

The INTERCESSOR

Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

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Humans Have No Nature

by Norman Grubb

Perhaps the greatest stumbling block to fulfilling our divine purpose as Christians is our misunderstanding, inherited at the Fall, of our human make-up. Norman exposes this falsehood and unveils our true functioning and relationship to Christ—the heart of what he calls the Total Truth.

We now come to what I think is the most important section of this Total Truth, because it has been missed in its completeness by nearly the whole of the Bible-believing body of Christ—a bold thing to say, but it seems to me to be the fact. It concerns what we call our human nature, and that is where our problems and entanglements lie. Even if new creatures in Christ with a new nature, we mistakenly think we have an old, scarred nature—we sometimes call it “the flesh”—which persists in being like an albatross around our neck, a constant rival distracting our attention and stumbling us in our walk. It is precisely that which made Paul cry out, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Wretched, yet redeemed!

It seems as if we acquired an old nature through the Fall, and now have a new nature in Christ, and the two remain deadly rivals, dog eating dog—a struggle from which we are never free in this life—the old man-

new man syndrome...and the best we can hope for is a means of the new counteracting the old; and yet with a sense that the old always remains in us, though we are Christ's—remains as a deadly element which Jeremiah calls “the heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.”

By “nature” we’re not now meaning our natural faculties and capacities of body and soul. Our nature, in that sense, means the type of person we are, which is expressed through our soul and body. We may say someone has a kind nature or a harsh nature, a sensitive nature or an unfeeling nature, and so on. But the “old nature” or “new nature” is not the faculties and appetites of a person, but rather the expression of the true personality of the person.

The evangelical church seems divided between two convictions concerning these natures. Each persuasion is antagonistic to the other. One, by far the largest, maintains that we have two natures when redeemed; and we must live with that fact, battling away against the old nature as in Romans 7, and affirming that there is a deliverance in Romans 8 which we must daily apply to relieve us from the pressures of 7!

The other section of the body of believers is strong, persistent, and

stoutly convinced that theirs is the truth—though they are in the minority in the whole company of believers and often are considered dangerous or suspect. They are given the general title of “holiness people.” They use such terms as “entire sanctification,” “perfect love,” “full salvation,” and are usually considered to be followers of the sanctification teaching that was reestablished in the church through John and Charles Wesley and John Fletcher. There are many precious people among them, with whom I have close links. Their conviction is that after the first stage of our new birth, which centers in justification, we must have a second radical experience of the

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fullness of salvation in Christ by the elimination of the old man and his total replacement by the new man “created in righteousness and true holiness” with “the heart purified by faith”—and that is the full application of our identification with Christ in His death and resurrection by the Spirit.

Both say we have a human nature. One maintains that our old nature corrupted by the Fall is supplanted by a new nature in Christ, but that the old remains—so that our new way of living is by recognizing the two, the old being counteracted by the new. The other agrees that we all start with a

The true revelation of the Bible is that we humans have *no nature*. We’re not created to *have* a nature, but to be containers of a “deity nature,” a divine nature, and we humans can only ever express the nature of the one within us.

human nature which has become corrupted through the Fall, but holds that the impartation of the new nature in Christ in its totality, by a second work of grace, totally replaces the old nature. The term “eradication” is sometimes used, though most “holiness teachers” regard that as an overstatement of their position, not sufficiently allowing for the continuance of “infirmities.”

But *I* am saying that the true revelation of the Bible is that we humans have *no nature*. We’re not created to *have* a nature, but to be containers of a “deity nature,” a divine nature, and we humans can only ever express the

nature of the one within us. All the Bible symbols of our humanity are those of being containers and expressers of one who is not ourselves, but is a god. All that matters is, “Which god?”

The illustrations used of us in our humanity are vessels, branches, body members, slaves, wives, temples. In every case that means we are the agent by which the occupant operates. As vessels, we are said to be either “vessels of wrath” or “vessels of mercy,” but we must be either one or the other. The vessel of *wrath*, of course, is a container of the god by whom we experience wrath; and the vessel of mercy of Him by whom we receive *mercy* (Rom. 9:22-23). So it is not the type of vessel that is of importance, but the nature of the liquid that it contains. The branch illustration is even more explicit, for a branch is but part of a vine, the two being in life-union. A branch is merely the living means by which a vine reproduces itself in its fruit. A branch has no distinct nature; it has the nature of its vine. The fruit is of the vine, not of the branch. And when Jesus said “I am the true vine and you are the branches,” He was obviously implying that there is also a false vine producing its fruit—one vine being He the true Life, and the other being the usurper (John 15).

We are called temples, and the temple was only the outer means by which the living God manifested His presence. Thus the Shekinah Glory shone through the tabernacle; and His glory is seen in us as His temples. In every case, a temple is only the dwelling place of a deity and reveals his presence, not its own. We are either a temple that contains an idol god, or one in

which the living God dwells and walks. A temple has no nature but that of the god in it (1 Cor. 8:10 and 2 Cor. 6:16).

We are called married wives, and Paul distinctly says we all in the human race are married to the one husband or the other. According to Romans 7, the moment we recognize that in Christ's death we are cut off from our old husband, Satan, then we are immediately united in a new marriage to Christ who is risen from the dead. No momentary gap between the marriages! And the point is that here he is speaking of marriage in what we might call a biological sense: the wife receives the seed of the husband and bears his children, whether "the motions of sins" or "fruit unto God." The wife is presented as merely the fruit *bearer*, not the fruit *producer*.

Then Paul, in Romans 6:16-23, calls us slaves (as it is in the Greek) and says all of us all the time are either slaves to sin or slaves to righteousness—slaves of Satan or slaves of Jesus. But slaves are merely the property of their owners, with no kind of a life of their own and doing only the work of their owner.

Finally, we are members of the body of Christ, and any body operates by the mind and will of the head, and nothing else. It has no body-led activity of its own.

So in each case the human is only the agent—as temple, manifesting the presence of the deity; as branch, expressing the nature and producing the fruit of the vine; as body member, set in action by the head; as slave, doing the will of the owner; as wife, bearing the children of the husband; and as vessel, only a container and nothing else.

The Only Two Natures

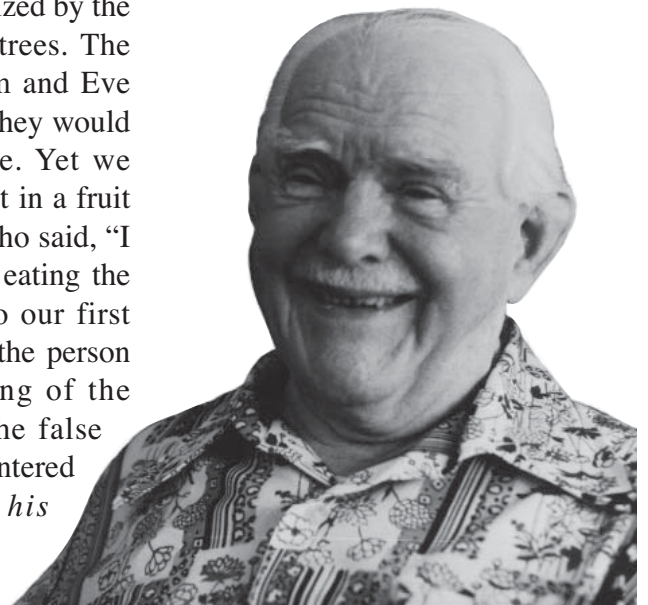
Now after this Biblical revelation of what we humans are—containers and agents—we find the Bible distinctly says that we have no nature of our own but express the nature of the particular deity indwelling us. On the one hand, Paul says in Ephesians 2 that while we were in our unredeemed condition, dead in trespasses and sins, we "walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience...and were by nature children of wrath"—not some nature of our own but of our satanic parent, his children in his wrath nature. Then on the other hand, regarding the redeemed, Peter tells us that by receiving "exceeding great and precious promises" we become "partakers of the divine nature." Quite obviously then, it's not some human nature, but God expressing His nature by us. Here are the two deity natures expressed in our humanity.

This could not be more explicit than it is in the Biblical account about the Garden of Eden. There we are told life and death were symbolized by the eating of the fruit of the trees. The Bible tells us that if Adam and Eve had eaten of the right tree they would have received eternal life. Yet we know that eternal life is not in a fruit but in a Person—in Him who said, "I am the life." Therefore, if eating the right fruit means that into our first parents would have come the person who is eternal life, eating of the wrong fruit means that the false deity, the spirit of error, entered in and they became *his* dwelling place.

Now here is the point,

the nitty gritty of the reality. All we redeemed humans recognize, when our eyes have been opened by grace, that we were sinners, were under the power of Satan, did his works, were his children. But do we realize that we actually were *he*, in the sense that humans are always manifesting the deity who expresses himself by us? Did any of us know, while unsaved, that we were Satan walking about in our human forms, or that the redeemed are Christ walking about in their human forms? We should know it now, for we are plainly told this.

I remember the surprise when I first read in 1 John 4:4, "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." I knew that "He in me" was the Holy Spirit, but I suddenly woke up to the fact that there was equally "he in the world" in fallen humans, just as much as the Holy Spirit is in us when redeemed. And two verses later John is saying, "Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." That began to open my eyes, and I began to relate it to the symbol of the fruit of the garden.



Then I became alerted to Jesus' words as He confronted those opposing Him, as recorded in John 8:38-44. "I speak what I have seen with My Father: and you do what you have seen with your father," stated Jesus. As religious Jews they resented that, and indignantly responded, "We're not born of fornication. We have one Father, God." Jesus answered, "If God were your Father, you would love Me." Then He broke the truth wide open and declared outright, "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do." When I read that, my eyes were opened to the second phrase as well as the first. The first says that we humans—all of us who have not yet become children of God by faith in Jesus Christ—have Satan, not God, as our father. But the second phrase especially struck me: "...the lusts of your father you will do." Not that we are doing our own lusts, but the lusts of our father. Then all we are doing as humans is not a product of some supposed *human* fallen nature, but actually *Satan himself* expressing his own lusting nature by us! All we are, therefore, is merely the outer expression of this spirit of error, this god of this world, living his own Satan-form of life by our humanity. That was revolutionary. I had always thought I was fulfilling my own natural desires; but not so, because we have no nature of our own. We have all been fulfilling the lusts of the god of self-centeredness, and what we think are just *our* sins are ours only in the sense that we are joined to Satan as branch to false vine, expressing his thoughts and deeds. So when the Bible says "All have sinned," the real inner truth is that the sinner is Satan, and we in a secondary sense are participating in

his sinning.

This is the major area in which sin—or Satan, as the Scripture has said—has deceived us; and deceit means making us think that we are what we are not. Satan has played his greatest trick on us in making us think that life is "doing our own thing"—our own self-expression. Who of us in the wide world would ever suspect that we were not just "ourselves" in our self-activity but Satan operating in our form? Of course, Satan himself is the fundamentally deceived one, for he vainly imagines that he made himself independent when he rebelled

It is one thing to regard ourselves as humans merely influenced by Satan; but quite another matter to realize that it is actually *he* just being himself and living his own quality of life by me...and I merely his vessel, branch, slave, temple. I am Satan in my human form.

against God and was cast out of heaven. He imagines himself to be Mr. Independent Self, though actually he is still eternally and totally dependent on his Creator, and doing His will—as we see so clearly in the history of Job.

It is this same false concept of independence with which Satan has infected the human race. We just naturally think we are independent and doing our own thing. Independence is the huge lie swallowed by fallen, blinded, deceived humanity, and the great delusion from which we have to be finally and fully delivered before we can be our true selves. That is what

Paul so perfectly explores and aims to deliver us from in Romans, chapters 6 to 8. That is the winning of the final battle over the delusion of the Fall. Our whole life has been built on the false assumption that we are just our own responsible selves, and when changes are needed they are needed in *us*. We can see it in our false self-righteousness, in our fallen days, when we imagined that *we ourselves* were living our own lives of good and evil (which we thought mainly good, with a few evil touches). Actually, all our "good" was evil, for it was a product of the spirit of independent self, the spirit of error. Self-effort *good* is no better than self-effort *evil*, being only Satan's self-effort produced by us. It is one thing to regard ourselves as humans merely influenced by Satan; but quite another matter to realize that it is actually *he* just being himself and living his own quality of life by me...and I merely his vessel, branch, slave, temple. I am Satan in my human form.

