral and spiritual darkness. The Grace of God in Christ is the redeemer for those disobedient to God’s Law, the absolute Purifier that makes us God’s own covenantal people, filled with dedication for excellent deeds. This Grace is also our Great Pedagogue who leads us away from ungodliness and worldly passions and guides us along the path of holiness. This grace also causes us to look forward with eagerness to the appearing in glory of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus for the ultimate glorification. Verses 11–14 underscores Christ as the center of Transforming Grace, because He is the author and finisher of transformation in the New Testament.

*Mr. Hirendra Prasad is on the Faculty &
Co-ordinator of Evangelism and Moral
Education of COTRTS*

Grace of Jesus that Transforms Culture: John 4:26

Rev. Rajasekhar

What is culture?

Van Rheenen defines the word “culture” as the integrated system of learned patterns of ideas, values, behaviour, products, and institutions characteristic of a society. According to Newbigin, culture is “the sum total of ways of living built up by a human community and transmitted from one generation to another.” And the Dictionary of Feminist Theologies defines culture as “the totality of any given society’s way of life. It comprises a people’s total social heritage, including languages, ideas, habits, beliefs, customs, social organizations, traditions, arts, symbolisms, crafts and artefacts.” Therefore, culture is everything made, learned, or shared by the members of a society. Let us understand the theme ‘Grace of Jesus that transforms culture’ following the Biblical Text.

Jesus crossed the geographical and ethnic boundary

Samaria lies in between Judea and Galilee. Those who wished to go from Judea to Galilee had to pass through Samaria unless s/he took a deviation through Trans Jordan. Jews avoided going through Samaria at all cost because the relationship between the Jews and Samaritans was a hostile one. The break between the two communities was long and deep rooted; Jews were proud of themselves as a chosen and homogenous people.

When Assyria occupied Northern Palestine in 721 BC, many Samaritans were taken into exile and Assyria colonized Samaria. The remnant

Samaritan Jews had no choice but to live among foreigners, marrying them and worshipping pagan gods that the foreigners had brought in. The Samaritan’s culture, population, and religion became a diverse one. Jews had difficulty in accepting this reality and despised Samaritans as racially and religiously mixed and unclean (II Kings 17). The hostility was sharpened by the building of a Samaritan temple on the Mount Gerizim about 400 BC, claiming that this shrine, not the Jerusalem Temple, was the proper place of worship. Destruction of this temple by Jewish troops in 128 BC heightened their enmity.

So intense was their dislike of the Samaritans that some of the Pharisees prayed that no Samaritan would be raised in the resurrection! When His enemies wanted to call Jesus an insulting name, they called Him a Samaritan (John 8:48). But Jesus chose to go through Samaria perhaps to reach out to the rejected Samaritans, and to expand his ministry from the boundaries of Israel to people outside. Therefore, the intention of Jesus to go through Samaria meant tearing down the geographical and ethnic wall between Jews and Samaritans.

Jesus crossed the gender boundary

Usually a request for water by a tired and thirsty traveller to a woman who was drawing water would have been a most natural thing. But Jesus’ request for water shocked the Samaritan woman. She responded, “How come a Jew, asks a woman

for a drink?" Rabbinic traditions taught men to thank God daily that they were not women. A Jewish man did not initiate conversation with an unknown woman, even their own women, because the rabbinic tradition taught that a woman's voice was a sexual enticement and that he who talks much with womankind brings evil upon himself. Divorce was easy for Jewish males. The school of Hillel taught that a man could divorce his wife for spoiling his dinner. Even Jews and Samaritans did not use vessels in common. If the Samaritan woman complied with Jesus' request, He would have had to drink from her vessel since He had none of his own. This would have involved a risk of ceremonial pollution for a Jew. The fact that it was a woman and a Samaritan made that risk higher. No wonder Jesus' request astonished the woman. But it didn't matter for Jesus; Jesus was breaking gender laws outlawed by Jews asking the Samaritan woman for water. Jesus standing at the well tells us that the actions of God - the Grace of God is not stagnant and dead, but living, flowing and like a rushing water that quenches every thirst.

Jesus said, "If you knew who was asking you for a drink, you would have asked him for a drink and he would have given you living water." Jesus was ready to offer her his gift of living water. Here his role reverses, first, Jesus was a guest asking the Samaritan woman for water, now He is hosting her with the living water. Living water means the gift of the Spirit, Grace, life eternal and salvation. He treats the Samaritan woman as his worthy guest for salvation. So here He goes again violating

another cultural taboo that Samaritans don't deserve salvation except the chosen people and that a man wouldn't host a woman with such a precious gift.

