

Conformity and Transformation

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

– Romans 12:2 –

I have always enjoyed an inward chuckle at self-proclaimed societal “non-conformists”. In my days as an undergrad at the University of Pittsburgh, I observed so many people outwardly expressing their individuality. The ironic part to me was that they all tended to look and act like each other!

The truth is, none of us want to feel isolated or alone. To some degree or another – whether wittingly or not – we all tend to conform to groups. The peer pressure we felt as adolescents never really goes away, it simply grows more subtle and ostensibly justifiable. Unfortunately, this innate tendency is fraught with pitfalls. As we conform to any group or ideal, it is likely that we are, in whole or in part, conforming to the world.

When fully received and rightly understood, the gospel liberates us from the felt need to “fit in” anywhere in this fallen world. The target of our conforming tendency is no longer a group or an ideal, but a risen Redeemer. To be like Christ is now the pressing daily goal. And since we know that the world hated Him, we are persuaded it has no resident fondness for us. Thus, our minds begin a process of renewal that continues throughout the remaining days of our pilgrimage. Our thinking undergoes a radical change – a transformation. We can no longer view the world the same way we once did. Any fulfillment we thought it offered has been exposed as corrupt or fallacious altogether. To borrow A.W. Tozer’s verbiage, it is no longer a playground, but a battlefield.

Note, however, that our text is an exhortation to *believers*. It suggests that even post-conversion, we can slip back into our propensity of group think and identification. *We must therefore actively and continuously submit ourselves to the transformative power of the gospel and the influence of the Holy Ghost in order to break the cycle.* This is accomplished only via the good and godly disciplines of Bible reading and study, prayer, church attendance, Christian fellowship, and active Christian service. All of these are requisite to maintaining the fullness of the transformation and the freshness of the renewed mind. When in this state, the Spirit will be free to use us in proving to a fallen world what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

-- D. Murcek