One reason why the natural man cannot easily accept this fact is that he regards Satan's activity to be mainly the grosser evils like murder, theft, etc. But when our inner eyes are opened, we fully see that the spirit of error, the spirit of self-centeredness, can look highly respectable. We recognize that the self-loving self is usually disguised to make a nice appearance. So, for us who are enlightened, it is not hard to see that fallen humans are Satan—Mr. Self-centeredness himself—in his physical form. It is a profound eye-opener to realize that *all* forms of our apparent self-activity—even if good, helpful, and beneficial to others—are expressions of our self-loving self and thus, in actual fact, expressions of that

Satanic spirit of self-centeredness in us. Good deeds are merely a product of the “good” part of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Two other scriptures also brought this into focus for me. First was 2 Corinthians 4:4, which speaks of the lost as those “in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds”; so there he was within us, in our unbelieving condition. The second is 1 John 3:12, in which John exhorts us to love our brothers, and adds, “Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother.” When I read that I asked myself, why are the words “of that wicked one” inserted? Why not just say, “Don’t be like wicked Cain who slew his brother”? Because it was *not* “wicked Cain” who was the murderer, it was “that wicked one” who Jesus has said was “a murderer from the beginning,” and *he* murdered Abel by Cain’s hands. “The lusts of your father you will do.”

We Have Been Deceived About Ourselves

So we are seeing a tremendous revolutionary reality—that humans never had a nature by themselves. They were both created and later redeemed to express in simple spontaneity and naturalness Him who is God in us and who, Scripture says, “dwells in us and walks in us” (2 Cor. 6:16). Likewise after the Fall, when we had freely joined ourselves to Satan, we had no nature of our own either. So there never has been a “human” nature. Therefore there is no point in considering whether we believers have two natures or one! No, we humans have *none*, but tragically or gloriously, spontaneously manifest the nature of

the deity in us.

But as we investigate this actual, factual relationship between God and man—in which man is nothing but the agency by whom God reveals Himself as God, and God in love-action—it becomes obvious that man is not a robot, with no free expression of himself as a person. It is precisely the opposite. We see the total freedom of the Divine Person fulfilling His love-purposes through the total freedom of the human person. And how can that be? It is no paradox when, as we have already seen, freedom must make its choices and the free will then loves to be controlled by its choice. We still do what we want to do. There is no need to force a person’s will. All the other person need do is to attract and captivate our “want,” and then we will love to act in harmony with him. Give a child another toy, and his crying after the first one disappears. People often ask, How can we conceive of God changing a person’s will if he is free? The answer is that God changes our “want,” and the will follows spontaneously. Once God has captured our wills by drawing us back to Himself through Christ, then it is He in us who “wills and does of His good pleasure” (and it is always good!) and it is we who naturally, gladly, freely work it out (Phil. 2:13-14).

He who is the “Freedom of the universe” can only be His free Self by His sons as *they* are free. Only with freedom can there be expansion and development, so God’s universe can only be entrusted as an inheritance to those free to develop it—to persons, not automata. If there are two freedoms, that of the Creator Person and that of the created persons, the one simple

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this magazine is to further the great high calling of the Lord Jesus to carry His Gospel to the whole world. This calling is known in the Christian world as the Great Commission. Our interpretation of the Gospel is that Jesus Christ is the second member of the Trinity, fully God, made manifest in the flesh. He was tempted in all points as we are, but totally without sin. He was crucified for the sins of the world, was buried, and rose from the dead on the third day, according to the Scriptures. He gives the power to become the sons of God to all who receive Him.

Beyond this forgiveness of sins, *The Intercessor* is committed to proclaiming to every creature the mystery of the Gospel, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church at Pentecost means that Christ has joined Himself to us as one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). Thus we see that Christ has reproduced Himself in our flesh, and we Christians are really Christ living as us (Gal. 2:20).

Therefore, there is not only the forgiveness of sins but also a life in Christ of knowing we are dead to sin (Rom. 6). Furthermore, we are dead to the Law (Rom. 7), since the power of sin is through the Law. Christ is the only Lawkeeper (Rom. 8), and there is no independent human nature that can keep the Law, though we are continually tempted to believe so.

Belief in an independent human nature is Satan’s lie and the root of sin. Non-Christians are really Satan-indwelt, expressing his lusts (John 8:44), just as we have come to learn that Christians are Christ-indwelt, expressing His righteousness (2 Cor. 6:16). Humans have no moral nature of their own, meaning that we are simply expressions of the indwelling deity nature, either of Christ or Satan (the fallen created being who is the spirit of error). Sin in a Christian is a result of believing again Satan’s lie that there is a human nature which can do good or evil.

Our full restoration, then, is to see ourselves as Christ in the world and to labor and travail to see Christ formed in others according to the mighty working of the Spirit. This is “intercession,” the definite laying down of our lives to present every man perfect in Christ (Col. 1:28). *The Intercessor* is committed to this great and thrilling commission, the cost of bringing it about, and the resurrection joy of reaping the harvest!

necessity is that the Creator and created be in such a love-union that the sons love to fulfill the will of the Father, and yet always are consciously free in working it out. It still remains an apparent contradiction to reason and logic, I realize, but there is no contradiction in daily living. We who are in this love-union know we are free, and we make our free decisions and carry them out into action, yet we equally laughingly and delightedly know we are doing what is worked in us to will and do. So here is the perfection of freedom which we who have found “the way” delight in, and in which we freely operate.

This revelation from the Scriptures is so central to our very being that we will go over it again, for the repeating of something this important can only help settle the truth more firmly in us. Our failure to recognize that we Christians are never independent selves and have no human nature of our own but are always, eternally, expressions of the Deity Person whose property we are, and that we manifest His nature, is the root of all our confusion and frustrations. All redeemed sons of God struggle with it in their newly awakened zeal to be the kind of people we know we ought to be. It is the root of our and Paul’s Romans 7 “wretchedness.” It is the blank wall of obstruction we appear to be confronted with in all of life’s problems. It also appears to us as an immovable block in our bringing Christ to others, with their deafened ears or prejudiced hearts. The false concept of independent self is the all-round blockage; indeed, it is the only blockage of all life.

It is the great deception. The serpent deceived Eve; and sin, which is

Satan’s garment of deception, the Bible says, deceives us. For sin’s principle is “I’ll do things my way, not God’s way”—the precise character of Satan. So what has happened is that Satan has tricked fallen humanity into thinking that we, like himself, are really independent selves, running our own lives in our own way. He has totally blinded us to the fact that we are merely expressions of him, the false deity—actually Satan in our human forms. Who among the millions of us in our lost condition ever thought that we were actually Satan manifesting himself by us? When we responded to the conviction of the

Our failure to recognize that we Christians are never independent selves and have no human nature of our own but are always, eternally, expressions of the Deity Person whose property we are, and that we manifest His nature, is the root of all our confusion and frustrations.

Spirit—enough to know we were sinners, under the condemnation of the law, without God and without hope—we simply saw ourselves as *slaves* of Satan, doing his evil deeds; even *children* of the devil, having his character of self-loving self. But none of us recognized that actually it was he, the spirit of error, who was living his *own life* by us—he being the real sinner and we walking Satans (just as the redeemed become walking Christs). We were under this false conception that it was just we who were the sin-

ners, and the sins our own evil deeds, and the self-centeredness our own distorted independent self. And it is because we did not know ourselves as “walking Satans” that we now have great difficulty in knowing ourselves as “walking Christs.”

This is what ties us in knots. We have been so grossly deceived—and deceit is much more dangerous than blindness, because when blind we know we are blind, but when deceived we think we are what we are not. We shall be seeing in further detail how this illusion of our being independent selves—and so having certain responsibilities and the particular obligation to be the kind of people we know we ought to be (despite our constant failures)—is precisely what has so distorted our self-outlook. Does it not seem almost blasphemous, or certainly ridiculous and impossible, that we could actually be Christ expressing Himself in our human forms? Look at us! Yes, look at us through the illusion of being independent, responsible people who should somehow become like Him. Now contrast this with the “notion” that we are Christ in our human forms. It is blasphemy! But we will clear this hurdle, and the leap is clear, simple and sane.

So now we have had a first hard look at this revolutionary fact, plain in the Scriptures, yet hidden from (we may say) everybody who is not of the Spirit, and equally hidden from the vast majority of Bible-based believers. It is the fact of the deity-indwelt life being as much the condition of the lost as of the saved. Recognition of this is the key to living with all boldness the liberated human life.

For many years after his retirement as General Secretary of the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade, Norman Grubb traveled extensively sharing the truth of our union with Christ. He also

carried on a huge personal correspondence with individuals throughout the world. He was the author of many books and pamphlets, a number of which are available through the

Zerubbabel Book Ministry. Norman lived with his daughter, Priscilla, in Fort Washington, PA. Norman P. Grubb entered the Kingdom at 98 years of age.

Editor's Note

In this issue of *The Intercessor*, we focus what Norman called “The most important section of our Total Truth...missed in its completeness by nearly the whole of the Bible-believing body of Christ”: that humans are containers and agents of deity, not self-existent selves. Having spent much of his life mining the scriptures to discover the truth about our humanity and how we function in relationship to God, Norman Grubb shared his treasure with all who would hear. At the risk of appearing repetitive, we have assembled feature articles as well as excerpts from several of Norman’s books that lay out in detail the biblical foundation and practical application of this key truth. And if, as Norman says, we “learn to live by the repetition of recognition,” this issue will give ample opportunity for learning.

The lead article, taken from Norman’s last full-length book, *Yes, I Am* unmasks the misunderstanding so prevalent in the Church—the false idea that when Christians have two natures—the corrupt “old nature” and the redeemed “new nature”—that are constantly in conflict. Instead, Norman provides biblical illustrations that humans have no independent human nature; instead we are neutral vessels containing one of two deity natures—Christ or Satan. This article explores

the revolutionary truth that sets us free to be what we were created to be: expressers of the Divine nature.

Three articles, “Old Man, New Man,” “Have We Two Natures?” and “What is the New Man?” explore in greater depth the origin and danger of the “two natures” misconception about our human makeup with clear biblical teaching on the total replacement of Satan’s spirit by Christ’s—effected for me by Jesus’ death on the cross and personally appropriated by faith individually when I accept Christ as Savior.

“The Sole Function of the Human,” explains how we inherited the concept that we are self-sufficient from the Fall and instinctively regard ourselves as something much more than containers, rather than totally dependent upon our indwelling Operator. This point is developed further in “The Self Can’t Be Improved.” Satan’s lie is that we are independent, separated selves who can be improved; instead, at conversion “we were restored through Him to the eternal union—eternally indivisible”—functioning as Christ’s body, directed by Him as the head and like branches manifesting the fruit of the Vine. Another excellent resource on this topic is Norman’s booklet, *No Independent Self*, reviewed by Mary Walsh in “A Look at a Book.”

Along the same vein, Brett Burrowes’ Bible Study, “Man—A Vessel,” presents a clear picture of what it means to be a vessel, putting our

humanity into proper perspective. Pointing to Paul’s explanation that there are noble and ignoble vessels, Brett asks, “Wouldn’t you rather be a vessel of gold than a garbage can?”

But what about sin in the believer? How do we sin if we are Christ-operated? Norman’s, “The Answer Continued” explains how all sins are ultimately a consequence of believing the lie of independent self—and how replacing that lie with the truth of our union with Christ liberates us to be the Christ-expressers that we were created to be. Page Prewitt’s article, “The Real Problem: Satan’s Lie,” explains how wrong believing about ourselves—seeing myself as an alone “I”—is the sin that allows Satan to misuse us through our soul and body: “sin in my members.”

Finally, on a more personal note, “There is a Second Blessing” is Norman’s account of his personal crisis that drove him to change “from the false idea of becoming something to containing Someone.” Norman also poured out this precious truth in his personal correspondence. In this issue’s two “Letters to Norman,” we see how Norman used the writers’ misunderstanding of our human make-up as a backdrop to teach and clarify our function as receivers (“vessels”) and expressers of Deity.

the self can't be improved

by Norman Grubb

Our great error is in thinking that our human selves can be improved. And we think that because we have this false concept of being separated self-developing selves, this is false deception from the spirit of error. But in Christ we are not separated. We are in an eternal union. That is what, we were crucified with Him, buried with Him, risen with Him, means. That is the symbol of the Lord's Supper, eating His flesh and drinking His blood. From the moment we received Him, we were restored through Him to the eternal union, which I prefer to call unity, because union keeps the attention on the two, whereas unity settles us in the realisation of something eternally indivisible—which is the fact by grace.

The relationship in this unity is positive and negative, so that all the illustrations given in the Bible point to that. We are branches in the Vine. The branch is the negative means by which the Vine can bear its fruit. But it is a unity, and when we see a vine we really only see its straggling branches and we call that the vine. The branches are the vine in their branch forms, and we are Christ in our human forms.