Jesus did not judge her past marital life, she had five husbands. He accepted her unconditionally as she was, invited her as a partner of theological discussion and finally revealed Himself to her as the living water and the one who surpasses all human-built temples. She left her bucket at the well and ran to her village to witness to whom she met, exclaiming "Can He be the Messiah?" She now became a host and invited her townspeople to come and meet Jesus. Jesus ended up staying in Samaria for two days, many Samaritans believed in Him. In her culture women weren't allowed to witness to anything except the death of her husband. However, Jesus lifted her up to the witness stand for good news and became the first missionary to Samaria, she deserves to be His disciple. Jesus broke the tradition and culture that qualified only a man to be a witness, or evangelist or disciple.

To summarize, Jesus took every possibility, crossed every boundary, broke traditional laws, overturned, surpassed, challenged and transformed the most binding, oppressive self-righteous, personal, social and religious culture of his day by hosting the Samaritans, the enemy of the Jew into His life and to the saving Grace.

*Rev. Rajasekhar is on the Faculty
& Dean of Students of COTRTS*

"Grace ceases to be grace if God is compelled to bestow it in the presence of human merit....
Grace ceases to be grace if God is compelled to withdraw it in the presence of human demerit....
Grace is treating a person without the slightest reference to desert whatsoever, but solely according to the infinite goodness and supper and purpose of God." —**Dr. C. Samuel Storms**

The Doctrine of Grace in the teachings of Scholastic Theologians

Abraham Thomas

In the Hebrew Scripture, Grace is understood as unearned favor, freely bestowed by God on individuals who are thereby redeemed and sanctified. In the New Testament, Grace is associated almost exclusively with the figure of Christ. By Christ's atoning death, the limitless favour of God was revealed. This article presents the teachings of various scholastic theologians towards the doctrine of 'Grace'.

1. Meaning and Definition

In the Old Testament, the RSV renders *hen* by "grace" on four occasions only (Est. 2:17; Ps 45:2; Jer. 31:2; Zech 4:7), while in two other instances (Zech 11:7:10) *noam*, "grace," "kindness," is used to convey the concept. *Hen* is widely translated as "favor" in the RSV and NEB, where the AV reads "grace." The term *hesed*, which is broadly descriptive of covenant love, is translated in the RSV by "favor" only in Esther 2:9 and Daniel 1:9 and in no instance by "grace." The term "Grace" in ordinary sense describes aesthetic experiences of loveliness and sweetness. In a more developed form it signified goodwill toward a person, as between God and man, and found special expression in the master-servant relationship. Grace or favour is the positive emotional reaction of approbation to some form of relationship, whether between man and nature, or something restricted to the level of human associations. Where God is involved in this relationship, it is He alone who bestows the estimate and consequences of favour and Grace upon man.

2. Scholastic Teaching on 'Grace'

Scholastic theologians, especially St. Thomas Aquinas, somewhat altered the Augustinian doctrine of Grace, which they intended to affirm. Aquinas introduced a distinction between the realm of nature and the supernatural. The realm of nature, he argued, can be known by unaided reason. The realm of the supernatural can be understood only through the Grace of God and by his gracious revelation of truth. Thus, Aquinas made room for both Aristotelian reasons in the natural realm and traditional Augustinian theology in the supernatural realm. For him, reason is untainted by sin and yields adequate knowledge within its inherent limitations. Grace does not contradict or supersede nature, but perfects it.

The scholastics also made a series of distinctions concerning the realm of Grace itself. Grace belongs to the supernatural realm; yet an act of Grace is necessary to elevate a person to the realm of Grace. This is justifying Grace, or Grace of elevation. It takes a further act of Grace, called Sanctifying Grace, to make a person holy and sanctified and thus able to enter communion with God. In addition, there is Gratuitous Grace: God's Grace cannot be bound to any predetermined channel. Grace may be permanent, as recognized in the steadfast, virtuous life of its recipient; it may also be received on rare occasions to allow certain extraordinary acts of obedience to God.

Scholastic theology tied Grace almost exclusively to the sacramental system. Grace, according to

this doctrine, is infused by each of the seven sacraments, so that the proper kind of grace is available when needed.

3. Scholastic teaching on ‘Grace’ in relation with ‘Salvation’

Scholastic view of salvation described that a man who does good work in the state or with the help of grace attained in salvation. According to Aquinas' teaching there are three steps of salvation.

- a. Infusion of Grace
- b. Moral co-operation
(doing good with help of Grace)
- c. Reward of eternal life

Later among the group of scholastic theologians the Nominalists (Ockham) set forth the four steps of salvation.

