

No Independent Self

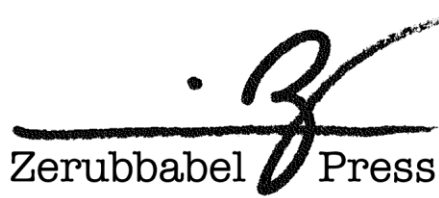
by

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Yes, I Am

About the Author

Norman Grubb, the son of an Irish clergyman, was born in 1895. He was a decorated war hero, receiving the Military Cross for his service in the Gloucester Regiment during World War I. After the war, he attended Trinity College, Cambridge, and married Pauline Studd, the daughter of the famous missionary, C.T. Studd. The Grubbs served under Studd as missionaries to the Belgian Congo where Norman translated the New Testament into the African trade language, Bangala. After Studd's death in 1931, Norman served as British and General Secretary of the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade until 1965. He was instrumental in the formation of the Christian Literature Crusade and the beginnings of InterVarsity Fellowship.

Mr. Grubb is the author of *Rees Howells, Intercessor*, the acclaimed biography of the Welsh coal miner who became the founder of the Bible College of Wales. *Rees Howells*, now in its 15th printing, has been translated into more than 20 languages and has sold over 10 million copies worldwide. Mr. Grubb has spoken at the Presidential Prayer Breakfast and taught at lay conferences such as Faith at Work. Following many years of teaching, writing and travel, Norman Grubb died at the age of 98 in 1993.

No Independent Self

by Norman Grubb

The basis of our total truth, which we are taking to the whole Church in the whole world, is that the human self has no nature of its own. It is the expresser 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). Because we have all become accustomed to speaking of ourselves as having a "human nature," it may make it clearer if we speak of the self as *never being an independent self*. It has never been a self-operating self, and thus has never operated by expressing a nature of its own.

There is no independent, self-operating self in the universe, except the One who calls Himself the I AM (Ex. 3:14) and says, "I am the Lord and there is none else, there is no God beside Me" (Isa. 45:5).

But the Independent One has a limitation to His independence, for it is said of Him that He cannot lie (Tit. 1:2). In other words, His eternal self-independence is a fixed choice between two alternatives. (These alternatives are explained in the following paragraphs on the law of opposites.) Therefore, when we say that we created selves have no independent self, but express His eternal Deity Self, we are also saying that we express God's fixed nature, which has eternally discarded the possibility of expressing the liar, self-for-self nature. We are fixed as He (1 John 3:9).

The Law of Opposites

The fundamental law of the universe is that there are pairs of opposites, and that nothing operates except by the one swallowing up the other (2 Cor. 5:4), the one using the other as its means of manifestation. Thus there are light-dark, hot-cold, sweet-bitter, hard-soft, yes-no, the positive-negative of electricity, and the proton-electron of the atom. Or, taken into our own reality as selves, there is self-loving or self-giving self: self-for-self or self-for-others.

This is why it says of God Himself that He cannot lie. In other words, He is dead to being a self-for-self (a liar) and is unalterably fixed as being the Self-for-others. The eternal fact is that He has never been a loner, but

brought His own Son into being. Thus He is the eternal other-lover (John 5:20; 3:35). (See Alan Parker's pamphlet *The Cross in the Heart of God*.)

Thus, created selves can only know themselves and function by being confronted by the choice of opposites. This was true also among those whom we speak of as heavenly beings. Lucifer was the chief one close to the throne of God (Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:12-15). He was created to be the manifestor of the Creator's fixed nature of other-love (Lucifer means "light-bearer"). But he chose in his freedom to be the expresser of the opposite, alternative nature of self-for-self to which God had died. He brought into manifestation the hidden fire-nature rather than the light-nature of God (Heb. 12:29; 1 John 1:5). *He imagines himself to be an independent self* (Isa. 14:12-14) but is deceived as to who he really is. Jesus called him the expression of negative light (Matt. 6:23). There was war in heaven and Lucifer was cast out (Rev. 12:7-9).