We are called the body of Christ. The body is the negative to the head, by which the head goes into action. But head and body are a unity. So Paul called the body Christ in 1 Corinthians 12:12.

We are called the temples of the living God, the buildings in which God may be seen; and we are the earthen vessels whose treasure is the

Christ within. Temple and vessel don't illustrate the unity, but do make it plain that they are merely negative containers, and we don't look for change or improvement in them.

So then how does this all work out? First, by a recognition, which is a revelation, that the human self by itself can only be motivated by its own self-interests; for its only true place in creation is in its unity with God, as the means by which He manifests Himself in other love through

The human self can never change. The vessel can never be the living water it contains. The branch cannot be the vine.

When that recognition is a reality to us, then we can start by accepting ourselves in our weakness and all normal human reactions.

our human selves. Apart from our destined place in the unity, we can only be self-loving selves. Therefore it is useless and a waste of time for us to ask God to make us loving, or patient or pure, or free us from human reactions of hate or fear or worry or depression. It is asking an absurdity and an impossibility. The human self can never change. The vessel can never be the living water it contains. The branch cannot be the vine.

When that recognition is a reality to us, then we can start

by accepting ourselves in our weakness and all normal human reactions. In this distorted world we are besieged all day long by fear and doubt and hate and worry and all the rest of them. To feel them is normal, not wrong. We shall always be responding to them. We hate or dislike this person. We are jealous of that one. We are afraid of what we are called on to do. We are worried by daily problems. We have fits of deep depression. Our minds are assaulted by all kinds of wrong thinking. If we struggle against them, what help is that? If we condemn ourselves for

such reactions, we remain still bound and full of guilt. If we call on God to help or change us, we don't get changed, or maybe just a momentary relief.

Then on what grounds can we accept ourselves? Because of this great revelation: we are merely the negative joined to the Positive. We are no longer we, but Christ in us. Christ the real we! Listen to Paul. He starts by saying Christ died for us, then speaks of the Lord with us, and goes on to his special revelation of Christ in us; but he ends up, when he gives his personal witness, by Christ is the real I. 'I live,' he says in Galatians 2:20. 'No,' he corrects himself. 'It is not I, but Christ living in me.' Christ not with, not in, but replacing Paul, Christ in Paul's form. And Christ in your and my form. Put your name there. You are Christ in Jack's form, Christ in Elizabeth's form, I, Christ in Norman's form, and so on.

Now, in the light of this revelation, when we in our humanity are moved in this direction or that by our negative reactions, we don't struggle, we don't condemn, we above all don't try to change ourselves (trying to be good is the worst sin); no, we *replace*. We transfer our inner believing from what has its hold on us because we are believing in it, fear, lust, hate, etc., and attach our believing to who we really are, not our human selves, but Christ in ourselves. And as we affirm and recognize Him, He who is the peace, love, courage, purity, manifests Himself in and by us.

There is the secret—discovering who we really are. We have come back home at last as the branch in the Vine and the Vine in the branch. 'Abiding' in that John 15 chapter is, in the Greek, just 'remaining'; and we remain by simple faith-recognition. The negative to God the Positive, and necessary as a negative, for only when we are consciously weak, as Paul said, then His strength is perfectly manifested. When we are fearing, He is the courage. When we dislike, He is the love. And Paul goes as far as to say he personally takes pleasure in negative situations of

weakness, hurts, needs, problems, for when he is weak, then he is strong.

There is no doubt that this is the biggest tieup in thousands of God's people; in fact all of us have to start tangled to get the knots untied. We are just so bogged down in taking ourselves for granted as normal functioning people, and we are so used to preserving an image, that it is a

second spiritual breakthrough for us to grasp the fact of helplessness. We had come to acknowledge that we had not kept God's law and were guilty sinners. But it is another thing, when we are the Lord's, to discover and admit that we are also helpless saints. We can't do it, and not only can't but are not meant to. We call that the second collapse.

That is the whole meaning of Paul saying we can have dominion over sin, because we

are not under the law. This is why there is that important chapter of Romans 7, which has been such a ground of puzzlement and controversy. There it is sandwiched in between the two victory chapters: in Romans 6, in Christ's death we are cut off from the former control of the spirit of self-centredness, 'dead to sin'; in Romans 8 we are

joined to Christ in resurrection life, by His Spirit replacing that former spirit in us. Then in between comes Romans 7, saying we are not only dead to sin, but dead to the law. Why? Because if we are to function as living sons, we must know once for all in what sense our human selves can be manifestors of Christ. So Romans 7 is the human self which now has God's Spirit and delights in His law in the inward man, and wills to do it, and serves the law of God with the renewed mind.

But self, when regarded as just by itself, has the virus of independence and self-reliance which Paul calls 'the sin that dwelleth in us.' That is the Satanic spirit of self-sufficiency which he calls sin. So the moment we humans, not yet recognizing Christ in us as the only keeper of His own law, want ourselves to keep it, and slip into this old habit of thinking we can do it, then down we fall.

When we in our humanity are moved in this direction or that by our negative reactions, we don't struggle, we don't condemn, we above all don't try to change ourselves (trying to be good is the worst sin); no, we replace.

By inner union, Christ is our real self. So what do we now do? We tell the law it is no good its shouting at us, because we can't fulfil it, were never meant to; but we contain the One who can and does. So the law has not a thing more to say to us or demand of us.

We can't do what we would, and do what we should not. Oh wretched man! And the law of God stands there to demand of us that we keep it, if we think we can! Then at last it dawns. Our human self is now a container of Another Self, Christ, the Spirit of Christ. We never were meant as humans to keep God's laws of self-giving love. Left to our human selves, we can only be ourselves and love ourselves. But this is just why Christ has come into us—to replace that evil spirit of self-centredness by which we had lived. By ourselves, we would still remain self-loving selves, but we are not

ourselves any more. By inner union, Christ is our real self. So what do we now do? We tell the law it is no good its shouting at us, because we can't fulfil it, were never meant to; but we contain the One who can and does. So the law has not a thing more to say to us or demand of us. We are 'dead to the law' in Christ. And now we are free by simple recognition that Christ in us, Christ as us, keeps His own law in us, so that 'the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us' who are now walking by inner recognition of the Spirit, and not recognition of that old self-effort.

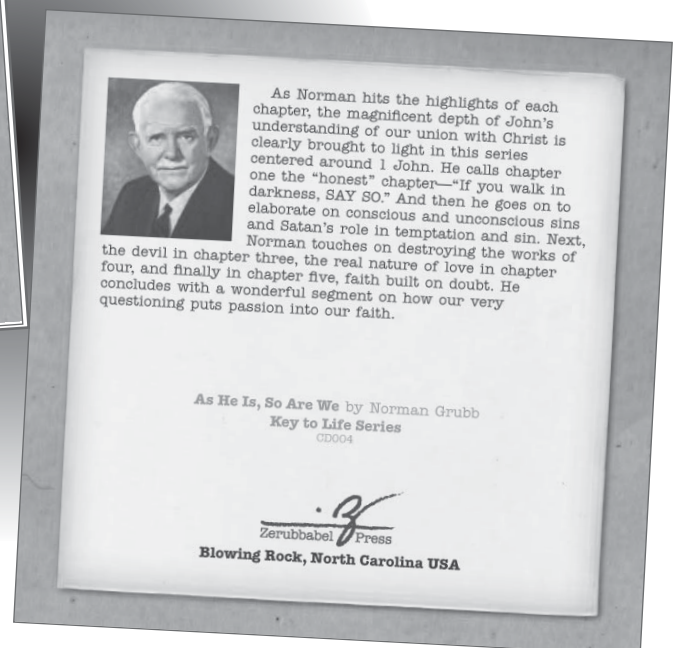
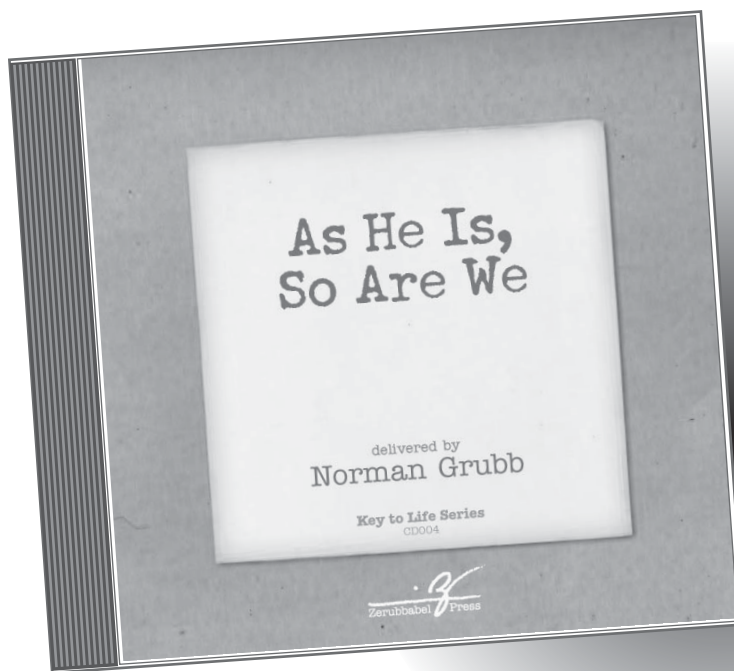
How thankful I was when, as a young missionary, longing to be 'improved'—to love more, have more faith, the Spirit said to me, 'Drop that. You can never be improved. You are just a vessel.' And then He showed me that simple fact that God is love, not has love, and I saw for the first time that love is a person, God Himself; and that it was not a matter of my being made loving, but of me being the vessel which contained Him who is the love. I learned then to change from the false idea of becoming something to containing Someone.

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The Sole Function of the Human

by Norman Grubb

There is only really One Person in the universe—God Himself. The creation is the means of manifesting Him. Human beings, created as persons in His image, only exist to contain and manifest Him as The Person, for they alone as persons can do that. But likewise, being persons, and therefore self-conscious and free, they can and did refuse to “retain God in their knowledge,” and thus became the containers of the false spirit of self-love in place of the Divine Spirit of self-giving.

I want to stress most plainly the complementary fact to God being the only real Person. It is that we humans are basically containers, and nothing else. I have already referred to our misconception of the function of the human self, and here it is. Through the self-sufficiency we inherited from the Fall, we instinctively regard ourselves as something very much more than containers. “Vessels” the Bible calls us; it was the first description given by the Ascended Christ of the most dynamic Christian of history, the Apostle Paul: “He is a chosen vessel unto Me”: just a vessel, that was all. Were all the dynamism, the wisdom, the revelations, the passionate love, the self-sacrifice then attributes of the vessel, or of Him whom it contained? And Paul himself went on to call us all “earthen vessels.” Not even tin cans, but nearer to crack-pots! Humbling, self-emptying, an offense to any man not enlightened to facts by the Spirit of God. But let us get it plain, and without equivocation. If God is the All,

and we are merely the means of His Self-manifestation, is it not a fact that we must be just containers? “Christ is all and in all.” “Temple” is another like metaphor, for a temple has no reason for existence except to house its god: “Ye are the temples of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them.”

The point then is that a vessel or temple has only one function (and you will remember that we humans have a misconception of the function of the human self). Activity is not the function of a vessel, but receptivity. Here we reach right down to the roots. Receptivity is the simplest, most child-like human function. In Bible terms, it is not works, but faith. But what we have to re-learn is that receptivity is not *a* function, but *the* function. All other functions are by-products. The whole of life is a parable of this. Is not everything some form of the self-giving of God? And do we not totally live by what we receive—food, air, the floor boards beneath our feet, the clothes on our backs? And in most cases something has died to give us life. Life is surely based on receptivity, and the Bible word for receptivity is faith. Can anything be simpler? How wonderfully God has made us: to live, spiritually and materially, by exercising a capacity which is as near as possible to doing nothing—just receiving. Not reaching up to drag things down, but things poured upon us in such abundance that we just open our mouths and they are filled: and the gift

of gifts we receive is Himself.

Wait a minute, you may object, but we do have to act also. Certainly, activity is a product of receptivity, but not a substitute for it. But remember we said that we must take extreme measures to expel the human self from its false position before we can replace it in its true one. Certainly, we are real persons. We think, we will, we act. Yet it is not safe or even true for us to regard ourselves as such until first we have “died” to our independent selves, and begun the life of constant recognition (reception) of Another as the Real Self in us. We must start at the bottom and remain forever at the bottom—mere containers, vessels, capable *only* of receiving, and with no other capability.

Do we see then what this means? Not that we have a life to live with God as our helper. Not that we must pray more, give more, love more, witness more. Not basically that we are God’s partners or fellows or co-workers, but that God Himself is the All in us. He is the One who prays, gives, loves, witnesses. He lives our life, our common everyday life.