- a. Moral effort (doing good with natural ability)
- b. Infusion of Grace (as reward)
- c. Moral co-operation
- d. Reward of eternal life
- 4. Evaluation

Most major religions provide paths that deliver individuals from the bondage of sin, immorality, ignorance, and other types of impurity or disharmony and lead them toward a state of purity of soul, spiritual knowledge, wisdom, godliness, enlightenment, or even eternal life. Some emphasize the separation of the spiritual part of the self from worldly attachments, while others emphasize living harmoniously in relation to nature, self, and divinity.

Two corresponding religious ideals can be discerned from the different ways in which religions consider salvation. On one hand, the saved or truly religious person may be one who has achieved transformation from the material world and has reached a heavenly state of afterlife

(such as heaven) or a supreme state of consciousness (such as nirvana). On the other hand, this person may be one who has come to embody the virtues of holiness; however they are defined by the particular religion, while still living on earth. Monasticism arose in some religions, such as Buddhism and the classical forms of Christianity, although it has no place in others, including Judaism, Islam, and Protestantism. Many religious virtues—such as love, self-control, compassion, non violence, and wisdom—appear in more than one religion, but differences in belief systems can give varying significance to these virtues as a result of real transformation. All the historic religions especially Christianity address the need for individual transformation in some form, and can point to saints, mystics, or spiritual exemplars who fully embody the ideals of their traditions.

Conclusion

In the Middle Ages, Roman Catholic theology took form much as it remains to the present day. In the early part of this period, there was little intellectual activity: schools had vanished, libraries had been destroyed, and learning had gone into eclipse. The church spent its energies in sustaining, transmitting, and extending the faith. Monasteries also had their schools and much of the monk's time was spent in copying manuscripts, which they have saved from destruction. From these scholars came the theology of the Middle Ages, Scholasticism, it refers to the theology of schools. Anselm, Peter Abelard and Thomas Aquinas are the famous theologians of this period. They tried to defend the doctrine of the church, they emphasized the grace which transformed and sanctified and they connected grace with the sacraments and a new transformation took place in history.

Abraham Thomas is on the faculty & library in-charge of COTRTS

Grace, Transformation and Community

Josfin Raj S. B.

Three main themes are discussed in this short article in relation to the theme ‘Transforming Grace’. Primarily, that Grace disciplines us, which will lead us to have a transformed moral life. This argument will lead us to a dilemma involved in the discussion of Grace and morally transformed life in relation to the Law. Secondly, the question of whether Grace becomes another law, when Grace regulates our morality, is discussed. Finally, the paradoxical nature of Transforming Grace which equally transforms the oppressed and the oppressors, the persecuted and the persecutors. It argues for a reciprocal transformation towards an inclusive community in which the relational transformation is expected and demanding.

Grace as a teacher of transformed life

The Grace of God works in us to train us to lead a better quality filled life in this world and have everlasting life in the world yet to come. That means, transformed life is the characteristic of a person who has received the undeserved gift of God, i.e., Grace. How are Grace and transformed life related? Both are linked in Christ Jesus. The act of Christ on the cross is the pivotal point in which divine Grace has displayed fully to humans. The Cross event re-structured and transformed the distorted image of God in mankind. Transforming Grace, then, gets a new connotation, it fixes the authentic problem of human life - sin. It restores humans from original sin to the original state of life. The consciousness of sin is replaced by the consciousness of divine Grace. Now we

live, move and are sustained in and through the Grace of God. When s/he is under the Grace of God, it always reminds him/her about the value (cost) of the Grace shown on the cross and turns us away from sinning – Sin no more!!! Sin no more – is the teaching/law in the Grace of God. A person who really experiences such grace cannot sin anymore! It is a simple but profound fact; it is a Law of Grace. In this Law of Grace, where Grace is located is the question to answer now. Where Grace and law converge and diverge?

Grace fulfils the Law of God

Grace teaches/disciplines us in a way not like that of the Law. It is not to impart knowledge alone, rather lovingly disciplines. “It does not thunder like the Law, rather it softens the heart, inclines the will and provides the power to put God’s precepts into practice.” However, the Law never collides with divine Grace, since both works as a complementary tool in the hand of God. Divine Law is given to display the cost of God’s Grace. Grace fulfils the Law. “Christ is the culmination of the Law” (Rom. 10:4). Grace transforms the Law, which is written on stone tablets, into the tablet of human heart/consciousness. This transformation is called the transfer from ‘letter’ to ‘spirit’. “Letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” – a transformed life!!! “For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under Law, but under Grace” (Rom. 6:14). Law gives opportunity to sin to be our master, where as Grace allows only divine love to rule over our consciousness. We

are out of the consciousness of guilt and shame. That is to say, the transformation happened not only to our outward moral life (as Law is very keen to look into outward expression of life), but also to the inner part. Thus, Transforming Grace works towards an individual's both inward and outward change.