God's Purposes To Be Fulfilled by His Family of Sons

God utilizes the choice between alternatives in us to fulfill His eternal plan "to the praise of His glory" (Eph; 1:3-14). He is bringing into being a vast family of sons in His image, whose created selves (with no independence of their own) express His fixed other-love nature. They will manage the universe with His Son (Heb. 1:2; Rom. 8:17) by ministering to it in His eternal other-love, and thus serving and liberating it to fulfill itself in the love of one to the other (Isa. 11:6-9; Rom. 8:19-21), so that the whole universe will be one eternal song of praise, worship, harmony, mutual love and delight (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

Our Confrontation with the Law of Opposites

This then necessitated that we who are created in His image be confronted by the reality of the opposites in ourselves and choose to express the deity nature of either self-for-others or self-for-self. Therefore, the first created couple had to be confronted with the symbol of the two trees in the Garden. They were at first *unconscious* expressers of God's other-love nature. Adam was in harmony with all creatures and could give each its proper name (Gen. 2:20); they knew no opposite to other-love in union with the Father.

In order to become *conscious* operating selves, and not merely continue

like spontaneous infants, God used Lucifer, the wrathful expresser (Rev. 12:12) of that opposite fire-nature, to entice and deceive Eve. She responded to Satan's (the serpent's) lies about God and began to express his self-for-self nature in herself by taking the fruit which God had forbidden. Adam consciously chose to identify with Eve's self-for-self disobedience (1 Tim. 2:14).

Thus they became conscious of the opposites through the attraction of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The good is a self which expresses God and other-love; the evil is a self which expresses Satan and self-loving love. They became expressers of their Satan-father's self-for-self nature, Satan's "seed" (Gen. 3:15; 1 John 3:8-10; John 8:44). In their expression of him (Eph. 2:1-3), they became tricked into the false concept of seeing themselves as independent selves, even as their false father Satan was deceived into thinking he was an independent self. (In reality he expresses that negative fire-nature in God, which rightly used in God became the source of the light-nature of other love.)

So we transmit what we are or think we are. Therefore, it was God's purpose that Satan, the serpent, should transmit his deceived concept of his independence into us his seed. As a result we fallen humans think we are independent selves. But in reality we are merely expressers of Satan's self-for-self nature. Note the word "deceiveth" in that plainest word in Scripture concerning his lying effects on us (Rev. 12:9). And thus by this deceitful means we destined sons of the Father could once for all experience the bitterness of this lie and discard it through the Last Adam, Jesus Christ.

The Secret and Essential Value of the Law of God through Moses

From this follows God's gracious dealings with fallen humanity through the law given by Moses (John 1:17). Paul has been the great expositor of its necessary purpose. Actually the law, as outer manifestor of God's true nature, is inherent in every person. The law exposes eternal truth as well as our inability to perform it in our false union with Satan. Romans 1:18-21 makes that plain and traces our total declension from it in the rest of the chapter. But here and there is a response in an honest heart, as in Romans 2:18-21 and the instance of Joseph in Genesis 39:9. And all nations have had their laws of right and wrong. But in the blindness of our deceived selves, we have not recognized our self-for-self nature as

Satan's nature in us and thus sin against God and its eternal consequences. This is the "ignorance" of Acts 17:23, Ephesians 4:18, and even of Paul in 1 Timothy 1:13. Thus, only breaking the outer pronouncement of God's law is known to be sin (Rom. 5:13).

So when God began His eternal purpose of restoring the human family to its true being, He first gave His great call to Abraham to be the human father of the family of faith who would believe in the Living God, the "possessor of heaven on earth. There had always been the thin line, like a nylon thread of believers and knowers, in this Satan-captured world, from Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah and Shem, to Abraham. But it was just a thread. Now it was to become a great nation of believers in the true God in that idol-infested world. In the "fullness of time" He would Himself come in the flesh to be our marvelous Savior.

In due course the first little family became a great population in Egypt and then became a nation through Moses in its own promised land. It was Moses who gave them and us, in plain words inscribed in stone, the true characteristics of God's holy nature (which in our later days we are to know as law all fulfilled in love). Yet in His fullness of mercy, He combined the law and its judgements (we inevitably breaking the law because it was given to us to expose the inevitability of our breaking it as slaves to the sin-deity) with the constant means of restoration and access to Him by blood sacrifices and various fellowship offerings of the tabernacle and temple. By these means, indeed, there were always those (many more than we might think— 1 Kings 19:18) who had a living relationship with God. For the Lamb had been slain from the foundation of the world, and there was a spiritual Christ before the historic Christ (Heb. 11:26; 1 Cor. 10:3, 4; John 8:56-58).