When we have really seen this, then we can add to it the other fact—that we humans are obviously more than inanimate pots and pans. We are people! Humanity has spent all the years of its history running amok with the claim to be autonomous selves, like a horse with the bit between its teeth. Therefore again we say, active self must be thrown right out, as it were, and replaced by

receptive self, before we can allow the usurper back into favour again. But if the expulsion has taken place once and for all, and the lesson learned, then the self-in-action can be recognized again in its rightful function, although all our lives it will have to be reminded of where it belongs and snubbed when it tries to take over again. Its rightful place and function is portrayed for us by Christ's parable of the Vine and branch, and Paul's analogy of Head and body. The Vine and branch truth emphasizes the indissoluble union of Christ and the believer. We are organically one. One tree, one life; yet in that relationship Jesus underlined the fact that we, the branches, are merely channels of the sap from the vine. A branch is more than a channel, because a branch is alive whereas a pipe is not, and a branch does absorb and utilize the sap to produce the fruit. It is not entirely inactive, though entirely dependent. But it was the

dependence Jesus was pointing to: "apart from Me, ye can do nothing." So that illustration is taking us one further than the vessel. First, we are merely containers. Then, having absorbed and accepted that fact, we are more. We are united to Him whom we contain in a way a vessel can never be united to the liquid in it. We are united because we are living people as He is the Living Person; yet in that union, as branch to vine, we remain as totally dependent as the vessel. Without the sap flowing through us, we can do nothing. Yet it is this time a living dependence, for we are to "abide in the Vine."

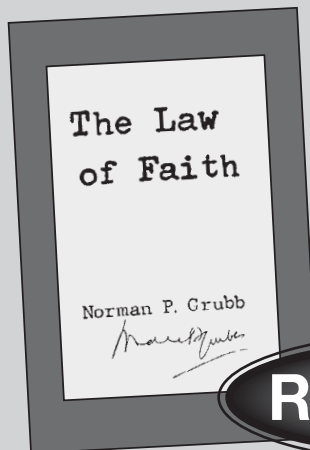
Once more then, Paul's illustration takes us further. We are body to head. Again that makes one Person, just as it was one Tree. So one that the Bible even speaks of the body (not the head) as Christ (1 Cor. 12:12). Yet the body is as solely the agent of the head, as branch of vine. The total dependence is main-

tained. The union is maintained. But in head and body, the activity of the members comes to the fore. A body is made for action. A head is useless without a body, so the body in Eph. 1:23 is specifically spoken of as the fullness of the head, as the head of the body. They are necessary to each other.

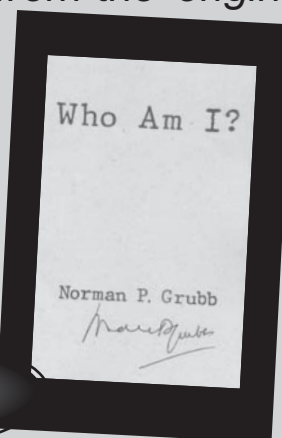
So here we come back full circle to active self, but dead, risen and ascended, and thus forever knowing itself as basically containing the Other, motivated by The Other, He living His own life and expressing His own Self through ourselves; yet we freely in action, just as if it was we, thinking, willing, working, laughing, talking, living as normal human beings in normal situations, and the world thinking it is just we, except for something unusual they can't identify about us. What? We know: "your life is hid with Christ in God...Christ our life."

Norman Grubb's Who Am I? and The Law of Faith

Unedited from the original.



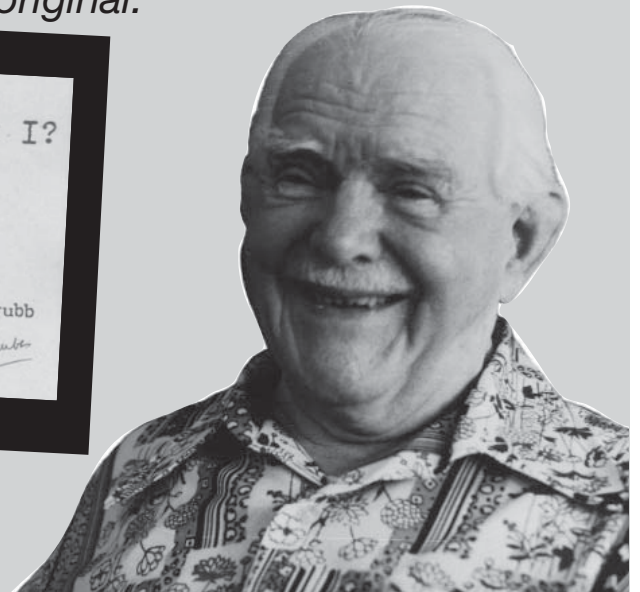
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A Look at a Book

by Mary Walsh

BOOK REVIEW:

No Independent Self

by Norman Grubb

Norman Grubb starts off the booklet “No Independent Self” with the statement that the basis of our total truth, to be taken to the whole Church in the whole world, is that the human self has no nature of its own. The self has never been an independent self-operating self. As humans we are the expressers of a deity nature, whether the nature of the false deity, the spirit of error, or the true Deity, the spirit of Truth (1 John 4:6).

Satan tells us that we are “just ourselves” and when we believe that, he is then free to express himself by us. There is no “just me” and when I believe in a “just me,” it is Satan expressing himself by me. This has been my personal experience. In my past Christian life, I thought “I” could be good, holy, do God’s will—with God’s help from within. I failed miserably because when difficult or perceived difficult situations or people came across my path, I very quickly became the opposite of good, holy, etc.

I love the way Norman goes into great detail on the various aspects of “No Independent Self.” In the chapter entitled “Free at Last” Norman emphasises why we are free—because we know ourselves as nothing but the expresser, vessel, branch, temple, body member and slave of the Deity self, His Spirit joined to our spirits. We have moved into that place by the recognition of faith, as in Romans 8:2 and Galatians 2:20 to being right self-conscious selves, conscious of ourselves

being Himself in expression.

This has become real to me. Because there is no independent Mary, my choice is to believe the truth about myself, that Christ is living as me. Because there is no independent self, I am freed from worrying about how to behave, react, or defend myself. The outworking (fruit) is God’s business. When I am now faced with a negative situation (losing my job is a recent example for me), I know that the people involved are not “just them” doing this to me, and I am not “just me” responding. That does not mean that I do not have negative feelings about the situation. Christ as me does not respond by being defensive or scared but carries on doing the next thing.

Norman makes very clear how to deal with temptation, asking, “what about these constant pulls we still have to fear, hate, worry, lust, self-seeking and weakness?” These pulls again make us think that we are independent human selves, and the moment we think that, back comes the law saying, “No, you ought not to.” It is here, Norman says, that Satan tries to play his final subtle trick on us. We are tricked into thinking that having those pulls is sin; whereas the real sin is the unbelief of thinking we are independent selves who should not have these pulls.

This was very helpful to me. I had always heard James 4:7 quoted: “Resist the devil and he will flee from you,” but I

never really understood how that worked. I would try to quench the temptation, pretend it wasn’t there, and struggle with the sin when it happened. Now I know that there is no “just me” to be tempted. I fully accept the temptation, not denying or resisting it. Then I do as Norman and the Bible say and resist the tempter. I do that by affirming who I am—Christ as me—and replacing the false belief with the consciousness of myself as a Christ-expresser, which swallows up the negative consciousness of Satan’s pulls on me—and he flees. Norman says that our danger is not the fact that temptation pulls us, but that it tricks us back into thinking we are the selves who must respond to the pulls.

The first sentence of Norman’s booklet is challenging, stating our commission to take the truth of “No Independent Self” to the whole church in the whole world. It feels like an awesome challenge. But knowing that it is Christ as me doing it makes it possible. I now know what my commission is—where I fit into God’s plan for the universe. I fulfil my part day by day, step by step believing the truth about myself and, when and where possible, sharing the full Gospel with others.

I recommend this booklet to all Christians and particularly those who are struggling, like I was, with besetting and wilful sin which prevented me from living the abundant Life that Jesus promises in John 10:10.

There is a “Second Blessing”

by Norman Grubb

As a missionary with C.T. Studd in the Congo along with his wife, Pauline, Norman Grubb soon recognized that he did not have the love, power, and wisdom it took to fulfill his calling. The following excerpt from Norman's autobiography, Once Caught, No Escape, describes how he discovered the solution to his (and our) dilemma: the liberating secret that we humans were not designed by God to become something but to contain Someone.

A friend of Pauline's, Dr. Isa Lumsden, was sending her a little paper called *The Overcomer*, published by Mrs. Penn Lewis, well known in England as a Bible teacher. But what she wrote about didn't make sense to us. She was not speaking about Christ dying for us, but of our being crucified and dead with Him, and risen with Him. That was all new to us. At first it didn't register much with us, except that we felt there was something there we hadn't got hold of yet. But our need was great. We had heard others at Cambridge and other places speaking of knowing that you are filled with the Spirit, especially Barclay Buxton, the father of Alfred, whom we undergraduates were fond of getting down to talk to us. Pauline and I knew that we had no such inner witness, and we desired it. We had one canoe journey to do for some days on the Aruwimi River, a tributary of the Congo, stopping at villages every now and then on the banks. I spent the intervening hours studying a commentary on Romans by an American,

I think Stifler by name. Light began gradually to dawn on the meaning of this identification with Christ in His death and resurrection.

Finally, we were out for a visit to a dear and zealous African brother, Bangbani. He was the only light in his chiefdom, and what a welcome he gave us to his little plantation, throwing his well-oiled arms around us so that we came out of the embrace looking like zebras. That night he gave us his best, his cook-shed, with a few banana leaves strung around for privacy, and our two camp-beds in it. The equipment we brought to the Congo and which was our house furniture was a canvas camp-bed each, with mosquito net, a canvas camp table and chair, enamel plates and cups, and cooking pots. That, besides our clothing, which for us men was just khaki shirts and shorts, with stockings or puttees week in and week out—very sensible and comfortable—was the main part of our living necessities.

But when Bangbani left us we could not go to

bed. The full moon was out and it was all quiet in the banana plantation except for the usual chorus of insects, with the moon shining between the great banana leaves. So we took the two little camp chairs and sat outside in the moonlight. There is not much trouble with mosquitoes in that area. We had decided together that we would wrestle this thing out with God, and specifically claim then and there that we should be filled with the Spirit. It was only later that we got our theology more in line—to discover that He in His fullness had always been there—His Spirit joined to ours, since we had been born again: and

that what we needed was not a filling from outside, but a witness borne to the existing living relationship. We took Galatians 2:20 to be the fact by faith: “I am crucified with

It was only later that we got our theology more in line—to discover that He in His fullness had always been there—His Spirit joined to ours, since we had been born again: and that what we needed was not a filling from outside, but a witness borne to the existing living relationship.

Christ, nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” and we went to our camp beds around 4 a.m., having accepted the matter as settled by faith. We awoke no different; but I took a postcard and drew a tombstone on it, and wrote “Here lieth Norman Grubb buried with Jesus.” Probably we all have to get settled on the reality of this death experience before the resurrection can be uppermost in our consciousness. At least that was the period I was in.

Nothing further happened to me in relation to this for a couple of years. For Pauline, it was different, and she tells how a few days afterwards, when sleeping alone in a native hut, the hut was filled with

a consciousness of His presence and a voice confirming to her that their union relationship was fixed for ever.

Two years later I was at home and visiting this same Mrs. Penn Lewis whose little magazine had first awakened our interest. I had gone to her to talk over our perennial problem of tensions on the field, but I think she must have observed that beneath this I had my own need, for instead of talking about the problem she told me what happened when she had been “baptized with the Holy Ghost,” as she called it, and the power of God had come on a group of

young people she talked with that night. As she talked, it was like a great light lit within me, bringing the inner awareness which has never left me

since, of Christ living in me; and living in such a sense that it was not I really doing the living, but He in me, in His Norman form. The Scripture against which I had written my name and date that next morning in Bangbani’s village had become permanently alive to me—this great Galatians 2:20.

There was a great deal I had not yet got into focus; those clarifications had to follow later; but one tremendous fact had become fact to me, and the passing years and deepening understandings have only underlined it as the fact of facts—that the secret of the universe, and the key to my own life, is simply the Person Himself in me; as Paul had put it, “The

mystery hid from ages and generations but now made manifest to His saints...which is Christ in you.”

