

## Soul Control

*by Fred Pruitt*

*(This started out to be a piecing together of three previous articles on the subject, that I thought I would be able to "knock out" in a morning. Four days later, I believe it has finally come together. I ended up using some parts from all three, but essentially re-writing everything plus many new things, making this a completely new word, including some new things to me, that just popped into my mind as my fingers were tickling those laptop keys. All praise to God!)*

### About Definitions

Dear Fred,

*I'm writing you this e-mail after reading your excellent article on discerning soul and spirit. I wanted to ask you a question because we run into the same issue when we speak with other Christians concerning the difference between the two.*

*When reading your article I noticed that you put the will in the spirit which is my friend and I believe is true. However, most of our friends do not agree with us and say the will is in the soul and give us the following reason: Since we are perfect in spirit and are being perfected in soul; the will by necessity must be in the soul because we don't always make the right decisions and spirit being perfect would not have that problem. Could you give any clarity on this issue?*

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you very much for asking these questions. While it might seem as if we are dealing with only "academic" matters, i.e., definitions and such, this issue is really much closer to home than a set of "correct definitions" would be. It is to the very heart of our personhood, and how we live as expressions of Christ in the world.

I naturally shrink from too much "defining" in these realms which are to me quite ethereal, when juxtaposed with hard-edged facts and the supposed solidity of the physical universe. (I don't have problems with the "realms" themselves, just the ability to communicate them in an articulate manner).

I don't know higher mathematics but I know basic math and our world works because those things are always true,  $2+2=4$  and so on. I can even relate on the macro-cosmic level with Einstein or the microcosmic world with quantum mechanics, and though those laws are more fluid, we have found a way to use them that makes our modern technology possible.

So I see, in that realm, that definitions and specialties and organizations are absolutely necessary to keep it all going. Somebody has to know how to mine the stuff; somebody has to know how to take the stuff mined and turn it into useful material; somebody has to know how to combine all those useful materials to make things for our world, and somebody has to be there to receive and use all the stuff that comes from that system. Even though it looks quite chaotic sometimes, still it all seems to hold together pretty well and go on day by day by day.

When I drive on the freeways, especially in big cities – Atlanta is 70 miles from here and is like this – every time I go there I am convinced that the world is running on unseen miracles every day on the freeway. I don't know why there aren't a thousand accidents and fatalities a day just in the city of Atlanta. Cars speeding mere inches apart side by side with each other, frighteningly little front-back distance, racing, changing lanes, everybody trying to get a leg up and get wherever they're going in a mad hurry, most people far exceeding the inner city 55 mph speed limit, usually 80+ if they can, near-misses constantly, the occasional crackup and bad accident, but the vast majority do it day by day by day, and get through unscathed.

My dad paid for private driving lessons for me (after he tried teaching me and I hit a parked car) when I was 15. After a few practice days around the lot, the first place the instructor took me to drive on public streets was the inner city freeway of Atlanta. But he didn't tell me that when he had me go out onto the roadway for the first time. We were headed south, toward downtown, on Piedmont Road from Buckhead. We drove a few miles toward town, then at North Avenue he had me go right toward Georgia Tech and "The Varsity," (world's biggest drive-in). As soon as we passed The Varsity he calmly said, "Turn right here." It was the on ramp to the I-75/85 freeway!!! No doubt with an involuntary quiver in my voice, I mourned, "But, it's the freeway!"

He replied, "Yes, I know!" He had nerves of steel I think. Well, I made it and have been driving on those freeways for 46 years or so, and I have nerves of steel, too, but these days I only have to exercise them for that occasionally.

Why did I stray there? I wondered that myself, too, and then it occurred to me that this little freeway "parable" is exactly what I am talking about. But I won't say it until the end. Funny God!

First the world of definitions. Like I said, they are, or can be, important. To "define" something is not necessarily to limit it, as in "put borders around," but rather to give it particularity in my consciousness, in my understanding. I've been kind of rebellious and in the past I have probably railed against "defining" more from that "put borders around" way of looking, but now I am seeing it a little differently. It's alright. We're allowed!

However, there is a little hitch when we get into things that are essentially intangible, i.e., soul and spirit. Scripture is not particularly consistent in the usage of the words. And then there's "heart," another rather intangible word, because we all know it is not talking about our physical heart, and no one has ever seen or detected the intangible one. It is used "in the world" in the same way. It means something different in the context, but everyone knows the "heart" of a lover is something poetic, intangible, in the realm of feeling or sense, known only to the one experiencing it. How could we possibly describe it?

