

Contemplative Theology

Power to Transform

Why Do People Stop Growing Spiritually?

1. **Why do we not go on to heroic virtue?**
2. **What does God's Word say about growth?**

2 Cor 3:18 So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image. NLT

Col 3:10 and have put on the new self. This is the new being which God, its Creator, is constantly renewing in his own image, in order to bring you to a full knowledge of himself. GNT

1 John 2:12-14 I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. 13 I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father. 14 I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one. NIV

3. **Why is mediocrity so pervasive?**
4. **Why do many Christians fail to rise above the level of mere decency?**
 - a. What we know has very little effect on how we live

- b. We have counted on preaching and teaching and information to transform us but it's inadequate

Translation and Transformation

1. Religion has 2 functions:
 - a. **Translation:** Creating biblical meaning for the "believer"
 - b. **Transformation:** Creating radical transformation for the "follower"
2. **Translation:** is a horizontal movement - securing the *believing self*
Transformation: is a vertical movement - transcending the *separate self*
3. **Translation**
 - a. Self is given new way to think about reality - new belief system (biblical worldview)
 - Forgiveness instead of blame
 - Relational instead of analytical
 - b. Self learns to "translate" the world and its own being in terms of this new belief system and way of understanding
4. **Transformation**
 - a. The self itself is examined and exposed
 - b. Brought to its own sacrifice and death
5. First movement in spiritual journey-**Translation:** common spiritual experience
6. Second movement in spiritual journey-**Transformation:** more rare experience
 - a. Not matter of *belief* but of *death* of the believer
 - b. Not matter of finding solace, but finding courage and creativity to change
 - c. Self is not made *content*, it is *crucified*

7. Both are essential/indispensable
 - a. Must learn to translate world
 - Give it biblical meaning/sense
 - Defend ourselves as having our proper place in it
 - b. But at the same time, it is not enough / transcending the self is needed
8. **Translation** gives *legitimacy* : a way of believing, a vision of the world, self, and God. It serves as a “social glue”
9. **Transformation** gives *liberation*: a way of being freed from the world and united with God
10. Must start with translation but the problem is that most people stop there. Believing is enough. It is satisfying. Defining. Securing. Relieving guilt and shame
 - a. The problem arises because this leads to *boredom*. Horizontal living is too small, confining, does not embrace our creation and destiny. Ends with *burnout or drop out*
 - b. Living only our own story is too small
11. But ultimately we begin to ask:
 - What are we to aspire to?
 - What are we to be detached from?
 - What are we to be surrendered to?
 - We long for something more
 - We want to move beyond something merely personal to something more intimate and even organic
12. If spirit and flesh remain two separate realms, what could being “*filled to the fulness of God*” mean? Or the “*indwelling of the Holy Spirit*?” Or “*our lowly bodies being made like his glorious body*?”
13. We must discover how to cooperate with God to pursue his revealed will and purpose
14. **Perhaps the greatest barrier to our transformation:** *We enjoy our mediocrity / we are content with translation*
 - It is undemanding and self-satisfying

- We *content* ourselves with knowledge
- We *satisfy* ourselves with knowledge
- We *justify* ourselves with knowledge
- We *comfort* ourselves with knowledge

John 8:32 *You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free*

- Truth that is not transforming is not really known
 - Truth that is not transforming us is deceiving us (James 1:21-25)
15. Our greatest hope of change is that the triune God is pursuing us in love and with the express intention of transforming us
- The *infinite Spirit* is working in us: **Titus 3:4-6**
 - The *eternal Father* is working in us: **Phil. 2:12-13**
 - The *incarnate Son* is working in us: **Gal. 2:20**
16. **We need *deep conversion***. What is it? What is really possible?

Created in God's Image

1. Our purpose and possibilities are intimately linked to our creation
2. We were made to be God's image-bearers on earth: to know him, to share his rule over the world, to reflect his glory
3. Our *design* and our *destiny* must determine how we live