I had been drawn to and sought an answer before in “holiness teaching,” especially through Barclay Buxton at Cambridge, and from him and others I had caught it that there is an inner fixation, a settling in by which we can know that we are not only born of the Spirit but filled with the Spirit, and which I knew I did not have. But I had some mistaken ideas. I had thought that I myself as a human would be made holy, and thus not respond as before to irritability, lust,

pride and so forth; that an actual change would take place in me. I had tried this way, taken it by faith that this “entire sanctification” had become

fact in me; but it had not worked. These same things continued to make their appearance in me. But now I was seeing something different. My humanity did not change.

I had to learn later that it is not meant to change, because every potential of my human nature is there to be an agency by which Christ can reveal Himself. Sin is not my various faculties or appetites, but shows itself in the misuse of them, when they are stimulated by temptation into action in a wrong direction, and I wrongfully struggle, as in Romans 7, to overcome what independent self can never overcome. It is the independent self which is the sin prin-

He in me is the all, the joy, power, wisdom, victory—all. I transfer my attention, my recognition, my affirmation from the human vessel to Him whom it contains: and that is switching on the light; and the light swallows up the darkness; yet the darkness was needful to give manifestation to the light.

ciple, for independent self is and can only be self-loving, therefore I am helpless in myself to resist the stimulation. But, another Self, God Himself—Father, Son and Spirit—has now so become the centre of my being that I am merely the vessel containing Him. Now, knowing this, my attention is no longer centred on myself, the vessel, and fighting against my fears or depressions or what not and expecting change in myself, and disappointed and condemned when it doesn't happen. No, I accept myself. The vessel doesn't change, but it contains Him, Christ living in

me, joined to me, Spirit with spirit.

It is the same idea as when a room is dark. We don't centre our attention on the darkness. The darkness is not

wrong, unless it is misused; we accept it but don't struggle against it; we just replace it! We look for the switch and turn on its opposite—the light. And when the light is on, where is the darkness? It is swallowed up. It is there in the sense that it appears immediately again when the light is off, yet it is not there to my consciousness with the light on. So now this awareness of Christ in me is the permanent switching on of the light, and the permanency is the importance. I now live in a new consciousness. At any time I am temporarily conscious of temptation which can lead to sin, but that does not mean that He who is the light has gone from my inner centre. He is the per-

manency; and the appearance of Him being not there, and of me being in the dark is an illusion. I have been tricked into moving back from eternal reality to temporary appearance. The change is in my consciousness, not in the fact.

So I learn to live by the repetition of recognition, which is the practice and habit of faith. He in me is the all, the joy, power, wisdom, victory—all. I transfer my attention, my recognition, my affirmation from the human vessel to Him whom it contains: and that is switching on the light; and the light swallows up the darkness; yet the

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Calvary two thousand years ago; therefore the forgiveness was there before the sin, and I can boldly appropriate that.

So this had become the central fact of our lives—Pauline's and mine—which has to become so in every life—call it by what name we like—the Second Blessing, Entire Sanctification, the Baptism of the Spirit, the Fullness of the Spirit, the Second Rest, the Exchanged Life. We can only live by what becomes part of us, not by something imposed from without and clung to by us. In the new birth, Christ has become real and personal to us as a Saviour, the Spirit has borne inner witness with our spirit that

we are the children of God. So again in this second realization, Christ has become known to us, not merely as the Saviour from our sins but also as the One who is living our lives. Then it was His righteousness in place of my sins; now it is His Self in place of myself. This actually took place at the new birth, but, for nearly all of us, we cannot yet see deeply enough into the roots of our problems, which is our self-reliant selves, to be conditioned to see Him as the Divine Self living His life through our human selves.

We have to go through our “wilderness” experience,

all of us,
redeemed but still
regarding Him as
separate from us;
and we seeking
to live the new
standards of
Christian living as
best we can, but

with constant failures, self-disgust, strains and stresses we cannot handle. We had a first collapse when we recognized our guilt as lost sinners and came to Him for salvation. We have a second collapse when, now redeemed, we discover our helplessness. First we had learned we had not done what we should. Now we learn that we *cannot* do what we should. And so, as after the first collapse, we were conditioned to see and affirm His blood replacing our sins; now, after the second collapse, we are conditioned to see and affirm Himself replacing ourselves.

The Answer Continued

by Norman Grubb

We are so used to this illusory outlook—our mistaken concepts of life, as though it is we living it—though we have now recognized and admitted that we did not live our lives on God’s standards, and in our lost condition needed and found a Savior, we now think that, as Christians, we can set to work and live on a new level. We will seek to keep the commandments, to love God and others, to maintain communion with Him by prayer and Bible reading to conquer the habits that defeat us, our hates and fears and lusts and jealousies, to have God at the center of our domestic, business and social life, to attract others to our new-found faith.

Instead, what happens? We begin to find this new life wearisome. We have not what it takes to live it, neither sufficient love for God and our neighbor, nor sustained interest in prayer of the Bible, nor victory over our weaknesses.

We even lose the consciousness of God’s presence. We cannot handle our depressions, our failures, our relationship problems, the strains and stresses of modern life, the difficulties of even attempting to be honest and pure and not self-seeking in the jungle warfare of modern industrial, political, and even social and domestic life. To say that we approach a conformity to the absolute demands of loving God with all our heart and mind and our neighbor as ourselves, is ridiculous, and frankly we often do

not want to. Maybe we had better give up. Maybe life was easier and more enjoyable without trying to be a Christian in a serious sense. We seem nearer to a breakdown and the need of psychiatric help than to the peace and rest and adequacy we thought the Christian life had for us.

Good; all these are excellent signs. In our former unredeemed life, we had to be so disturbed that we came to a final crack-up and admitted

It struck me that I had been seeking a God who would say to me, “I have and will give to you.” But instead, He was merely saying, “I am,” and not “I have.” It was as if He were saying to me, “You’ve got it wrong. You thought love was something I had and could therefore share with you. But love is not a thing at all. I am love.”

our failure before God, a total failure. Despair is the best word, for despair means that we are finished and there is nothing more we can do about it. We have to come there, having given up completely, before we can have eyes to see that when we could not climb up to Him, He had climbed down to us; what we could not do for ourselves, He had done for us.

Now, again we have to come to a second despair. Before, our recogni-

tion was that we had not done what we should have done in keeping God’s law. This time, as redeemed Christians, we come to the discovery that we cannot do what we should do. Before, we learned our guilt. This time, we learn our helplessness. Before we did not, now we cannot.

The apostle Paul has a profound and subtle explanation of this stage in our experience. He has already shown how the law (God is love) should have been naturally operative in us, so that we are love; but owing to our fall into self-centredness, that same law then confronted us with its demands which self-love cannot fulfill, and thus at last led us to honest admission of our lawlessness.

He goes on to show, mainly in his Romans and Galatians letters, that because we are still not yet free from an innate self-reliance, from the idea that somehow as new men in Christ we can do what we didn’t do before, once again the law confronts us with its “You ought,” “You must”; and in our illusory self-confidence we jump at the bait. “All right, we will,” we say. “We’ll do the best we can.” And down we fall on our faces. We don’t fulfill it, and usually we don’t even want to fulfill it. We prefer to please ourselves.

Often the preachers from the pulpits are themselves to blame in their constant exhortations to us to get up and get doing what we can’t, and don’t honestly want to—for the simple reason that independent self, self-

relying self, can only by its very nature be self-pleasing self. So we come to an impasse. The law, according to Paul, is now completing its job on us. It forces us to face, first our guilt, but now our helplessness.

The Bible is full of illustrations of sincere men, earnestly dedicated lives, who went through the period of their disillusionment, when they had to discover that they could not be or do what they wanted to do. Outstanding are the disciples of Jesus, who were completely sincere in saying they would die for Him, but they ran when the heat was on, Peter to the point of denying Him with curses; and that was just where they learned this second and final lesson—their inability.

I learned it, to give a word of personal experience, when I was as dedicated as I knew how to be. I had responded to the call of God to take Christ to the Congo. That cost me nothing, because I could conceive of no higher honor than to introduce Africans to Him to whom I had had a personal introduction through an Englishman. When out there, my aim was single and concentration total on my calling. But I carried with me this illusory concept we are all born with—that I was a servant of Christ and wanted to be the best I could be; and yet I was terribly conscious that I was not what I should be. Particularly, I had not the kind of love which would identify me with those to whom I had gone, or the faith that the things would happen I had come out to see, or the power to see them happen: and when I am dissatisfied with my standards of ministry, I take it out on my wife by irritability, and

my fellow-workers by criticism which must not admit that they have what I have not.

So, though active without, tramping the villages to speak of Jesus, up in the early morning for a couple of hours with God and the Scriptures, within I was unhappy. I began to think that I had been happier before I gave my life to Christ than after. I was bound by self-consciousness, inner strain, disturbed relationships.

A vessel does not become the liquid it holds; they are separate, unmixable entities: so I as a human do not become the power or love or wisdom of God; I merely contain Him who is all these, and everything. How clearly I saw that: we humans are not created to become something, but to contain Someone—but that someone is the living God, and, therefore, the All.

I was passing through what I since learned is a stage we all have to pass through when we are miserable Christians and, as I did, think we were happier in the old life than in the new! Sometimes it has been called “the dark night of the soul,” “the wilderness experience,” “the dry and thirsty land where no water is,” with much more self-consciousness than God-consciousness, more self-concern than concern for the needs of those for whom I had come to Congo. But, unknown to me, my real trouble lay in another direction. I had the illusory idea that I needed to become

something better than I was: I must be a better representative of Jesus Christ, and so forth. I was looking for personal improvement and some further spiritual equipment which would set me on my feet. God and the Spirit were then to be my helpers.

I sought God and searched the Scriptures, as any earnest Christian would do. Surely there in the Bible the answer was to be found, for it talked of love and faith and power and freedom. But the answer I got was in very different terms. It was a confrontation, not this time with the law saying to me, “You ought,” but with God turning my attention from myself to Himself by saying to me, “I am.” The way it came to me was in that statement I have so often quoted, “God is love.” But the emphasis was on the little word “is.” It struck me that I had been seeking a God who would say to me, “I have and will give to you.” But instead, He was merely saying, “I am,” and not “I have.” It was as if He were saying to me, “You’ve got it wrong. You thought love was something I had and could therefore share with you. But love is not a thing at all. I *am* love.”

Then I saw that the only self-giving love in the universe is a Person, not a thing. Therefore, it is not something He could share with me, but it is Himself, and He can’t take parts of Himself and give to me. He can only be Himself. It was my first sight of an exclusive God, the One Person in the universe, who gives nothing but is everything, and, therefore, His only giving is to give Himself and just be Himself wherever He does give Himself.

How then do I have my needs supplied, if God has nothing to give

me, but in each instance I find that He is (not has) the power, He is (not has) the life; until finally I read that “Christ is (not has) all, and in all”? That last phrase gave me my key. I saw that my mistake was the idea that He would give me things, and that I would thus become something. Now I saw that we humans do not exist to become something, but to *contain Someone*. This was a totally different concept, and was the end of my great human illusion that I must be this or become that, centering my attention on what I am or ought to be, and equally depressing me with the recognition of my failing to be all this.

Now I saw that I am to cease to look for improvements in myself, or to center my attention around what I feel or don’t feel, whether I am this or have that, why I fail in this or am defeated by that—the whole outlook on life which fixes my attention on myself and my reactions or my adequacies or inadequacies.

The most illuminating illustration I found in the Bible was the several times we are called vessels, because a vessel, a cup, a vase, a can, is strictly limited to one function only. It only exists to be a container. It can be nothing else: and here was this simple though humbling illustration of my relation as a human to God. I only exist to contain Him. A vessel does not become the liquid it holds; they are separate, unmixable entities: so I as a human do not become the power or love or wisdom of God; I merely contain Him who is all these, and everything. How clearly I saw that: we humans are not created to become something, but to contain Someone—but that someone is the living God,

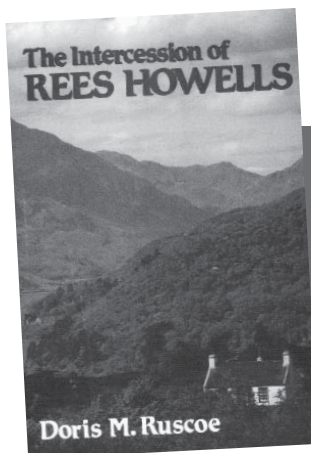
and, therefore, the All.

This transferred my attention from worrying about myself as the vessel not being this, or being that. Leave myself alone. I am just the container. In place of this, I had it clearly that I was containing a totally exclusive Person who gives nothing, but is all; and I don’t contain Him in a relationship in which He imparts various gifts and graces to me, but I am just a means by which He can be Himself in a human container. This means that my main function in life changes from activity to receptivity. Activity centers round how I can be this or do that, around my human self. Receptivity is occupied with receiving or recognizing what I contain—the only function of a vessel.