Those of us who are native English speakers may be at a disadvantage when it comes to these definitions, because other languages may have different words that have more clarity than the variety of meanings for the English word "heart." We've just got this one word that has to mean so many things, and we're all supposed to know the difference! It is like the word, "love." In Greek, three different words speak of three different kinds of love: "Eros," sexual and romantic love; "Phileo," brotherly or friendship love; and "Agape," Divine, non-possessive spiritual love.

### **Taking Apart the Parts**

It struck me in considering what many say and teach, how the Bible in a sense gives us the "parts," and then it's up to the Spirit in us to make it a "whole." When I first learned about the workings of soul and spirit in the union life days of the early 1980s, it was as if we were in shop class learning how the parts of an automobile go together, what does what, and how.

Norman stressed how important it was to understand those workings, to understand the Word that **"divides asunder soul and spirit,"** as the writer describes it in Hebrews 4:12. To understand it, we took it apart and began to identify the qualities of the two. We had been given the parts, but the parts do not work separately from one another. Instead, they work as one integrated whole. Like an automobile does not run on pistons alone, nor with just a carburetor or a transmission, but the whole machine working together as one whole with each part doing its bit. It is the same with us in the three "parts" of our humanity. They are one integrated whole – either a whole in unrighteousness or a whole in righteousness. The "soul" doesn't go off and do one thing, the body another and the spirit something else.

We are one human person, in this life a makeup of spirit, soul and body, each doing its part as one whole. For educational purposes we dissect the "parts" — i.e. the soul is the seat of the emotions, feelings, intellect, the human psychological makeup; the "spirit" the most inner part, the place of God in us, where we are will, inner knowing, and inner desire or love. We will get into and explore the definitions a little later.

Those are the "parts" which, working together, are the one whole working. We do spend time studying the "parts." There is a learning time and we have to practice a bit with it — "Oh yeah, this is just soul, oh, yes, this is spirit." Of course that's a right process and very helpful in the Spirit's education of us. And we are reminded continually that HE is the Teacher, and leaves nothing left out, and He Who also brings all things to fruition in their time. So there does come a day when we don't think about that anymore. We forget in operation what is soul and what is spirit. We just are. We just "BE"!

### **The Problem of the Gradual Improvement of the Soul**

So I will start off first with this "truth" commonly held by many, of gradual "self improvement" — by "perfecting" or "working on" the soul. Protestant, Independent or Catholic, it is embraced by nearly all. From the extreme Catholic view that sanctity is tied directly to participation in the sacraments, works of piety and self-denial, to the extreme evangelical view focused almost exclusively on sin and works of darkness, in an attempt to dispel them, which the devils love, since they are the center of attention.

Most are somewhere in-between, and may believe in eternal salvation after death, but also sadly believe, having been taught, that they can only "try" to live godly lives, but sin can, and most assuredly will, get them anytime it wants, because they can never overcome it, but God overlooks it and receives us by His grace. (I don't have a problem with the last statement. We are not speaking of "imputed" sin here.)

Thus, they live an Old Testament view of life on earth, that if we follow all the religious rules and regulations, our crops, our families, our pocketbooks, our minds and hearts will all be blessed to overflowing. They also believe the opposite, and it is incredible how many confessed Christians live in this belief, that if we do not do those things with all diligence and sincerity of heart, God will send plagues, sickness and poverty.

I believed all that for a time. We had so many things go wrong during a period of years a while back, that I wondered from time to time if we were under a curse! But no, it was the Loving Hand of the Father, for blessing, hope and faith, and here we are now. We could not have gotten here, except we had gone there!

But regardless of the ways in which it is couched, some version of this truth has been embraced by the whole human race from its beginnings on this side of the Garden. It is still subterranean in all of us, which is why it is so normal to our thinking and rules the minds of most.

But I am glad the answer is greater than this problem we have presented. The real Truth of the matter is brought into light and consciousness by the very means of this mistaken understanding, to which all of us have fallen prey at one time or another in varying degrees. The answer takes us into the depths of the heart of so many other truths of the Father, because when the Spirit overtakes us with it, it is a huge high-dive springboard into the unbounded liberty of the Spirit.

It is not an argument over a doctrine in an academic sense. It just boils down to bondage or liberty. Both are total. There is no such thing as partial bondage; nor is there such a thing as partial liberty. Those who believe they are in partial bondage, might as well go ahead and realize their partial bondage makes a whole bondage.