Is this transformed life meant only for the world yet to come? Or do we have any implication of it in this world – the society in which we live? How does Grace operate in the community set up?

Grace is a tool for community transformation

Christians, usually, are concerned only for the individualistic aspect of Transforming Grace. We make sure that an individual is morally correct so that s/he is eligible for the 'other world'. This individualistic and 'other worldly' view of Grace reduces the universality of Christian faith into particularistic and other-world centred faith. The undeserved gift of God to the world is not limited to individual salvation alone, but extended to the transformation of community(ies). "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). Then, Grace is public property! Considering this universal Grace of God, holistic and inclusive transformation of human community(ies) must be our scope. The epistle of Titus chapter two shares the same concern. It demands for the transformation in the relational attitude of the slaves who received the Grace of God towards their masters (v. 9). Paul speaks to a context in which slavery was a social system. He doesn't question the system of slavery here, but does ask slaves to have a transformed attitude towards their master. This community of right attitude and relationship can be called as the Grace community. In this Grace community, both oppressors and oppressed are transformed to share the same table for fellowship (*koinonia*). *Avarnas*

and *savarnas* will have a common platform to repent and transform. That means, the transformation is not happening in the structure of the community, as most liberation and liberal theologians argue for, but rather to the relationship and attitude of people towards others in a particular social structure. In any social structure, the Grace of God is powerfully operational – is the lesson we learn. In this way, human community would transform into the *oikumene*, the house hold of God by the Grace of God. It is possible (only) with the abounding Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In short, Transforming Grace is not only limited to individual salvation or sanctification. It includes the community as a whole. The structural change is less necessary, whereas relational transformation is compulsory in this new divine Transforming Grace experience. In this way, Grace is working as an operational power to transform community(ies).

Josfin Raj S. B. is on the Faculty of COTRTS & in-charge of COTR Voice

New Faculty in COTRTS



Viju Wilson is on the Faculty & Principal of COTRTS



Josfin Raj S. B. is on the Faculty of COTRTS & in-charge of COTR Voice

Unity: The Consequence of Transforming Grace in a Community

Wankitboklang Wanniang (M.Th. I)

God's Grace can transform not only the life of an individual, but the life of a family, a group of people, and consequently the community as well. Not only that it can, but it should. A glance at Titus 2 shows Paul's concern of different groups of people – the older men & women, younger men, slaves. The thirst that Paul had was that each group will display evidence of Transforming Grace at work in them, which will then disseminate into the whole community. Through this article, I would like to bring our attention to some aspects of transformation in the Khasi community when they embraced God's grace.

The Khasis of the Khasi Hills in Meghalaya are people of tribal lifestyle and culture rich in folklore, folktales, arts and also stories of origin. The tribe is sub-divided into many sub-ethnic groups, usually living in different regions of the state, with each having some peculiarity of its own. The sub-ethnic groups have dialects which in many cases are unintelligible to each other. There are differences in some aspects of custom and lifestyle as well. The geographical setting of the land poses a great challenge to most of the people groups in relation to communication and regular contact. In past history the region was divided into many small kingdom states, each with its own king, who would wage war amongst each other. The religion of the people was a form of monotheism, they believe in one God. Yet each sub-group attributes different titles and names of God, which at times

corresponds to a particular place like a river or a mountain. The religion is a clan-religion where each clan worship under the priesthood of a maternal uncle. At the most the village or the kingdom state can worship together and no greater circle than that could be included.

The gospel came to the Khasi Hills by the work of Krishna Chandra Pal of the Serampore missions in 1613, which was the earliest mission work in N.E. India. However, it could not sustain for long, more concrete and permanent work was done by the Welsh Presbyterian mission with the arrival of Thomas Jones in Cherrapunji, on the 2nd June, 1841. Even in the midst of oppositions and disincentives in becoming Christians, the number of converts grew. Education and medical missions began to grow. The Khasis do not have a script of their own and many folk tales exist of how the original script was lost. The missionaries began to use Latin scripts for the local language in the vicinity of the mission headquarters, i.e. the Sohra dialect. There was opposition from the British government who wanted to impose the Bengali script. But this was impossible as the missionaries did not know Bengali. This led to the development of indigenous literature more importantly the translation of the Bible into Khasi.

The transforming aspect of this work was that it developed a lingua franca. This has brought

solidarity within the tribe divided by unintelligible dialects. This brought together sub-groups which would earlier go to war or will not participate in a religious ritual of another group. But Christianity as a universal religion has brought an understanding of the universality of humanity. Thus, in gatherings, even among early Christians there were members of different regions belonging to different dialects gathering together under the uniting lingua franca easily understood by all. This has transformed the Khasi community in tribal solidarity. This is so because the lingua franca came to be used in all aspects of social life, not only in the ecclesiastical aspects of the Christian community. This brought a solidarity that would have been an impossibility in the past.