So in the blindness of our fallen hearts, the law was God's merciful means of revealing sin as sin. Then, in that fullness of time, the true Lamb of God came to make the one complete and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the world. By His death and resurrection there is justification from the condemnation and eternal consequence of our sins condition. This is for all who move in by inner faith reception and outer word confession of Him in His finished work of atonement. Beyond that the Spirit gives inner witness of the replacement of the Spirit of Truth for that false spirit of error. This is the radical revelation to those who cannot stop short of our total inheritance.

The Law's Final Revelation

We have come now to the law's final revelation, which the vast majority of the redeemed remain ignorant of. It is for those who hunger and thirst after righteousness until they are filled (Matt. 5:6). What is revealed is the root of sin: the Satanic deceit of thinking we are independent selves, who by ourselves can resist all Satan's assaults of self-for-self. This is especially underlined for us by Paul in Romans 7. We know we have now become new creations in Christ and experience in our redeemed selves the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23). But at the same time we are being constantly knocked off our steady walk in the Spirit by the assaults of all kinds of temptations. These drag us back toward sin-responses such as fear, hate, lust, pride, etc.

Because we are still under the delusion of being independent selves, we respond to those temptations which the law says we should not respond to. We therefore say we don't want to respond, and we make resolutions that we won't (Paul's Romans 7 statement "when I would do good"). But then we are hopelessly caught. We struggle and seek to resist the pulls, but there they are. We feel guilty for having such pulls—which we call flesh—and experience inward guilt and often outward response. We blame those responses on a supposed flesh-nature which binds and drives us, so that we see ourselves as what Paul said in Romans 7:14: "carnal, sold under sin." So we remain with our struggles and inner condemnations as being such flesh people. When we have actually sinned, we repeatedly return to 1 John 1:9 and thankfully accept the forgiveness and cleansing, though with the hopeless recognition that we shall very soon go through the same repeated syndrome of struggle, condemnation by the law and renewed cleansing.

But at last some of us come to a place of desperation. Only those who become desperate can find the releasing secret. Paul himself went this way. In Romans 6 he leads us through the deeper meaning of identification with Christ, by which we reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive unto God. But while we reckon that in Romans 6, it just doesn't work out in the life of Romans 7! Yet Paul then goes on to leave Romans 7 forever behind (except for occasional foolish visits) and live in the reality of Romans 8, where there is no further condemnation, and there is freedom. The fixed law of the Spirit of Life forever replaces the former

fixed law of sin and Satan control.

Paul's great discovery was that the human self is basically *neutral* as far as the kind of nature it expresses. He says in Romans 7:18 that no good thing resides in our humanity (flesh). But then he says that neither does any bad thing, though he had mistakenly and so deceivedly thought it did. No!—if any good in him is expressed by the Spirit bearing His fruit through him, merely as a branch, so also, any bad is not in humanity, our flesh, but is equally the fruit of the bad spirit through us as a branch. Actually he said that in Romans 6:20-22. Which fruit were we formerly producing? Fruit is not a branch product, but a vine product. It depends on which vine our human selves are the branches of! So if the good is the Spirit of good expressed by me, the bad is the spirit of bad—what Paul called “sin that dwelleth in me” in Romans 7:17 This is now replaced by Christ dwelling in us (Rom. 8:10).

So, at the point of desperation, Paul found a solution to his misery. He was not able to combat temptations under the pointing finger of the law's “you ought to.” The solution was the radical revelation that he never was an independent self combating temptation and challenged by the law. He came to see his created self (as are all selves) as the mere container and then expresser of the Eternal Self. We are all created to contain and express the Eternal Self. But we have to learn that nothing functions except by swallowing up its opposite. We learn the operation of God's opposite by yielding our human selves to the Satan occupant, resulting in “sin that dwelleth in me.” We are tricked into believing that we run ourselves (as Satan thinks he runs himself) and that we ourselves are the sin persons doing the sins. But we are only branches, not vines.

God sent the law through Moses to challenge us to be doers if we think we can! Down at last we fall. We are of course unable to be self-operating selves, because there is no such thing. Initially we saw our sins removed by grace. We did not yet see that they were Satan's sins by us and not ours (John 8:44). But then comes the final discovery that the sin-doer was never we, but he in us as us. The law caught us out as if we were independent selves. Then came the condemnation from the law and the struggling to rid ourselves of the sin-power holding us. But at last we see! There never was anything wrong with our branch humanity made in His image. So therefore, we take no condemnation as if we were the culprit. It was he, “Mr. Sin,” pulling at us and often knocking us over.