Consider a slave. What is the difference between freedom and bondage to a slave? Anything less than complete and total autonomy, anything less than full independence from the slave master, anything less than a total cut-off from the former life, with the former master no longer in the picture whatsoever, would still be bondage to a slave! That is the issue.

The New Testament is an "is" book, or an "I AM" book. Admittedly, certainly there are passages that seem as if they encourage believers into adding to themselves spiritual attributes, e.g. 2 Peter 1:3-8.

***"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; knowledge; temperance etc., .... For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."***

Let's consider this for a moment. Peter's first statement, really the foundation or anchor of this passage, unequivocally states that He HAS given us "all things" having to do with our spiritual lives. We have no lack. Peter even tells us that we have been given incredible, unbelievable promises, by which we partake of the Divine Nature, and that we have escaped the corruption in the world!

If all that IS true, and it is, why does he then go on to say, "*And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue ... etc., ...*"???? The "beside this" seems to sweep away the "all in all" nature of what he had just stated, and it is as if he is asking us to "add back" what already should be there.

Most of us do not see that in the beginning, so we do not ask that question, innocently thinking this is a list of qualities or attributes we need to develop in ourselves, because we have always thought that way. Which leads to the next logical question: "*How do I add those qualities to myself?*"

Does anyone really and truly have a clue? ... Anybody?

Oh, I know there are countless books, lectures, seminars, teachings, sermons, systems and sure-fire plans that promise to develop or teach us how to develop these things, perhaps about the same number of helps out there for becoming real estate barons with no money, or how to have a successful marriage in 21 steps. They fill the book stores, both secular and "religious!"

Someone said it to me the other day, not really to me particularly but to the group in a meeting – I've heard it so many times before – "*Well, we know our spirits are perfect, but our souls still need work so we must be diligent and open to the Lord to work on our soul's progress ....*"

One wants to say sometimes, "*How's that workin' out for ya?*" but that's TV psychologist Dr. Phil's line, so I'll have to think of another one.

But really, seriously, to those who are working on their souls: How is it going? How would you rate your progress thus far? If you do not believe you are where you should be, what do you think has caused it? How many of those seven qualities Peter lists have been fully developed in you? Or, as the kids say, are you "there" yet? Or, how many feel like the disciples when Jesus first met them from the shore as they were getting in from all-night fishing on the sea of Galilee, having "*toiled all night, and caught nothing*" (Luke 5:5). That last one was me.

The New Testament speaks in terms of "You are," rather than, "You should be." Paul talks about "*putting on Christ*" (Eph. 4:24), and in another place Paul says we, "*have put off the old man*" (Col. 3:9), which he further explains is our complete and instantaneous liberation from the misdeeds and illicit lusts of the "old man." "HAVE PUT OFF!" he says, meaning it in the past tense, as something

already done and completed.

Paul, not once in all his epistles, ever advocates or presents to us a process of rummaging around inside ourselves and our past in order to find all the problem areas left by our old master's reign in us and bringing them to the surface so that we might get rid of these things one by one. Jesus never said it, nor Peter, nor Paul, nor any other writer in the New Testament. Then where did they come up with that idea? Who would want us fully focused on ourselves and our personal spiritual process? I can think of at least one who would just LOVE to keep us working on ourselves the whole time of this life. He even provides the daily condemnation, accusations against us and reminders about the law, in other words, the fuel required to keep it going!

Peter uses the same phrase again in 2 Pet. 1:14, when he says he is about to "put off" the temporal house which was his body and soul in this world. In every case when the Biblical writers use that phrase or concept, we may understand it to mean something instantaneous, something more akin to a clean cut-off from one thing, and an instantaneous turn toward and in another. By no means is it meaning a long process of re-education and behavior modification.

Like repentance. All repentance means is a change of direction. We have made it into some sort of sackcloth and ashes ordeal, but it isn't that at all, though depending on what the change is about, it may seem to be that way regarding some issues. But when Jesus came saying, "**Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand,**" He was meaning that right now, in our midst, the kingdom of God has come (in Him AND in us if we see it), and the only prerequisite for seeing it is a change of direction in our sight. Instead of looking and focusing on one way, we look and focus on another way!