Family is one of the important units of the community, the community affects the family and vice versa. One lurking danger that threatens the bond of the Khasi family is the possibility of divorce. The traditional custom provides an option for the married couple for divorce. Christian teachings came with a strong conviction of the sanctity of the family and marriage as ordained by God. There is a strong stance against divorce, this has led to family unity instead of brokenness. In Khasi tribal religion, the father is tabooed to be part of clan worship if he is of a different clan. But with Christian universality, worship is no more a clan or sub-group activity; anyone is welcome

to unite in worship. Thus, it is evident on worship days to see family members going to church together. This brought strong family bond and each family member actively takes part in the same worship. This is a drastic shift from the old pattern. It unites a family and the whole community in worship. When the family bond is strengthened, the danger of brokenness is minimized. Such a benefit has positive psycho-social effects on the family – the parents and the children too.

In retrospection, we can see the Grace of God transforming a community in its societal and family life. This work of Grace has been a great blessing to the Khasi community and the evidences are still undeniably present even today. On the other hand, the challenges posed by the present lifestyle and thinking seem to threaten this unity. The high demands of the present age, globalization, the creeping of individualistic thinking and many other factors, all present a challenge to the unity and bond of the family and the community. Such challenges were also present in the world of the 1st century Palestine in its own setting in which Paul addressed Titus. These challenges are an undeniable reality, but the task is not impossible. It is a need for the church to revisit the call of God to bring positive transformation through the work of Grace in the individual, the family and the community as a whole.

“Yet the duties God requires of us are not in proportion to the strength we possess in ourselves. Rather, they are proportional to the resources available to us in Christ. We do not have the ability in ourselves to accomplish the least of God’s tasks. This is a law of grace. When we recognize it is impossible for us to perform a duty in our own strength, we will discover the secret of its accomplishment. But alas, this is a secret we often fail to discover.” —***John Owen***

“Christian humility does not consist in denying what there is of good in us; but in an abiding sense of ill-desert, and in the consciousness that what we have of good is due to the grace of God.”

—***Charles Hodge***

Transforming Grace all through the Ages

Mrs. Lissy Victor

Grace is one of the attributes of God's Goodness. The Greek word for Grace is *charis*, which means favour. Grace is the undeserved favour of God towards the wicked and unworthy sinners who deserve only punishment. Just as God is Love, He is grace too. Grace is not an addition to God's plan; rather it was in God's plan from the beginning of creation. Throughout the Old Testament, it is clearly visible, but the fullness of His Grace appeared through Jesus Christ. Jesus was not only the Love incarnate, but also the Grace incarnate. He reaches out to the wicked, sinful, rebellious, depraved, destitute and condemned human beings and offers salvation and all the eternal blessings. Romans 3:23 says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The Transforming Grace is the Grace of God which brings back a sinner who lost the glory of God, to the image and likeness of God by redeeming and transforming him from his sinful nature. Here a complete transformation occurs in the life of a sinner through the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus Paul says, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). It is a complete act of God to bring back a sinner to the godly nature.

In scripture we see three different stages of God's grace: (i) the hidden eternal plan of God's Grace (ii) the Grace which is revealed by the appearing of Jesus Christ (iii) the Grace which is going to be revealed in the age to come (2 Timothy 1:9-10). This surpassing Grace of God revealed upon mankind can be learned in the three different stages of life.

1. By His Grace we were Transformed

Every child of God possesses a past in which he lived as a sinner. Our deeds displeased God and we were destined for eternal death. Prior to the fall, man was alive in God's creation (1 Cor 15:45). God formed or fashioned man's body from the dust of the earth, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul (Gen 2:7). Thus man possessed the Spirit and soul, which gave him the image and likeness of God.

By the entrance of sin, the image of God in man was distorted. Man's relationship with God was totally broken and a big gap formed between them. However, Satan did not succeed in overthrowing God's plan. Salvation for humankind was an eternal plan of God. It was a mystery hidden in the heart of God from the very beginning of the creation. God in His mercy, made us alive when we were dead in trespasses (Eph 2:4-5). We were reconciled to God through Christ's death (Rom 5:8, 10). Salvation is a gift of God; it is not earned or merited. God gave what we do not deserve. As a result, we could relate to God and also came back to fellowship with God. This is the Transforming Grace that we experienced in the past.