This brings us to Paul's Calvary revelation that Jesus on the cross was we on that cross, for He came to be our representative. Because sin was indwelling and expressing itself by us, He died on Calvary as us, His holy body as ours. He was thus "made sin" (2 Cor. 5:21)—made the sin expresser we were. In His death, the spirit of error left that body. Sin as us left. In the tomb His own resurrecting Spirit came into His body and raised it. He comes into our bodies also as we receive Him by faith. So Paul saw the truth about our human selves. The created human self, created "very good" in God's image, had never had anything wrong with it except that it participated in physical mortality. Now it manifests the nature of the Spirit of truth and responds to His drives. It is dead in Christ to manifesting the nature of the spirit of error and responding to his drives. Therefore, we have also become "dead to the law," because the law only had an apparent claim on us while we were living in the deceit of thinking we were independent selves running our own lives. So now there remains nothing for this outer law of God to point demanding or accusing lingers at. We are "dead to the law," *because there is no longer such a thing as an independent self to which the law can address itself.*

Free at Last

So now at last we are clear. 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. And we have moved in 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. We act freely as ourselves because He has of His own choice by grace joined, fused and identified Himself with us as ourselves. We are "driven" people, driven by His self-for-others deity nature. And we live freely in His keeping in our soul-body reactions as much as in our spirit (1 Thes. 5:23).

So then, what about those continual pulls that we still have to that old opposite—those invasions of fear, hate, worry, lust, self-seeking and weaknesses? Now we are alive to Satan's subtlest assaults on us. The subtle trick occurs when we feel those constant pulls on us and we go back to the old habit of thinking we ought not to respond to them. Bang! We have been caught out in the old habit of thinking we are independent, and thus need to respond to an "ought to" or an "ought not." This is the

subtle trick. Those pulls make us think we are independent human selves again, and the moment we think that, back comes the law saying, “No, you ought not to.” And we are caught right up into false condemnation. That “ought not” only reaches us because we have slipped back into thinking we should be watching ourselves, running our own lives and combating the wrong pulls. That is where Satan has his laugh on us. There we are, inwardly condemned as if we ought not to fear, hate, anger, lust, or to want or react to these negative desires. And there we are struggling and condemned, or maybe following through to some actual sin.

Why? Here comes Satan's final subtle trick. *We are tricked into thinking that having those pulls is sin; whereas the real sin is the unbelief of thinking we are again independent selves who should not have these pulls.* But independent self is really Satan-self again having his hold on us, and we then again “carnal, sold under sin.” That means we are back again under the law with its “thou shalt not.” But we are bound and unable to keep that law because our false sense of independent self, to which the law addresses itself, is really Satan as us with his temporary control of us.

Paul puts the essence of Romans 6, 7 and 8 into three verses to the Galatians—Galatians 5:16-18. “Walk in the Spirit,” he writes, “and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.” We are Spirit people, but still in our flesh humanity, and thus open to all Satan’s pulls on us in our soul-body emotions and appetites. So now what happens? We become conscious of flesh pulls, for, says Paul, “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other.” These contrary pulls make us conscious of the antagonistic opposites, “the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.” We are Spirit people bearing Spirit fruit and loving to be so, but we now also feel the pulls and desires of the flesh—Satan's agency in this Satan-filled world for attracting us back to his self-for-self ways.

This consciousness of the flesh-Spirit antagonisms is the danger spot. Satan thereby seeks to drag us back to that separation through the Fall, in which we again think we are independent selves instead of Spirit-united selves. This independent self outlook is really the touch of the old Satan-union on us. It also means that we immediately put ourselves back under the law again. And with what consequence? We are bound by that Satan-self in our separation and cannot respond to the law or Spirit, and so Paul says, “Ye cannot do the things that ye would.” Thus we are under the

condemnation of the law and experience guilt that we cannot fulfill it. Being in the lie of independent self temporarily puts us back under Satan's control. Therefore, we cannot do the things that we would. Properly caught, properly bound and condemned!

But now Paul says, "If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." In other words, if we are temporarily in unbelief, which has resurrected the lies of the independent self, we then suddenly remind ourselves of who we really are—Spirit bound and Spirit led, our self expressing Himself. We then say, "Wait a minute. Of course I am not an independent self feeling these pulls of Satan. That is his lie. No, I am a Christ-self." I do not deny or fight the reality of my flesh pulls (and those are precisely what my Elder Brother equally, continually had according to Hebrews 4:15).