I saw how all life is in this same relationship to God. Vegetation exists by what it receives—sunlight and rain. What it receives it utilizes, but it must receive first, then activity is a by-product of receptivity. All science is application, not creation. Scientists discover what is, and then apply it. We humans have lost our way because we are blinded to the fact of being containers of God, and have substituted our self activity. We have

to return to the roots: and it is not even really receptivity, but recognition, for having already received Him, we form the continuous habit of recognizing that we do contain Him. Life at its base becomes a repetition of recognition. What more amazing realization can there be than that we humans contain God?

This is why Jesus stated that rest is the evidence of a life in gear. He said to us His followers, “Take my yoke upon you...and you will find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy and my burden light.” An obvious contradiction in terms. Life is activity—the yoke is pulling the plow: but how can a plow be easy to pull or a burden light to carry? The answer is the difference between activity from inadequacy which is strain, and activity from adequacy which is rest. If we are pulling the plow of our life’s problems, relying on our own resources, that is strain, for we haven’t got what it takes to meet them. If, in our pressures, we turn inwardly as containers to Him who is the all within, and boldly reckon on Him to handle things, then it is rest in the midst of the activities—the habit of recognition.



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The Real Problem: *Satan's Lie*

by Page Prewitt

If you have been seeing yourself as an “independent” person and acted from that belief, realize that you have gone for Satan’s lie about the believer. You have gone for Satan’s lie about yourself. God only sees union with Himself; Satan sees and sponsors this divided outlook. This is the sin of unbelief—unbelief about who God says you really are.

God has said that He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17). He has also said that He is the vine and believers are the branches. He is their owner, and believers are His bondslaves. He is the deity placed in the temple. We, the believers, are the temple to manifest and display Him. He is the husband, furnishing the seed to the productive wife. Believers are the wife, wedded to this One. He is the treasure, and we, the believers, are the vessels that contain Him.

The branch, the vessel, the temple, the wife...all are dependent. The branch is dependent upon the vine, the vessel upon the contents, the temple upon the deity, and the wife upon the husband.

The analogy of the owner and the slave shows that the master is the one who owns the slave, and as in Romans 6:17, the slave is never his own owner or his own operator.

So, if you are a believer, to even “see” yourself as an “alone-I” who has the ability to operate himself—even that seeing is sin. The Scripture says when we find sin present with us to confess it. So the remedy is just to confess it. Call it sin and confess it. By confes-

sion I don’t mean “sackcloth and ashes.” Confession is no more than agreeing with God. It’s as if God says, “Look what you have been doing. You have let the enemy get you confused and mixed up. See it. Confess it.” It’s as simple as that.

The worst sin you will ever find out you have committed is the sin of wrong believing about yourself. And in doing that, you have allowed Satan to misuse you. That is what is wrong with every non-

redeemed person, and with every born-again person who commits sins, minor or major—small ones that just “mess up” your life or blatant Biblical sins. Serious sins like theft, murder and adultery always stem from wrong seeing about ourselves as believers.

The result of living like this is not a life of sin-consciousness, but a life of true liberation. Bondage lies in wrong believing...to not see yourself as who you really are, one with Him. Wrong believing about yourself will immobilize you.

Wrong believing about yourself can cause conflict in a marriage, in the work place, with your children and in other situations. Satan, in your “independent self” believing, manages to get his hooks into your “members.” The Bible talks of believers in these terms: “sin in my members” (Rom 7:23). “Members” means your soul and body (your “flesh”) and not your spirit. Satan gets his hook in there and he is the confusion. He is the cause of the confusion. I’m not talking about the feeling of confusion, but the confusion that results from the conflicts caused by wrong believing.

The result of living like this is not a life of sin-consciousness, but a life of true liberation. Bondage lies in wrong believing...to not see yourself as who you really are, one with Him. Wrong believing about yourself will immobilize you.

BIBLE STUDY:

by Brett Burrowes

One of the most significant truths of Scripture is that we were created to be vessels of the divine glory. If we fail to appreciate this fact and live from it as the basis of our very existence as Christians, we will find nothing but frustration and dissatisfaction. Knowing and accepting the fact that we are vessels of a spirit greater than ourselves will enable us to escape the twin traps of the devil, namely inferiority and low self-esteem on the one hand, and pride and superiority on the other. What we need is an appropriate evaluation of ourselves as selves—a truly humble picture of ourselves as created by God, without exalting ourselves or viewing ourselves as scum and dirt with no value whatsoever. How often we have swung between these two extremes! How often Satan has toyed with us and run us ragged because we don't know or appreciate or frankly, outright disobey God's truth in these matters!

What, then, does it mean to be a vessel? Paul says that "in a large house there are vessels not only of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for noble use, some for ignoble. All who cleanse themselves of the things I have mentioned will become noble vessels, dedicated and useful to the owner of the house, ready for every good work." A vessel, then, is an instrument or utensil that serves the purpose of the one using it. Paul's point is that in God's world we can be vessels for noble purposes—to express the pure gold of His divine character and love, or we can be ignoble, ordinary vessels like a garbage can or toilet.

Both types of vessels serve the Master's purposes; both, in some sense are necessary in God's world. But wouldn't you rather be a vessel of gold than a garbage can?

Of course we must guard against the idea that some vessels are intrinsically more valuable than other vessels. After all, anyone can be the vessel of gold or silver that Paul describes if they cleanse themselves of the evil deeds that Paul describes in the context. Also, anyone can be a garbage can

Unlike a cup or container we have the capacity to choose which spirit fills us and operates us. The point of the vessel-container imagery is to focus our attention on the fact that good and evil do not originate within ourselves—we are operated by a spirit greater than ourselves.

or toilet if they allow Satan to continue expressing himself through them. In other words, it is not the vessel which is good or evil, but rather what it contains that makes the vessel noble or ignoble. So a vessel is also something that contains something else, like a drinking glass, for example. If I put water into the glass, it contains water, but if I put ink in the glass, it is a container for the ink. Although a container might be particularly beautiful or ugly, the purpose of the vessel is still only to contain, hold or express some-

thing other than itself. In the same way, Paul says that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that it may be clear that the surpassing power is from God and not from ourselves" (2 Cor. 4:7). The treasure is nothing less than the glory of Jesus Christ, the divine character of righteousness, goodness, love and power now revealed in us, the earthen vessels.

In John's gospel, Jesus illustrates this truth with a parable and states that He is the vine and we are the branches, and that if we abide in him, we will bear much fruit, but apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). The fruit—love, joy, peace, meekness, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control—these are all the fruit of God's Spirit, the expression of Christ's own character through us. Without the sap coming from the vine, the life-giving sap of the Spirit, we can do absolutely nothing good. For as Jesus says, "God alone is good" (Mark 10:18).

We were created to be containers of God's abundant goodness, constantly overflowing to others through us. This is what it means to be created in God's image (Gen. 1:26)—not that we would be like God—that was Satan's lie—but that God would dwell in us as His images. In the civilizations around ancient Israel, the purpose of an image or idol was not merely to give a picture of what the god looked like, rather the god was actually understood to dwell in the idol—the idol made the presence of the god real to his worshippers. But God has no need of gold or stone idols—He created people to be His idols—people in whom to dwell and express His character and

MAN—A VESSEL

presence in the world.

But you might object: "I am not just a container; I am a person!" And of course you are. Unlike a cup or container we have the capacity to choose which spirit fills us and operates us. The point of the vessel-container imagery is to focus our attention on the fact that good and evil do not originate within ourselves—we are operated by a spirit greater than ourselves. The choice we have is whether to continue giving ourselves over to Satan for his misuse or give ourselves over to Christ that He might use us for the purpose for which we were created: to be images of God, expressers of His glory.

Most believers recognize that we have Christ dwelling in us (Col. 1:27). But what is often ignored and rejected is that we have been vessels of sin, of Satan, as much as we are vessels of Christ now. Jesus says that "you are children of the devil and his desires you do" (John 8:44). Also, "He who sins is of the devil": that is, they have their spiritual source in the devil, as a well-known scholar F. F. Bruce has written. So all the time we were living lives of sin, it was not in fact merely us who were sinning, but Satan producing His sinful evil desires in us, expressing His nature and lusts. So Paul says: "it was no longer I who did it, but the sin dwelling in me who did it" (Rom. 7:17, 20) and speaks of how the prince of the power of the air is the spirit who operates in the children of disobedience (Eph. 2:2). Just as the Holy Spirit of Christ indwells the body of Christ who gives freedom (Rom. 8:9-11; 1 Cor. 12:13; 2 Cor. 3:17), so there is a spirit of the world (1

Cor. 2:12) who enslaves (Rom. 8:15).

For this reason, Peter writes that in order to escape the corruption that is in the world (the Satanic spirit of sin) we need to be sharers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). Only because God dwells within us as His vessels and we trust in His presence can we then add goodness, godliness, and love to our faith. These qualities are His and His alone—we just get to participate in them and express them in our lives. Peter wants us to know that

There is absolutely no place for pride: any good thing that we do as Christians is really an expression of Jesus Christ through us and the only contribution we have made is our "yes" to God, a mere consent to the fact that we are his vessels. All that God really requires of us is the acknowledgment of a fact—that we are His vessels.

none of these qualities or attributes originate with us: they are intrinsic to the nature of God and we can only participate in these qualities if He Himself comes down and lives them out through us. Once we realize this, we can see that there is absolutely no place for pride: any good thing that we do as Christians is really an expression of Jesus Christ through us and the only contribution we have made is our "yes" to God, a mere consent to the fact that we are his vessels. All that God really requires of us is the

acknowledgment of a fact—that we are His vessels. The life of faith then, is only a walking out in daily life in humble recognition of this truth—that it is in fact He and no longer merely we who are living life (Gal. 2:20).

What this means is that sin is actually a Satanic self-delusion that we are something other than or more than mere vessels. We are either deceived into believing that we are superior to and intrinsically better than other people, or that we are inferior to and worse than others. Because we have all been operated by Satan, we have all had some kind of hierarchy or pecking order in our minds, and each person with whom we came in contact fit into the hierarchy at some level. Our physical appearance and health, our brains, our abilities—all these things were—and perhaps still are—used to determine where we fall on the pecking order. We tell ourselves: "Well, at least I'm not like so and so," "At least I've never done that" or, on the other hand, we wish we were like so and so and become envious and jealous and desire to pull the other person down to our level or below. We don't want to be at the bottom of the heap and we will do anything to get to the top. Of course, some of us may deceive ourselves that we don't do any of this, that we are basically "nice" vessels who are above all this competition—but there it is—the people who believe they are nice really believe they are better than the people who crassly go out and jockey for a position in the pecking order—the "nice people" wouldn't act that

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Old Man...New Man

by Norman Grubb

I think one of the main confusions in Christian living and service is between the “old man” and “new man,” of which Paul often speaks. I don’t think it is intended confusion. Believers want to be the best for God, and to have correct foundations to their faith, but they also want to be honest; and sometimes they do not feel they can honestly state what the Bible tells them to state, such as, “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God”; “if ye be dead with Christ”: “likewise reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord”: “your old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed.” The tendency of most of us has been to say, “Well, I reckon it, but it is not really so!” Or, “That is my state in Christ, but not my standing in the world”—a neat rationalization!

Not that anyone wants to rationalize; but how can I say that I have “put off the old man,” and “put on the new man”? Aren’t I a continual mixture of both, or at least don’t I constantly gravitate between the two? James has no use for that, with his condemnation of the double mind, the double tongue, the double motive. But I am sure the problem with most of us is failure to understand clearly what is implied, and therefore experienced by us, in this death and resurrection which we are told we participated in once for all. Where we have got confused is that we are so accustomed to regard *ourselves* as sinful or holy, in the sense that sin or holiness is

something ingrained in us; and it is that which causes us to speak of ourselves as having two natures, which we commonly refer to as flesh or Spirit. We regard it that, before we were reborn, sin was a kind of moral infection which permeated our personality; and now that we are reborn by grace, holiness has made entry and partially possesses us, but sin is still there also. We are surely conscious of it, we say, by the rapid uprisings in us of pride, temper etc.; and the constant stirrings of, or at least incitement to, the lustings of the flesh. Holiness is there also; we are new creatures in Christ, and the Spirit bears His fruit in us, but it is a mixture of both.