2. By His Grace we are being Transformed

God not only made us alive when we were dead in sin, but he exalted us and made us sit in the heavenly places (Eph 2:5-6), so that we may transform into more of his likeness (Eph 4:23). So at present we are in heavenly places in terms of our spiritual life. God's purpose in creating man in his image was completely visible in the person of

Jesus Christ. So we can share the image of Jesus Christ and go from glory to glory by the ministry of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:18) through prayer, meditation on God's word, and worship. So, the transformation is a continuous process in the life of a believer. God wants this glory to be revealed not only through individual believer, but also through the church. Just as Christ manifested in the flesh, justified by the spirit and received up into glory, so the church will also be received up into glory as soon as her mission on earth is accomplished. Until then the church has to witness Jesus and be transformed into His image day by day by the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. By His Grace we will be Transformed Completely

The process of our transformation will be culminated the moment we enter into eternal glory. The corruptible shall put incorruption, and the mortal shall put immortality (1Cor 15:53). Once we were dead in sin, but when we are alive in Christ, death became our servant to lead us into eternity. The moment we enter into eternal glory, we will be transformed completely into the image of Jesus Christ. So long as we remain on this earth,

the fullness of this perfection is not possible. Paul, who laboured much for the sake of the gospel could not claim to be perfect, says, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected, but I press on" (Phil 3:12). John the apostle says, "We know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). One thing is sure that in our eternal glory we shall entirely be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ and shall attain its fullness. Then God's three foremost purposes of creating mankind will be restored into fruition. First, we will be with Him forever (Rev 21:3); second, we will be the givers of perfect glory due unto Him (Rev 7:10); third, we will rule with the Lord Jesus and will have dominion over the earth (Rev 11:5). This very revelation of future glory was given to Paul, who said that his present suffering was not worthy to be compared with the future glory in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:18). The believers who received the very revelation of future glory will certainly keep their mind on things that is above and not on the things of this earth (Col 3:1) to enter the eternal glory.

Mrs. Lissy Victor is alumni of COTRTS

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Performance vs. Transformation

Sovan K.Mallick (M.Th. I)

We tend to live under a works-based mentality. We feel we have to earn God's Grace through service and obedience. We have often many questions in our minds, how many times do we have to go to church? How many people do we have to witness to? How many families do we need to serve during the holidays? How many good deeds do we have to do to offset the bad ones?

Logically, this makes sense. After all, this is how things work in society and especially for our careers -work hard, get rewarded. But the Grace of God is different from this concept; Salvation has nothing to do with our efforts and everything to do with Jesus' love and sacrifice. Many Christians, though they would not admit it, have knowingly or unknowingly accepted a very legalistic view of Christianity, where we tend to follow a work pattern of our day to day Christian lives. Before we became Christians, we were performance oriented by nature and our culture enforces that orientation, and we want to somehow relate to God every day on the basis of our perceived performance. If we have been good, as we would define goodness, we feel reasonably secure in our relationship with God. If, on the other hand, we've had a "bad day" spiritually, we tend to feel insecure. In fact, that insecurity may cause us to live in denial about how bad our bad days really are.

The Grace of God is the most important, but the most "misunderstood" of all Christian teachings. Though we have memorized verses that speak about Grace, still we follow a performance based relationship with God. We still try to live our Christian life by our moral willpower. We just think

to read what the Bible says and do it. But often we do not realize the necessity of relying on the Holy Spirit to enable us to apply the scriptures in our lives. After several years of this self-effort approach, I grew discouraged over the prospects of seeing significant change in my life. While still not involved in any of the so-called "major" sins, I was seeing the subtle, often hidden sins of the heart. I seemed to be getting worse, not better. Instead, I found myself battling the same old sins of the heart that I had struggled with before.

God has predestined all believers to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). The process toward that goal is called by various names such as sanctification, growth in Grace, transformation (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Peter 3:18; 2 Corinthians 3:18). This process of transformation into the image of Christ begins at our new birth (John 3:3-5) and continues until we die and enter into the presence of the Lord. At that time, according to (Hebrews 12:23), our spirits will be made perfect, the transformation process will be completed. Not only has God predestined us to be transformed into the image of His Son, He has commanded us to be transformed. Apostle Paul says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Romans 12:2). In a similar way, Apostle Peter wrote, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:14-16).

“To be transformed into the image of God’s Son and to be holy as God is holy” are essentially similar expressions. But through these similar expressions what God has predestined for us, He commands us to pursue. There is no conflict between God’s sovereign will, which He will certainly accomplish, and His moral will for us, which we are to pursue.

This transformation into the image of Jesus is much more than a change of outward conduct; rather, it is a deep penetrating work of the Holy Spirit in the very core of our being, what the Bible calls the heart—the center of our intellect, affections, and will. It is what is sometimes called “a change from the inside out.”

