

THE NEW BIRTH

Eva Peck

Chapter 6 – Transformed into a New Being

Salvation is not a static, one-time event. Rather, it is the ongoing experience of transformation at the soul level by God's Divine Love into divine nature. Using the Old Testament reference to the coming bestowal of the Divine Love, we are speaking about a new heart – a “heart transplant” or heart transformation. Theologian John Wesley described this dimension of God's grace as sanctification or holiness. The Bible contrasts the two states – where we came from and where are we going.

Two Mindsets Contrasted

While we are not to judge and condemn others, the Bible supports and encourages discerning. In fact, it advises us to watch the company we keep, for corrupt behaviour in others does rub off, and we are warned to be on guard (1 Corinthians 15:33; Proverbs 22:24-25). We are told in Matthew 7:16-18: “*By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.*” Fruit can include our own actions, as well as the result of our ministry to others (2 Corinthians 3:2-6).

A specific listing of “fruits of the Spirit” (spiritual nature, following the highest law) and a contrasting list of “works of the sinful nature” (the natural loveless proclivity) is found in Galatians 5.

Galatians 5:16-26 – So I say, *live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.* For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. *They are in conflict with each other,* so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit [motivated by Divine Love imparted by the Holy Spirit], you are not under law [the law is transcended]. *The acts of the sinful nature* are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God [the Celestial Kingdom]. But *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.* Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus [have the Divine Love in their souls] have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the

Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Analogies to and Nature of the Transformation

Jesus used several physical analogies to illustrate the changes in the human soul brought about by the Divine Love. One comparison is what happens to *dough* through the fermenting action of yeast (Luke 13:20-21). Another one is the *mustard seed* that grows from something tiny into something very large (Luke 13:18-19). Jesus also mentions the effect of *new wine* destroying old wineskins (Mark 2:22), and an *unshrunk patch of cloth* destroying an old piece of clothing when washed (Mark 2:21). In the gospel attributed to John, Jesus talks with a Samaritan woman about partaking of the *living waters* that become “a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14). All these sayings convey the idea of something new and powerful entering into a human being in order to change that person from what he or she was into something completely new and different – indeed, *a new creature*.

Like the yeast (or another leavening agent) that is added to dough to initiate change, the Divine Love is deposited into the soul of a person who earnestly longs for it. It then starts changing that soul at a deep level, permeating it little by little as the individual prays for more of God’s Love. With our co-operation and God’s sanctifying grace, we grow in ability to live as Jesus lived

and love as he loved. As we pray, study, worship, and share in fellowship with others of like mind, we deepen our knowledge of and love for God. As we respond with compassion to human need, we strengthen our capacity to love others. Our inner thoughts and motives, as well as our outer actions and behaviour, become more and more aligned with God's will and will testify to our union with God.

How to Grow and Develop

To continue growing, our own effort and involvement is required – transformation doesn't occur automatically. As is written in the book of Philippians 2:12-13, "continue to *work out your salvation, ... for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*" After asking for the Divine Love, we are to consciously act accordingly. This involves two aspects – being and doing, and includes love for others, oneself and God, gentleness, kindness, patience, generosity, truthfulness, humility, gratitude, service, integrity, acceptance of others, and promoting peace and harmony.

In Ephesians 5:18, we find more light on this. It reads, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; *but be filled with the Spirit!*" According to Mark Kramer, in the original Greek, the imperative phrase "be filled" is one word, *pleroo*, which means to "*render full*", to "*fill up*". The Greek verb is in the present tense, rather than the aorist – it is an ongoing instruction. We are to be continually filled with the Spirit. However, the verb is also

in the passive voice, which means, that being filled with the Spirit is something done unto us by God, and to which we submit. Paul is telling us, not to be merely possessed of the Spirit as opposed to being drunk with wine, but he is in effect saying, *“See to it that you are continually, and constantly, being filled up with the Spirit!”*

Manifestations of the Divine Love Transformation

Soul transformation through the Divine Love is the only way to qualify for the Celestial Kingdom of God and have a guarantee of immortality. This is the New Birth which *“means merely the flowing into a [person's] soul and becoming a part of it, of the Divine Love of the Father.”* It isn't the result of accepting the blood or death of Jesus as a sacrifice for our sins, to appease the wrath and requirements of the Father, or because of any vicarious suffering of Jesus – which cannot transform us. Put in other words, the New Birth is *“brought about by the flowing into [human souls] of this Divine Love, whereby the very Nature and Substance of the Father [infuses the soul], and wherefrom men cease to be the merely created beings, but become the souls of men born into the Divine reality of God.”* (TGRABJ/1/308 and 2/56). It is a *new creation* from above through the operation of the Holy Spirit upon our life – changing our soul through the Divine Love when we truly repent and turn to God.

