

TRANSCEND IN CHRIST ALONE

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Romans 1:15-32

So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

The Just Live by Faith

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

God's Wrath on Unrighteousness

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

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This message isn't going to really be an expository message in going through the verses of the Scripture in Romans 1. I wrote this for a American literature class to where I compared the writings and writers of the transcendental movement with God's Word, the Holy Bible. What we can learn from this as well as from the narratives in the Bible and then even in the early 1800s that in the words of King Solomon, "That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun."
(Ecclesiastes 1:9)

A prevalent movement arose in the early part of the 19th century that would soon after become labeled as transcendentalism. What gave that movement legs, or more apropos to the cause, a voice, was a group of Unitarian preachers. To give that message wings to spread rapidly and widely then, was the writings of more than a few prominent writers. While it has been said that this movement was not necessarily unique in its basic tenets, it certainly was what had developed on the heels of what had been called romanticism.

So what exactly is transcendentalism? The root of the word should give us a bit of that answer. It was believed and purported that, as man is inherently good, one can rely on one's instincts or feelings to transcend the physical to tap into the spiritual, or what lies beyond the natural. This new movement was put forth as "the gospel of the new faith" by Laurie E. Rozakis, Ph.D.¹ There are said to be three elements then to this process of transcending into the other realm. First is the communing with all of the cosmos. Ralph Waldo Emerson, a major proponent to the new movement, concluded that it is the combining of "know thyself" with the "study [of] nature." The second element to this belief system then is in the studying of nature that speaks to someone's being one with the "Over-Soul". What developed through the 20th century can be said to be from the same ideas or premise, that was and is behind the "New-Age Movement". It is now described as an entering into the "Christ-Consciousness", through reflection and meditation. The third element is strikingly similar to the tenet "do as thou wilt" that has been primarily attached to Aleister Crowley, the Wiccans, and the Satanic religions. For transcendentalism, it was described as following one's own intuition or beliefs.

As mentioned, there was a strong backing to this movement by numerous writers. Those writers included Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Margaret Fuller, as well as some Unitarian ministers, and the publisher of "The Dial", Elizabeth Palmer Peabody. Included in that illustrious group of writers, in support of the transcendental movement, was also the prominent physician and writer, Oliver Wendell Holmes. Holmes called Emerson's speech at Harvard,

¹ Laurie E. Rozakis, Ph.D., Complete Idiot's Guide to American Literature, pg. 79 (Indianapolis: Alpha Books, 1999)

"The American Scholar", an intellectual "Declaration of Independence." There are two primary issues that seemed to be the driving cause of this movement. Those two things were big government and social causes. There was more to this movement than just getting in touch with one's feelings though, so to speak. As Emerson stated, "Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind." He also stated then that when man is left to himself, to follow the dictates of his own integrity, that he will then be at his best.

As a student of the Bible and a minister of the gospel, I am inclined to, or more to the point, I am necessitated to do a comparing of the transcendental movement with the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Word of God. It is unfortunate, yet not a surprise, that the movement arose primarily from the ministers of the Unitarian church. Unitarianism, by definition, is the belief in one God and rejects the doctrine of the Trinity.² In that then, the Unitarian belief rejects the divinity or deity of Christ. The other glaringly heretical teaching ascribed to Transcendentalism, which was adopted by certain Unitarian preachers, is the belief that man is inherently good. Apparently their Bible doesn't have either **Romans 3:12** or **Romans 3:23** that says, respectively, that there is none who does good and that we are all sinners in need of a Savior. Also, **Proverbs 3:5-6** tells us that we can't rely upon our own wisdom or understanding but that we need the wisdom and guidance from God. Likewise, as Jesus stated, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (**John 14:6**)

Another important issue then with transcendentalism, that contradicts Scripture, is the belief that persons can tap into the divine through their own willing of their being. Yet we know from the Word (the Word being Jesus), that there is but one way to the Father and that process involves being born-again, which is being born of the Holy Spirit. As Jesus put it, one must be "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (**John 1:13**) Whether one wants to acknowledge it or not, a man or a society without Christ, regardless whether they ascribe to godly principles or not, is Godlessness.

What comes out of the transcendental dogma is really the belief that one can become their own god. No matter how simplistic and close to nature one becomes, as was the tenets of Henry David Thoreau, without Christ, they are dead in their sins and destined to destruction. From the earliest of examples of mankind, in Eve listening to Satan and believing that one could be like God, to the building of the tower of Babel to where they decided to make a name for themselves, transcendentalism falls in formation as being just one of many repackaged lies of our enemy in leading us away from the

² "What is Unitarianism?", gotquestions.org.
<https://www.gotquestions.org/unitarianism.html> (accessed Mar. 15, 2023)

love of God and in looking to Him as our God and our Savior.

One last contrast of transcendentalism to the Bible is summed up in what the Apostle Paul wrote in **Romans 1:20-21**, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened." Paul then goes on to explain that man desired to reverence the created over the creator. What that means is that man has and will continue to look for ways to justify themselves and to be their own god so that they are not then, in their distorted way of thinking, accountable to God.

Each of us will have to answer to God (**Romans 14:12**) but as Christians we have the assurance from Christ who promises, "**whom the Son sets free is free indeed!**" (**John 8:36**) As with generations that have come and gone before us, the standard format is that first things start out well for mankind, think first of the garden of Eden, and then through the sin of man things continue to just get worse and worse. The prime example that God gives us in His Word is with the Israelites. It was and is a vicious cycle of God setting man straight, then over time man determines to become their own god and forsake their Creator and Sustainer for their own selfish interests. Another great reset is indeed coming to this country as well as the whole earth. For us, we can be part of the problem or we be the ones sharing and showing the love of the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be praying for God's grace and mercies for those that God has placed in our lives as well as for our community and nation.

As Paul told the Ephesian church, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them." (**Ephesians 5:11**) That doesn't mean we have to be mean-spirited about it but as we have the love of God being shed abroad (or poured out) in our hearts, as Paul put it (**Romans 5:5**), we should be concerned and warn others of what the Word says. Of course that means that we have to know what the Word DOES say, right? We're not anyone's judge and we are all sinners in need of the saving grace that is in Christ Jesus. The best way that we can testify though of the glorious love & grace in Christ is to live it. Be that example that has others saying, "I want what you have!" I am not talking about physical possessions, for all that is going to pass away. What we should be showing and sharing is JESUS, the Christ, the Son of God, that they and we can have life in HIM. We certainly don't have to subscribe to all of the propaganda that the world is pushing for we are being called out of that darkness and into the marvelous light of Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior! (**1 Peter 2:9**) May our transcendence be in Christ! AMEN.

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"What is Unitarianism?". Gotquestions.org.
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