But though the transformation process is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit, it very much involves our earnest, active, pursuit of that holiness without which no one will see the Lord. All the moral commands and exhortations of Scripture assume our responsibilities. At the same time, we are to

be dependent on the Holy Spirit for doing both of His own work and enable us through His power to do the work we must do. The more we grow, the more sin we see in our lives, it is the realization that both our eternal salvation and our day-to-day standing with God are based not on our own performance but upon the sinless life and sin-bearing death of Jesus.

This is one reason we still need the gospel every day. It helps us move from a performance relationship with God to a relationship which is based on the sinless life and sin-bearing death of Jesus Christ. It daily reminds us from God’s point of view that our relationship with Him is not based on how good or bad we’ve been, but upon the perfect goodness and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, the gospel frees us up to honestly face our sin, knowing that because of Christ’s death, God no longer counts that sin against us (Romans 4:7-8).



PROMOTED TO GLORY

With deep condolences we the NTC of India report this for your prayers that we have lost two of our Pastors who were faithful in the ministry. Pastor Elisha Rao, who built four churches and brought so many to the kingdom of God, being the first Telugu medium graduate of COTR Theological Seminary. He was serving the Lord in Rambhrapuram, he worked very faithfully in the ministry for the last 30 years.

Pastor Eliya who worked with NTC for the last five years, went to be with the Lord at Papayyavalsa of Rambhrapuram Area.

Please pray for the churches they left behind that the Lord would take care of them and comfort the families.



New Testament Church of India - Report

Rev. Mathew Jacob

NEWS FROM THE HARVEST FIELD

I, on behalf of the New Testament Church of India greet all the readers, in the Matchless Name our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I am delighted to come to you with what the Lord is doing in the New Testament Church of India. God has been so good in meeting all the needs of the ministry so far and to enable the leadership to continue to be faithful in the responsibility and the burden that the Lord has placed in their hearts.

After Apostle Dr. P. J. Titus was promoted to Glory, Mrs. Mary Titus, the Co-founder was taking care of the ministry till February 2015. With much prayer and submission to God's plan, the responsibility of N.T.C. was handed over to Rev. Jameson P. Titus, the second son of Apostle P. J. Titus and Mrs. Mary Titus to be the President of New Testament Church of India, and Mrs. Mary Titus being the Co-founder and Chairperson of the ministry. The ministry with the new leadership has started functioning from the following month with the help of the Almighty and with the assistance of Rev. Mathew Jacob (Vice- President N.T.C.) and other efficient team of leadership. God has been so faithful to the promises for this ministry so far. We would like to ask your prayers and the possible means of help to carry out the great commission of our Lord through this ministry.

NEW APPOINTMENTS

This year, the ministry has made new appointments in Kerala and in Tamil Nadu. Rev. Mathew Thomas was appointed as the State President of

New Testament Church of India in Kerala and Rev. Jayan Daniel was appointed as the State President in Tamil Nadu. In Andhra Pradesh we also made some new appointments to be the local Church pastors, Evg. Sudheer Williams in Chinthalavals (Vijayanagaram), Evg. Ravi in Rambhrapuram, Evg. Sateesh in Isukathotta (Visakhapatnam), and Evg. Philip in Savarvalli (Vijayanagaram).

CHURCH DEDICATIONS

This year NTC has built three new church buildings in different places and dedicated for the glory of God. The Church building in Prakash Nagar of Vijayawada was dedicated on 18th January, 2015, by the area Supervisors and other local pastors.



And another church building in Orissa was built and dedicated on 20th February, 2015 by Rev. Mathew Jacob. This church was rebuilt in Orissa after the Khandamal riots. Though there were problems, still God helped us to complete the building. Almost three hundred people gathered

for the opening of this church and praise God for the people who contributed to build this church. Ps. Dilip Pradhan is the pastor of this church.



We dedicated another church building in Chelluru of Manadapeta area of Andhra Pradesh. Rev. Mrs. Linda Gardner along with Mrs. Mary Titus and Rev. Mathew Jacob dedicated this church. It was built in remembrance of Rev. Jim Gardner who went to be with the Lord. We want to thank all the sponsors who were the instruments in building up the Kingdom of God in contributing for this church building.



CHURCHES UNDER RE-CONSTRUCTION

There are a few churches under re-construction. One of the churches that is being taken care of by Pr. Sudhakar in Siripuram Village of Ramachandrapuram area is under reconstruction. Please pray for the speedy reconstruction of this church. Another church building in Rangarayapuram of Ramabhdrapuram area is under reconstruction. At present the believers worship under the trees. Please pray that it will be completed soon.