Transformed into a New Being

So the New Birth is both a present and future reality. Jesus told James Padgett: “Your soul, as you, has been *developed in its spiritual nature* and you have become in closer union with the Father and have partaken to a large extent of His Love, and, to a degree, been transformed into his essence, so that *you have become a very different entity from what you were when your development for our purpose commenced*; ... You are now [progressing] towards the fountainhead of the Father's love, and *have taken on a part of his immortality*, and it depends only upon yourself how rapid your progress shall be towards a complete transformation such as spirits who are inhabitants of the Celestial Spheres, possess. You need not wait until you come to the spirit world in order to make a rapid progression, although it will be more difficult for you to progress while in the flesh, as you understand, but wonderful progress may be made while in the flesh, and you have been told the secret of this progress.” (TGRABJ/1/5).

The transformation at the soul / heart level is a gradual process and can be almost imperceptible by the individual as it is occurring. Some have experienced a gentle burning in the heart after they have prayed for and received the Divine Love (cf. Luke 24:32). Others may have no conscious physical perceptions. We are all on a unique spiritual path with unique experiences. Everyone is connected to God in his or her own way. Each person is also likely to be guided in ways that are the most

beneficial to them and that will motivate them to keep asking for more Divine Love.

If we recognize this Love as a Presence and Substance that transforms our lives from the inside, this touches every part of our being – both our minds and bodies. Over time, the effects of the transformation will become evident on our faces, in how we view others, in how we express ourselves, in everything we do. We'll manifest more and more of the “fruit of the Spirit” listed in Galatians 5:22 as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. As we'll discuss in more detail in the next chapter, our perspectives and desires will change, and spiritual pursuits will gain more importance in our lives. Our soul guidance will gain pre-eminence over mental and intellectual reasoning. We'll be receiving more and more spiritual insights through soul perceptions.

The Bible concurs that with the Holy Spirit / God's Love / Christ in us (these terms often denote the Father's gift of saving grace), we indeed become and are becoming a new creature or creation. We are exhorted to “live by the Spirit”, i.e., follow the promptings of the Divine Love in our hearts and souls as opposed to the physical passions and desires:

2 Corinthians 5:17 – “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ [Divine Love], he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

Transformed into a New Being

We embark on a new way of life – one where ceremonial laws fall by the wayside. “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision [and other ceremonies and rituals] means anything; what counts is a new creation.” “Those who belong to Christ Jesus [walk the Divine Love path] have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit [Divine Love in our souls motivating us], let us keep in step with the Spirit.” (Galatians 6:15; 5:24-25)

The transformation and development process is further described in the second epistle of Peter.

2 Peter 1:3-9 – His divine power [Divine Love] has *given us everything we need for life and godliness* through our knowledge of him [God] who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his *very great and precious promises* [of Divine Love / immortality / place in the Celestial Kingdom], so that through them *you may participate in the divine nature* and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, *make every effort* [our cooperation is required] to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does

not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins [by the law of Divine Love transcending the law of compensation]. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to *make your calling and election sure*. For *if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* [the Celestial Kingdom].

In summary, the New Birth, or transformation of soul by the Divine Love, is a gradual and ongoing process. Once we begin it, we become a new being and embark on a new way of life with a new orientation. Spiritual soul development, however, is not automatic but requires our cooperation and effort. While we are transformed and motivated from within by our “new heart”, we need to consciously follow its promptings and act in loving ways, even in situations of temptation. We are to grow in love and other virtues, but we have God’s help through His Divine Love in our soul to succeed and become more and more at-one with our heavenly Father.