And of course we know we do not gradually come into the kingdom of light, nor gradually leave the kingdom of darkness. Paul says we have been "translated" into the kingdom of His Son, after having been once and for all delivered from the power of darkness (Col. 1:14). There is nothing gradual about that. It is done the moment we see it. (And was truly already done before that, but it becomes alive and active in us at our point of recognition).

These New Testament terms, "put on," and "put off," do not mean what we would normally think they would mean. It sounds funny to "put on" Christ as if He is a suit of clothes, and at the same time to think we could so easily "put off" the old man with just a simple recognition of that fact.

But that is exactly how it is. To "put on Christ," of course, is not meaning we "*try to act like Jesus,*" but that the very life in which we live and move and have our being is Christ alone. The "putting on," is simply our recognition by faith that it is true in us. This is not a life of pretense, where we try to act like Jesus would act. The operative word there, is "act." Basically, we are told in our ignorance, out of the ignorance of those who teach us regarding growth and sanctification, to perform an acting job. The best "actors" are those everyone recognizes as the most "spiritual" and "closer to God" than the ordinary folk, who aren't as proficient at acting as they are. I know. I used to be a pretty good actor in the things of God.

But of course that way is a complete falsehood. Instead, this life is simply recognizing the truth that already is, such as Jesus' word about and to us in the Sermon on the Mount, when He said, "**You are the light of the world.**" He does not say you should work and work and pray and go through a process to become the light of the world, but no, just a simple, "**You are!**"

Likewise, in Romans 6, that great chapter which is again talking about that total cut-off from one thing (being servants of sin) and being raised to newness of life, our "members," (and here he is meaning the totality of our human selfhood – spirit, soul and body), are now the instruments of righteousness (see also 2 Cor. 5:17-21). There is no striving to make that happen, no working on ourselves to become instruments of righteousness, but instead an instantaneous renewal of our minds from one sight (sin consciousness) to the other sight (righteousness consciousness), through

our baptism into Christ.

And it goes on through all the New Testament. 2 Corinthians 5 is plain in saying that if we are in Christ, then we are wholly new creatures, and all things are of God. Through Christ becoming sin for us, we have become forever free of its grip, and then rise as the righteousness of God, imparted as a gift from God because it is "*Christ our righteousness*" (1 Cor. 1:30) within us. Paul is declaring a present moment Truth or Reality for all who are new creatures in Christ. As He became sin for us, we became righteousness in Him. Period!

People might say, well, you don't seem to be acting like a "new creation" would act, but we cannot let that deter us from the Word of Faith God has given us. How would the "new creation" act? No one knows, for it is one who is born of the Spirit, and the Spirit is like the wind, which no man can follow either to its source or to its end. All I know to believe and say, is, "***the Father that dwells in me, He does the works***" (John 14:10c).

Let's look again at that passage from 1 Peter, cited above. The NASB (New American Standard Bible) translates it slightly differently from the King James:

***"Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love."***

There is something quite different, the way it reads in NASB, from our normal idea of "adding" those qualities to ourselves. And this meaning is in context with what Peter had stated just a couple of sentences before, that we already have all things we need pertaining to godliness, because we partake of the "divine nature." Peter is saying that all those qualities are "included" in Christ, and exhorts us through our faith to acknowledge them. Notice how one seems to be contained within the one that preceded it. "In your moral excellence, knowledge, in your knowledge, self-control, in your self-control, perseverance, etc."

This is exactly what I have been talking about for a long time – consciousness! Like Adam naming the animals. Naming the animals gave them particularity in his understanding and consciousness. Until he named them, they were just hardly noticed creatures that ran all around the Garden. But when he calls one a bear, suddenly he notices that he begins to see other bears that he hadn't really noticed before.

It is the same with the attributes Peter lists. The reason Peter brings them up is NOT, I repeat NOT, so that we can devise a system whereby we might acquire these properties. There is absolutely nothing anyone could do to "develop" these qualities, because if we could, we would be right back to "acting" again. These are divine qualities, belonging only to God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. No work of man can by any means produce the Divine qualities. Only the Spirit can produce them in us, for it to be genuine. Flesh cannot produce spirit. It is always the other way around.

However, even though we have understood it that previous way, what Peter is really saying to us, is to diligently in our faith, recognize each of these properties one by one, each coming out of the other and the Spirit Who dwells in us. Just like the rivers of living water which come out of those who believe, even so are these qualities already in residence in those who believe. It is the "believe/faith" part that gives them recognition in our consciousness, thus in some sense fully activating them through that recognition. They require no practice, just the daily living of being our new selves in Christ in spontaneity and overflowing life. We will always be tempted to think they are not there, but if we are in Christ they most certainly ARE there. That is our daily exercise of faith.