I accept and recognize the reality of these flesh pulls, but I am dead to them in Christ ("always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" as in Corinthians 4:10). They can shout at me by temptation, but have no hold or right to me (Rom. 8:12). I am alive unto God, a Spirit person and led by the Spirit. The only law on me is what I now instinctively fulfill, that "law of the Spirit" by which I spontaneously do the things of the Spirit. Through Christ, the Spirit has replaced that old "law of sin and death" by which I spontaneously did the things of the flesh. So I go free—back to who I really always was.

This is Paul's definition of daily freedom under daily flesh-assaults or pressures. It is what James told us to be very thankful for—good constant practice in the application of our faith walk. We admit those lying pulls back to unbelief, but now we are spontaneously faith-conscious of walking as Christ as us. Therefore, we "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free" (Gal. 5:1). By admitting *Satan's* right to pull at us through the flesh, we are also free to affirm *our* right to our faith-consciousness of being Christ as us. Thus we express Christ's nature of love, joy and praising. We swallow up the negative pulls, or rather use those very pulls to express His pulls: love replacing hate; faith, fear; rest, strain; strength, weakness; self-giving for self-gratifying; and so on.

We Will Repeat About This Independent Self

Because of its importance, and because it is the main reason for this whole "walking in the Spirit" sharing, I will address again what we do in

meeting the assaults of the flesh. The answer is that we do not fight temptation or take condemnation for it. The very opposite. We recognize that the real temptation is to make me think am the independent self that I am not. Then I am again “under the law,” yet cannot fulfill it, because independent self is really Satan as me (Matt. 16:23). It is the sin of unbelief. What then do I do? I quickly recognize that the problem is not my having flesh temptation, but rather my temporarily forgetting (2 Pet. 1:9) that I am no longer an independent self. Who I am is simply and solely an expresser of Christ in His nature.

Therefore, as quickly as I can, I *accept* the fact of being tempted, for we live in a totally tempting world. Accepting that, I don’t deny or resist the *temptation*. Instead, I resist the *tempter* (James 4:7) by saying, “That’s not me you are pulling. That’s only my outer soul emotions and bodily appetites, which of course are open to all that can reach me from your outer world (for his is ‘the spirit of the world’—1 Cor. 2:12). But I am not a bunch of outer responses: I am Christ as me. He is the real Self expressed by my human container self.” As I do that, I am in fact doing what Paul said in Corinthians 4:10: inwardly recognizing my place of death in His death to those old pulls of Satan on my human self. In place of these temptations, I am seeing myself in my true self-relationship of Christ in me as me. As I do that, the consciousness of myself as a Christ expresser swallows up the negative consciousness of Satan and his pulls on me. Satan flees (James 4:7). I resist him by replacing false belief in him by true belief in who I really am—Christ as me. Light swallows up dark. We don’t fight the dark; we recognize its right to exist, but we replace it by turning on the light.

Our danger, then, is not the fact that temptation pulls us. We shall always have plenty of that on all levels. The danger is that it tricks us back into thinking we are the selves who must respond to these pulls. But now we know that trick of Satan. We accept the pulls as normal and right on our humanity. And then we say, “That’s not my real me. Those are only pulls on my outer clothing of soul-body. My me is Christ as me, and the light is on and the darkness swallowed up.” And if we are tempted to think, “But yes, we are constantly assaulted by the same things,” then we equally say, “And yes, that gives me continual practice in recognizing again and again who I am—Christ as me!”

And Now That More Than Conqueror Reality

Now we are “more than conquerors” (Rom. 8:37), because we are freed from having to fight our own battles and watch out for our human responses. We are “fathers,” not just “young men” (1 John 2:12-14). We are co-laborers, co-saviors (1 Cor. 9:22) and intercessors. We now move out to meet the needs of others. We are more than just personal conquerors; we can lead others into conquest. We are the privileged ones to be “knowers” by the Spirit of what is to us the total truth: that formerly we were Satan-I, but now through Calvary, Christ-I, with no illusory independent self in between. This is such liberating light and the meaning of life in fullness that we have an unending drive of the Spirit to bring this “mystery hidden from ages and generations and now made manifest” (Col. 1:26) to all God’s people. We are taking our share in this worldwide, Church-wide commission. We know it includes also our share in the offense of the cross where the sword of the Spirit pierces too deep and disrupts established convictions. But we also have the glory of seeing an increasing number in whom the light is lit in clarity. And we know our calling, as with Paul, is “to open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel,” and to “speak boldly as I ought to speak” (Eph. 6:19, 20). And by God’s enabling, this we will do.