CHURCH BUILDINGS DESTROYED

Two of our NTC church buildings were destroyed; One in Visakhapatnam which was led by D.D Prasanna Kumar. The municipality took the church



land and destroyed the church building. The Municipality promised them to give them another land, but so far it is not done. Please pray that the Lord will work in the hearts of those leaders to give them the land and the people of God in this place will have freedom to worship the Lord.



Another Church run by Pastor B. Premshekhar in Kakinada area of Andhra Pradesh was burnt by some anti-Christians. The church is under great pain and praying for those people to change and also they are waiting for God's provisions to rebuild the church. They lost a lot of Church materials. Please do pray for them so that the Lord in His time will provide all the needs for them to construct a new building and recover the lost items.

AREA CONVENTION

New Testament Church of India, Narasapurpetta in East Godavari district conducted an area convention from 9th to 11th of March, 2015 on the church grounds. Rev. Johnson P. Titus, Rev. P. N. Yesupadam, Rev. P. Varaprasad, Pastor Joseph Benny, Pastor P. Solomon Raju preached the word of God. It was a wonderful meeting, many were blessed and four people took baptism.

There was also another meeting conducted in Mandapeta Area from April 6-8, 2015. On 7th the Church celebrated their Silver Jubilee; Pastor Samuel Raju is ministering in this church. The

meetings were so blessed. Rev. Johnson Titus preached the word of God on the Silver Jubilee celebrations.



BORE WELLS FOR CHURCHES

After a long time of prayers and waiting, the Lord has provided bore wells for eight N.T.C. local churches. The Pastors and local church members and the surrounding villagers are happy for the provisions that the Lord has given to them. The people expressed their thanks and appreciation to the organization and individuals who were instrumental to this great venture. The beneficiaries are: Pastor A. Moses, Thamarapally (S. Kota area), S. Krupavaram, Jami (S. Kota Area), A. Amos, Chinna Neralavalsa (Ramabhdrapuram area), Evg. G. Mohan Rao, Rangarayapuram (Ramabhdra puram Area), Evg. T. Murali Mohan, Amadavalsa (Srikakulam Area), Evg. G.D. Paul, (Srikakulam Area), Pastor N. Karuna Kumar, Regidivalsa (Srikakulam), and Pastor Prabhakar Rao, Mallapur, (Hyderabad).

The New Testament Church of India needs all of your prayers and support, so that it may continue to fulfill the vision and mission for which this ministry is established by the Lord. The Leadership is coveting your valuable prayers for the smooth functioning of this ministry. Blessings.

*Rev. Mathew Jacob is Registrar of COTRTS
& Vice-President of NTC, India*

Report of Nava Jeevan School & Nava Jeevan Christian Junior College

Victor Joseph

It gives me an immense sense of happiness to bring this report to you from Nava Jeevan Group of Institutions. Nava Jeevan Public School and Nava Jeevan Christian Junior College were re-opened on 15th June, 2015. On 22nd June, 2015, students and staff of both the institutions had a joint assembly at the school ground. Rev. Johnson P. Titus, the president of COTRTS prayed and inaugurated the 2015-16 academic year. Mrs. Mary Titus, the school correspondent and Dr. Viju Wilson, principal of COTRTS also graced the occasion with their presence. There are 950 students in all, in both the institutions. Nearly 350 students are boarders, representing different states of India, 200 students are given free education. 35 teachers and 11 junior lecturers are employed in school and college respectively besides office staff. In the previous public examinations we achieved 100% results. Nava Jeevan Christian Junior College is one of the reputed exam centres for Board of Intermediate education (BIE), A.P.

On 9th February, 2015, College and School jointly celebrated Annual Day. Parents, well wishers and many from COTR community attended the same and witnessed a splendid display of cultural programs in the Global Advance Centre.

On 14th August, 2015, Ratna Sagar Publication conducted a workshop for teachers on class room management in the school Auditorium. Mrs. Sheena from Coimbatore was the resource person. It was a great time of learning. 15th August was Independence Day, the entire COTR community gathered at the school grounds sharp

8.15 a.m. Mrs. Mary Titus, the correspondence unfurled the tri-colour followed by march past and cultural display.



Moral education, Sunday School, evening devotion and Sunday worship are under way in the school campus.

Today, in a multifaceted society, education has also taken on a varied role; education no longer seeks to provide mere information. The focus is on developing and fostering well rounded knowledgeable citizens of India. At Nava Jeevan, as Educators, we strive to impart education that suits the needs of the changing world without compromising our values. This demands commitment and patience. I entreat all the readers of the ANSWER magazine to continue to pray for Nava Jeevan institutions to go forward for an exciting and challenging future, so that all our children may attain their fullest potential.

*Mr. Victor Joseph is Principal
Nava Jeevan Public School*