

# Conformed-Transformed

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There are many common expressions which illustrate the idea of the word conform and the idea of conformity. An example is the expression “When in Rome, do as the Romans.”

The words conformed and transformed, set in juxtaposition are derived from the Scriptures, Rom. 12:2.

The negative position is here given as an admonition against conformity to the world. This world, which we by nature love, is the world contrary to God and His precepts.

To conform to the world is so natural to us. It is so difficult to be different in custom, in word, and in walk from the rest of the world. The world, after all, sets the fashions and the “forms” to which everyone is supposed to “conform”.

In your contact at work you, no doubt, are often confronted with these things very concretely. You are asked if you’ve seen this or that movie: if you’ve heard this or that radio program or if you’ve seen a certain TV production. If you haven’t you’re considered odd, different or queer. It isn’t pleasant to our flesh to be considered thus.

It seems that so many of us are of the opinion, judging by appearance and walk at least, that the word of God admonishes us not to conform “too much” and not to conform “in everything” to the world. The idea seems to be that although we know that gross conformity like movie attendance, dances and the attendance at worldly places of amusement is not to be condoned, yet we do not make the non-conformity decisive and complete. The word of God definitely means for us to completely break with the world in every department of our life.

Conformity with the world includes, among others, our outward appearance. We judge people, and very often rightly so, by their outward appearance. We speak of “women of the world” or a “man of the world”. This we do because women by their make-up and dress, and men by their manner and behavior manifest that their minds and hearts are taken up entirely with and filled with worldliness.

We mention these examples of outward conformity with the world not because this is the only aspect of the subject about which we are admonished, but because outward appearances usually denote inward conditions and because Scripture also teaches us that “by their fruits ye shall know them.”

Another manifestation of conformity is our speech. “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt.” Outward conformity with the world is manifest more clearly by our speech than by our appearance. We refer not so much to gross swearing and cursing, but to graceless speaking and to flat, tasteless speech, which is not seasoned with salt.

Every profession and industry has its peculiar phrases and speech. By a person's speech one can often discover what a person's occupation is. The world has its peculiar speech by which it expresses what motivates her and what interests her, so the Christian has his distinguishing speech.

How little we use the new language we have learned which distinguishes us from the race of the man of the world and sets us apart as a “peculiar people.”

We can discuss any topic under the sun, but in doing so we must speak in the new language we have been taught, for the world discusses the same things we do, but they speak a language which expresses their own philosophy and “world and life view”. The approach to our problems and the expressions we give to our ideas and philosophies are so often conformed with

those of the world about us. We are influenced by “popular” opinion, by newspapers and the views of worldly propaganda.

The “path of least resistance” is the complete conformity with the world. This includes appearance and dress, walk and conversation, act and deed, thought and motive.

The positive position admonished is one of transformation, “but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”. To be transformed is to be different, formed anew, not fashioned after the likeness of the world but after the likeness of God and in accord with His precepts.

To be pleasing to God in everything and to have His face shine upon him in favor and approval is the earnest desire of every true child of God. It is this very thing that motivates Him. Therefore, when the word of God confronts him with the admonition to be transformed, he recognizes and confesses the holiness, justice and righteousness of the precept. His desire according to the “spirit” is to be wholly transformed, but because the “flesh” is weak and he knows that there is in him a constant warfare between the old man of flesh and the new man of the spirit, he cries “God be merciful to me a sinner” for “who is able undo these things?” God, however, who is rich in mercy and in grace, who creates in us this desire and willingness to be transformed, gives to us also the ability to be transformed. To Him be all the glory forever.

To be different, peculiar and separate, we are called.

In appearance we must not be mistaken for men and women of the world. All men must be able to discern that we are not of them. Our words and speech must manifest a soberness and piety which distinguishes us from the lightness, levity and sacrilege of the worldly man.

We must not be found “in the counsels of the ungodly, nor standing in the way of sinners, nor sitting in the seats of the scornful”.

In our private lives we should devote our time to those things which tend to draw us nearer to God rather than those which fill our minds and hearts with carnal, earthly things and so draw more into conformity with the world. We think here of television, radio, sports, magazines, books and all those things which either “profit little” or not at all, but do positive and great harm to our spiritual life.

Let our ideas and philosophies, expressed and believed, be such as not conforming unto but transformed and different from those of the world.

Our “world and life view”, as our view of all things in the world in relation to each other and to God is often called, should be thoroughly Scriptural. On this point we perhaps differ more than on any other from nearly every Reformed church group.

God give us grace to be so transformed in appearance, in word, in deed and in motive that the world may find no common ground with us, but that God’s people may see Christ in us to the glory of the Father.

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