Our great mistake is the locating of either sin or holiness in *ourselves*. I was tripped up by this for years. I could never come right out with a testimony to an experience of “entire sanctification” or “the purified heart,” nor could I preach it convincingly to others, because I always had this question mark. I had entered into a transaction of sanctification by faith; the Spirit had borne witness with my spirit that Galatians 2:20 was a fact in my life through grace—crucifixion with Christ, and He now living in me. But to use such expressions as being holy, or sanctified, or entirely cleansed from sin, or dead to sin, or the old man crucified, did not ring true to my experience, because of my daily consciousness of coming short of His perfections in some form or other, of sins which need repentance, confession and cleansing.

The trouble, as I say, lay in locating both sin and holiness in the wrong place. It was a great clarifying revelation when I saw that both sin and holiness are basically the attributes of two persons only, and neither of them myself. “Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.” Now my attention was directed away from myself to these two persons, the god of this world and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. I have already stressed this basic truth; but it is so basic, and I think so rarely presented in real clarity, that repetition won’t hurt. Put in simplest terms, sin is Satan, and holiness is Jesus. As I have already said, in actual fact there is only one Person in the universe, only one who has ever said “I AM,” who calls Himself “the first and the last,” who is said to be the “All in all,” who is named “the Life,” “Love,” “Light,” “Truth,” “Power.” We created people are only so created as persons that in a complete sense the living God may manifest Himself through living people, in a way He cannot do so completely in lesser forms of creation. So holiness, love, power, life are never mine, never a part of me, neither now nor in eternity. They always are, and always will be HE in me. My attention, therefore, when I see this, is directed away from myself becoming holy in some sense (and being very conscious that I am not), to Him, made unto me “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification.”

But equally, when I have seen with absolute clarity that all I shall ever have of eternal life or heavenly character is

HE in me; then it is easier for me to look back on myself in my former unregenerate state, and see just as clearly that the sin was not basically I, any more than the holiness is now. The sin was “he that is *in* the world,” “the spirit that now worketh *in* the children of disobedience,” the one of whom Paul wrote that he is in the unbeliever, blinding their minds. The one who is the false god, who embodies sin which is self-centredness, who is sin; just as the Holy Spirit is holiness. John exposes him to us in the third chapter of his epistle, when he says outright that a person who commits sin is “of the devil,” for he was original sin, and Christ came to destroy his works, by replacing him in us; and we have already seen how, when Cain slew his brother, the hater and murderer was within Cain and used Cain as his agent of evil, just as the Holy Indweller, in the next chapter, is shewn using us to express His self-giving love.

Humanity, therefore, always has been and always will be inwardly united to an indwelling lord; it just depends to which. It is not that union with Christ is a kind of novel relationship which has to be got used to after a former life of independent self-living. No, all men are united to an indwelling person; and redemption through Christ means change of Indweller. Satan has been so clever that he has almost totally disguised himself from fallen humanity, so that not one in ten thousand recognizes that he is inwardly motivated by another spirit. We just think it is we ourselves running our own lives! Satan has even managed to get himself smeared and laughed at as a ridiculous creature with horns and tail, so that none recognize the truth of his awful subtlety—that sin is just every form of self-love,

expressed through us by the author of it; and as a consequence every breath every unsaved human draws is sin, because it is motivated by self-love, no matter how lofty the deed or character may appear to be: for the only sinlessness possible to humans is Christ in us; He only is that unconditional selfless love which can love God with all the heart and our neighbor as ourself. When the twofold form of union is realized, the one replacing the other, then, as we say, it does not take some strange new effort of faith to recognize this wonderful gift of union with Christ; it is just exchanging faith in the former old union which Paul called being “the old man,” to faith in the fact by grace and through identification with Christ in death and resurrection, of the new union, which Paul calls being “the new man.”

Now we can begin to get clear between “old man” and “new man.” They do not connote any basic change in our human selves. It was the same Jesus who was made sin, died to sin, and rose by the Spirit. It is the same self which reckons itself dead to sin, and yields itself to God as alive from the dead. The difference is not in the self, but in the one who controls and expresses himself through the self. That is why in the same chapter of Romans where we are pronounced dead and risen with Christ, Paul says four times over that we were servants to sin, but are now servants to righteousness. We were always servants in the old life as much as in the new; the only difference was a change of bosses!

That is what clarified my understanding. My attention had been directed away from what I was and what I had become, to what the Other Person in me was and what He now is. It was no

longer a question of whether I was sinful or holy; it was a question of whether he who is sin or He who is holiness is united to me. And now I saw how I could with all conviction speak of being dead to sin and alive to God: of the old man being crucified and the body of sin being annulled: of being dead, and my life hid with Christ in God: and how I could use such phrases as “entire sanctification,” and “the pure heart.” I saw that “the old man” had become “the new man” in Christ, and that therefore they could not co-exist; for the old man was myself joined to the spirit of error, and the new man myself joined to the Spirit of truth, through Christ. I could not be both at once. The death to sin had been a once-for-all fact when I became joined to Christ by faith, and is never repeated, for that was the moment when by receiving Christ, the efficacy of his death which separated him from the sin-spirit became operative in me, and the efficacy of His resurrection by the incoming of the Holy Spirit made the same incoming a reality in me. There is one crucifixion with Christ, and it is never repeated in the believer. Equally there is one resurrection with Him: and in that fact I could say boldly that the old man was out forever (Satan in me), and the new man in (Christ in me): and that is the meaning of “entire sanctification” (separated unto Him as His dwelling place), “the purified heart” (my love-faculty now the means by which He expresses His divine love through me).

Have We Two Natures?

by Norman Grubb

It is commonly said that a child of God has two natures, and will carry them with him to the grave. This teaching is usually based particularly on the fact of those inner conflicts of Romans 7. But the word “nature” is not mentioned in the chapter, nor in the corresponding paragraph in Gal. 5: 16-26; nor does there seem any Scriptural authority for introducing it into this law—sin—self—situation.

Let us look at it this way. Man is always a unitary being. If he is not, we call him a schizophrenic. We see this first in our unregenerate condition. The word “nature” is used of us then. “We were by nature the children of wrath.” Now here is most positively a one-nature person. We should never say, should we, that the natural man has two natures, one evil and one good! We should consider that grave heresy. It is by such false teaching that the modernist avoids the necessity of the atonement. “Just let the good nature grow and it will choke out the bad one,” he says in essence. God’s word gives us no shred of authority for such a false doctrine. But we do agree that the natural man can be much *influenced* by good from without, and by the conscience within, the accusing and excusing thoughts, the ability to know good from evil. That is to say, when we are unregenerate, we are evil at the centre. We have the evil heart of which we have just written, the heart that is “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” In our natural blindness we used not to think that. We appeared to ourselves fairly

respectable, and to others too. But when conviction came, we knew differently. All our righteousness became as filthy rags in our sight, because we saw egoism, even in its best clothes, as enmity to God. But during these unregenerate days, we were very often being influenced by good. We prayed. We worshipped. We obeyed at least some of the laws of God. We sometimes desired to be good. Good people and good ideals affected us and to some extent we adopted what we saw. But it was from *outside*. It was not a second nature: it was an intermittent upward pull. We might almost call it an upward temptation: a drawing to be good from the drawing Spirit who has been seeking us. According to God’s word we have only had that one nature—“by nature the children of wrath.”

And now that we are children of God through Christ, the Scripture just gives one name to our new condition: “partakers of the divine nature.” If we are new creatures in Christ, with old things passed away and all become new: if our old man is crucified with Him, that the body in which sin dwelt might be annulled as its dwelling place: if God’s seed remains in us, so that we cannot keep committing sin, because we are born of God; then we are new men in Christ, just as we were old men in Adam. Then we had only one old nature, though influenced by good. Now we have only one nature, though influenced by evil. There is only one self—my self. I was in a certain relationship which was called the old man; now that same self,

cleansed and renewed in Christ, is in a new relationship called the new man.

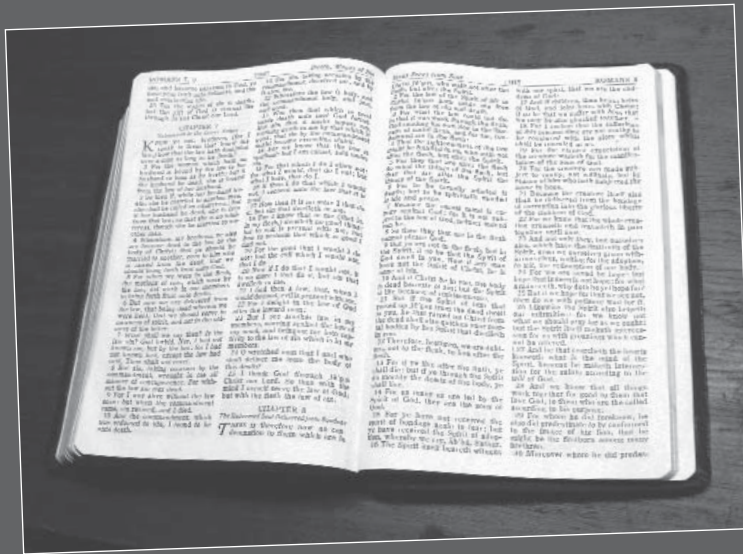
The Romans 7 conflict is not a matter of dual nature. If so, it can very easily give us the erroneous idea of a kind of equal tug of war between the two, with any man’s guess as to which will win. Indeed, many of God’s people labour through life under the false impression that the best to hope for is a hit-and-miss struggle between these two natures within them. Paul says no such thing. He says that we are servants who have changed jobs and are under new management. We have left the old boss and his wages and his work, and joined the new one (Rom. 6:16-23). We are “dead to sin,” “dead to the law,” “set free from the law of sin and death”; we have become “servants of righteousness,” “servants to God.” But that does not mean that we are out of calling distance from our old boss! He can send plenty of messages to us to entice us back to the old employment, and he does. He even has allies in our own camp, in the flesh that lusts against the Spirit. But let us get this quite clear. That does not mean that “the motions of sins in the flesh” are our nature. They are a disease, a virus, from which we are not finally cured until we get our resurrection body. But a disease is not a nature, it is an invader. We have not yet a sickness-free body, nor a sin-free flesh: but that is not we, it is our covering.

Our nature is our very self, and that is unitary: once old, now by grace new. That is why it is important to retain the

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SIN, SATAN AND THE FLESH

SIN, SATAN AND THE FLESH



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C. T. STUDD, Founder



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My Dear Bob,

I was talking over your letter with a visitor in whose home and grounds we have our main annual "union life" weekend, it came clearer on this matter of not only there being the two "Deity" natures (Satan's Eph. 2:3 & 2 Pet.1:4), but that you are saying there is also a human nature—"what we do naturally."

What we are saying, we believe on solid Bible basis, is that the only thing we humans can "do naturally" is to receive faith and recognize the presence of the "Deity" nature. As such, we are called "vessels, branches, temples, body-members, wives, slaves."

We then, as humans, are able to utilize our human faculties with which we are endowed as in God's image (spirit, soul, body—1 Thes. 5:23) in spontaneously expressing the nature of the Deity spirit in us (Satan's, John 8:44, Christ's, Gal.5:22, and as branches the alternative fruits as in Rom. 6:21, 22).

But if we are to imply that the human has a nature by which "we do things naturally," we are really saying we humans can actually do things by our own self-activity, and that must mean doing either good or evil. But we are saying that this is precisely Satan's great deceit of Rev.12:9, by which he transmits to us in the Fall his own basic self-deceit, for there is no such thing as an independent self in the universe, neither angel nor man, and that this was the great deceit discovered by Paul in Rom. 7 (the deceit of v. 11, and the discover of vs. 17 & 20). For only by being so deceived in the fallen human race can we experience to the bottom the lying appearance of independent self, and thus be conditioned to use our one human faculty of receiving and acknowledging our total deliverance from the indwelling and operations of that false indweller to deliverance which is in Christ as us, being "made sin," and thus in His body-death "died to sin" (2 Cor. 5:21 and Rom. 6:10), and thus our freedom from this great deceit in making us think that we were the doers of those sins: and now, in Satan's deceiving place, The Spirit of Truth has replaced him (according to Gal. 2:20), and is now expressing His nature by us.

Thus we say the only clear way of making this as obvious fact is to say that we humans have no nature (which "does things naturally"), except the one action of receptivity, very much like the computer which has great potential but can only operate its potential under the orders of it's programmer.

Unless we use terms which make an absolute differentiation between our human vessel, branch, body-member faculty of mere receptivity and then application of what (Who) we receive, we humans are so immersed in our universally common concept of life

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as we all "doing our own thing," we cannot bring home the reality of us humans always and only operated by the "Deity" indwelling us, formerly that spirit of error and now through Calvary—The Spirit of Truth; and then our normal self-activity of our whole man spirit, soul & body being the re-expression in our human forms of Him in His nature. And we also think we have Bible background in this by the Bible never speaking of us having "a human nature."

And here lies the great release from struggle and self-condemnation through our inability to "achieve," and our new boldness in "accepting ourselves" as created in God's image, and having nothing that is derogatory about the human self in all its faculties, for it is a question of its former misuse, but now its right use, and equal boldness of confidence in going into total human action as being energized by The One who is now our "life" (Col. 3:4).

The further important effect of taking the whole onus off our so-called "human nature" as non-existent, in the form of operating by its own activities, is that this is not a gospel in which our human flesh or properties of self-expression by soul & body have to be changed, delivered from some "tendencies" and acquiring others. No. It is the recognition that all our humanity remains as inviolable as when created, and the only change is not in us, but in our restoration by grace to the full uses for which God created us. So it becomes simply the liberating recognition that nothing ever was wrong with our selves as God-created selves, and therefore the boldness of faith which accepts ourselves with "no condemnation," bought back (redeemed) from its captivity to its false owner, and every faculty and appetite which were misuses for expressing his lusts of self-gratifying self are now rightly used as the Spirit's agencies for all forms of God-glorifying and self-giving self. Immense liberation to us falsely burdened human selves, labouring under false ideas of self-improvement, and false condemnation or fears of "flesh" or humanity which must have some alteration effected in them if we are to be "Complete in Christ Jesus." Flesh is our precious humanity in which God was manifested, and which Paul says is "the life I now live in the flesh" and "we walk in the flesh, but do not war after the flesh." In other words, the problem was "sin in the flesh," and "the lusts of the flesh"—right appetites being wrought upon by the drawing influences of "the spirit of this world." John wrote of "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes." Obviously there is nothing wrong with the eyes but how they are directed. So nothing is wrong with the flesh but its misuses.

So Bob, I appreciate chewing things over with you. My love as ever,

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Dear Denise,

Your letter has just caught up with me "in the sticks" here, having great times in every place. So glad to hear from you, dear, as always. Dear, spirit-reality always will appear unintelligible to human reason, because it is PARADOX only experienced (though maybe never fully understood by reason—do scientists "understand" the atom??!!)

Thus we ARE spirit—human spirit made precisely in His image, and thus we have full operating personality. So God also is Spirit, in His full operation, and so also is the false god-spirit (1 John 4:6).

But human derivative spirit is only created as derivative fully-functioning spirits in order to express the Deity Spirit and His nature. So the human is always "managed," enslaved, containers, branches, temples, yet in the paradoxical reality that we manage our managers!

In human experience, when we have gained a profession, medical, teaching, cooking, what not, we are possessed inwardly by a know-how and then we gaily express our expressors! Which is it? A doctor is taken over inwardly by his medical know-how. He calls himself a doctor but he really only is a human practicing a know-how which has taken him over. I had to learn an unknown language in Congo. After several months learning it, it "got" me. Now, years after I can always speak it. Which is it—I speaking, or the language know-how which has inwardly taken me over?

So in our true spirit-selves. We start taken over by Satan, the spirit of error. We spontaneously express his nature and do his stuff. We do it. Which is it, I doing it, or "the lusts of my father ye will do"?

So now through Christ's body-death (His blood phase of His crucifixion was for removal of outer sins, guilt, hell. His body death was the sin-spirit out and the Holy Spirit in), we are possessed, managed, express the nature of the Spirit of Truth. We do this spontaneously. Which is it?—I by my human spirit in its rightful self-expression, or the God-spirit by me, as me?

So in this permanent paradoxical relationship, my human spirit in this world of sin-diversion by Satan temptation remains a self-acting spirit and can be diverted from without, first feels those diversions (as did sinless Jesus) as good practice in replacing by my True Self, He in me as me; or I can occasionally deliberately respond to ("marry" the spirit-temptation through soul-body), and commit a sin. Then 1 John 1:9, and Heb. 9:14. Get up quickly!

See Jesus at Gethsemane. Not my will (His pulled human spirit), but THY will. Hope this clears things. If not, give me another shot at it.

Lovingly,

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What Really is the New Man?

by Norman Grubb

We have already stressed that the Scripture makes it plain that the last Adam, the Progenitor of the new race, the Saviour who ended the old by taking it into His death, and began the new by His resurrection, did not rise by His own efforts or power. For our sakes He had become the first Man of the new nation, “the firstborn among many brethren”; and men cannot do things by their own efforts. Therefore when we speak of the new man, we mean a people who have an entirely and radically new conception both of the powers and function of the human personality, a people “renewed in the spirit of their minds.” Whereas they previously thought in terms of self-sufficiency and self-effort, now they use the same language about themselves as the Saviour on earth about Himself, when He said, “The Son can do nothing of Himself,” and Paul when he wrote of himself “who am nothing,” and the disciples to whom Jesus said, “Apart from Me, ye can do nothing.” They have had a divine revelation of the created helplessness and nothingness of the human self.

But that alone is not enough. Even as, through faith, we have been joined to a dead and buried Christ, so far as our old selves are concerned; so have we also been joined to a risen Christ so far as our new selves are concerned, and so joined to Him that we are one: “he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” And that means nothing less than the new man being Christ and I made one, and in that union He is the all, and I the nothing; He is the Vine, the living tree, I the branch, the

appendage to the tree, which it vitalizes with its sap, and through which it produces its fruits. Therefore for all essential purposes the new man is Christ: “Christ who is our life,” “Christ is all and in all.”

The perfect Scriptural presentation of this relationship, given in complete and masterly outline with almost the stroke of a pen, and yet weaving together all the intricate threads that make the pattern of the new life in Christ, is Gal. 2:20, Paul’s master analysis of his own condition as a new man in Christ. The first half of that verse will repay unceasing study, until the Spirit illuminates in personal understanding and experience the fundamental and subtle balance of truth in the three operative statements—“I am crucified with Christ”: “nevertheless I live”: “yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

The first is clear, in the light of what we have already been seeing of the death of Christ and of ourselves in Him. The “I” which has been crucified with Christ is, of course, the old egocentric self with which we came into the world.

The second—“nevertheless I live”—is the new Paul, our new selves, risen from the dead in Christ, the same self as before so far as our organs and faculties are concerned, but “renewed in the spirit of our minds,” “created in righteousness and true holiness,” the dead and risen self to which Paul refers when he says, “Reckon ye *yourselves* to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God...yield *yourselves* unto God as alive from the dead.” This renewed “I” has a pure heart (Acts 15:8; I Pet. 1:22), a purified soul (I Pet. 1:22), pure mind (2

Pet. 3:1), dedicated body (Rom. 6:13; 12:1) the temple of the Holy Ghost.

But then Paul definitely qualifies this second statement by a third: “Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” Why does he do this? Because the real new I is Christ in me. That is the crux of the matter, and takes us right back to where we started. We saw that God Himself, He alone, is the All—the eternal life, light, love, wisdom, power, holiness. And He *can* only make creatures to contain Him. He cannot make other gods who are self-existent with all the attributes of the godhead, for then He would cease to be God alone. He *can* only create receivers, containers, and manifestors of Himself. And this is equally true of man, the summit of His creation, intelligent creatures with faculties like Himself with whom He can have fellowship and who can be His sons. They too can only be recipients and containers and manifestors of the One God. That alone is their highest privilege and the limit of their capacity.

Therefore when the God of all grace redeems man from his false, deceived, imagined, impossible so-called life of self-centredness, He can only redeem him by ridding him of this false attitude and restoring him to the true and only function of his humanity, to be the recipient and container of the Living God. And this, in the glory of His grace, takes place in our faith-union with Christ in His death and resurrection. Through the mighty power of His cross the “old man,” Satan-infected, dies; through the mighty power of His

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Bible Study: Man—A Vessel

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way—they're "above" all that—so the "nice people" are really playing the Satanic game of hierarchy after all—they just deceive themselves that they aren't.

The only way to escape this Satanic game is to humbly recognize the fact that we are vessels operated by Christ or Satan and although we may differ in our appearance, personality, skills and abilities, we are all basically the same in that we express either the spirit of Satan or the spirit of Christ. There simply is no hierarchy, especially since we have all sinned and lack the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), so that no one can claim to be superior or inferior. There is level ground at the foot of the cross. The fact is that we all get to be "top dog" or noble vessels as Paul describes it, when Christ is the one operating us.

Perhaps this seems too incredible for us to believe. But all that we are called to believe is the biblical fact that having received Christ as our Savior, we are now vessels of Christ rather than vessels of Satan. And there is a certain "rest" in that fact, since we are not called to believe that we are superhuman beings who can leap over tall buildings and fly through the sky. Believing that we are vessels is really a radical self-acceptance of everything about ourselves, apart from our sin. I was created with the perfect personality, the perfect physical appearance, the perfect amount of intelligence, the perfect skills and abilities, to be the vessel God designed me to be. We are perfect for accomplishing whatever task that He has laid before us. You might object: "I'm not perfect, I sin all the time." But that is why the Perfect

One now dwells within you to express His perfect moral character through you. And for that purpose, you are the perfect vessel. God created us as earthen vessels, with all our "earthiness" so apparent to us as the perfect means of expressing His surpassing power and glory (2 Cor. 4:7). If we start lamenting how imperfect vessels we are, we are not taking God at His word.

On the other hand, perhaps it seems like I am suggesting that we "paste" Jesus Christ over our sinful lives and just call whatever we do "Jesus Christ." But nothing could be further from the truth. Faith in God's promise to live through us is not a magic wand that we wave over our lives; it is relying upon the all-loving and all-powerful God to do exactly as He promises in, through, and as us. But such faith comes at a price. Christ and Satan cannot operate in the same vessel at the same time. As Romans 6 and Eph. 2:2 make clear, if we yield our members to sin, then sin (or Satan) shall be our master, and his spirit will express itself through us. So we have the responsibility of cleansing ourselves of Satanic misuse and unbelief, as Paul makes clear in 2 Tim 2:21: "All who cleanse themselves of the things I have mentioned will become noble vessels, dedicated and useful to the owner of the house, ready for every good work." We cleanse ourselves through repentance and confession of sin, which heals us (James 5:16). But we must also cleanse the unbelief that is the root of sin: "Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin" (Rom 14:23). And what is unbelief? Nothing other than failing to believe that we are vessels and trusting Christ to be the Spirit operating and living through us.

What Really is the New Man?

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resurrection the new man, which is Christ in us, Christ the all, we the nothing, lives.

But, in the perfect balance of Paul's statement, the dual consciousness in the new man must be carefully noted. It does not just say, "Christ lives in me," but "I live" *and* "Christ lives in me." And it continues about "the life I now live in the flesh," but that it is lived "by the faith of the Son of God." There is a distinct division of consciousness between "I" as the new man, and "Christ in me." Jesus, as a Man, had that same consciousness in the Garden, when He prayed, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Now in the final resurrection of the body, when we shall be "like Him," when we shall all together have become one "perfect man," Head and body, when we shall be beyond the reach of temptation, as God Himself now is (James 1:13), we will no longer have this divided consciousness, for it is a product of the fall which replaced the single knowledge of good with the dual knowledge of good and evil.

Have We Two Natures?

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realization of the purified heart by faith, and the indwelling Christ in the pure heart, because it is the real I, freed, cleansed, indwelt, dead to the old boss, alive to the New. All the assaults of the enemy through world or flesh are outside the real me, and are not I nor my nature; and they can, thank God, be constantly repulsed, as they attack the citadel of my heart, by the shield of faith which interposes the fact of my crucified and risen Lord, and myself in Him.

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No longer I who live...

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

—Galatians 2:20
(King James Version)

Words to Live By...

Stop fussing about your human self, where you fail and where you need improvement. Drop that whole false idea. Vessels don't improve, they just contain. Now turn your attention away from what you are as a vessel—or think you should be. With a single eye, turn your full attention on Me, the One the vessel contains.

Subscriptions

The Intercessor is printed quarterly by Zerubbabel, Inc., and is mailed without charge to anyone who requests to be put on our mailing list. *The Intercessor* is published in Boone, NC and we shall be glad to place you on our subscription list.

The Intercessor is published for about \$5,200 an issue on the Lord's provisions. We have had a generous outpouring of God's gifts thus far and are truly grateful to each who has participated. By faith, we look for the continual outflow of the "word of God" by us.

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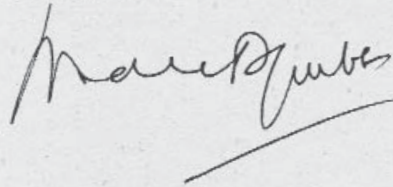
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