God changed Abram's name to Abraham a year before Isaac was born. Abraham as we all know

means, "*father of many nations.*" Abraham took the name and called himself that, though doubtless to many he looked like a fool. How can someone who has no true heir from his wife be a father of many nations? I'm sure many laughed at that.

But God calls things which seem not to be, to actually be the truly real, and considers that which we consider "real," to be misleading. The reason for this is because what we see outwardly, though it is real, it is not the whole picture. Therefore we must believe BEFORE we see; it's the only way! So no matter how we look, we begin to believe what God says about us, and with God's eyes begin to see our completion and total acceptance in the NOW of our lives. He is continually saying of us, **"This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased!"**

Well, then, where did this come from? I am convinced that this self-improvement idea came about as a means to "explain" why we don't "look and act perfectly," (according to human reason and preconceived ideas of Christ), even though we may believe that in our inner spirit we are already perfect. This has been the whole history of the church in my opinion, from the apostolic days until now. It has even happened in our union fellowship, where we learned in the beginning to see ourselves as God sees us, "whole, complete and entire, needing nothing," but for some, total freedom seemed to be too good to be true, so they backed off the "Yes I am" reality which is the heart of the New Testament and the true reality of our lives in Christ, in favor of somehow adding some more steps to living in the perfection of Christ already provided and lived in us by means of His indwelling Spirit, Teacher, Comforter, Upholder and Guide.

People receive Jesus by the Spirit, but almost always we go through a time, like the Galatians who Paul said had "*fallen from grace,*" where instead of acknowledging Christ in EVERYTHING, even in our own thoughts, words and deeds, even up to and including everything in our souls, in our separated consciousness we attempt to become more pleasing to God, by trying to order our lives into an imaginary mold we create for ourselves, or a model we may have taken from others, regarding what "Christ-like behavior" in thought, word and deed would look like.

And I hate to say it, but it is a sad fact that much of the visible "church" promotes this self-improvement idea in order to "make merchandise of us" (2 Pet. 2:3) To be just plain crass, it is often mainly about the money. Because in this non-Biblical system of preacher and laity, as long as the preacher can keep the people working on themselves — which is endless and a course from which we can never graduate — then they keep showing up at church and tossing money into the plate. They "need" the preacher like an athlete needs a coach or manager, to spur them on in their continual strivings and efforts, and to continually exhort them to more and more works and activity "for God."

But even in that environment, liberation comes when we see God's declaration of Who we are, that we are He living, and He expressing His own pure divine quality of Life by means of us. Further, that this reality is all-pervasive, throughout the whole of our being. This divine quality of life is fully active in all areas of our humanity — spirit AND soul AND body.

In the Only Begotten He has communicated to us that He is eternally pleased with us, because He has thoroughly cleansed us in every way! (John 15:3). The Spirit has taught us, so that we know that we are whole, clean, pure, perfect and entire in every way in every aspect of spirit, soul and body. It is Christ Who chose us and also chose to live in us in order to bring about our salvation and eternal purpose — therefore how could it be that He would not establish His perfect Kingdom there (in us), since He has willingly chosen us, you and me, to be His very means of expression?

Of course He does all that He promises and we live in perfect wholeness because He is perfect wholeness. And this all begs another question toward those who promote this "*continual perfecting of the soul into a more Christ-like expression,*" which is this: why would God tell us to clean up that which He has already pronounced clean? Even the Romans on whom the Holy Spirit fell as Peter was speaking were pronounced "cleansed" by the Spirit to Peter, in his vision on the housetop. If

God already considers them cleansed, and even clean enough to be containers for his Eternal Spirit, (and we know God does not indwell an unclean vessel), why would we then lay something else on them to further perfect themselves?

The whole idea is abhorrent! It is quite contrary to the whole nature and spirit of the Good News. This gospel, or "good news," is most fully appreciated in the present moment reality of the kingdom of heaven which has grown up in us, where we realize that our entire personhood has been taken into the depths of the Godhead, where nothing unclean can even approach, much less take up an abode there.

### **Tracing the Steps to Understanding**

The spirit/soul issue didn't come up much in my beginning days in Christ. I know it was mentioned in the charismatic church but I don't remember it being in the forefront of my consciousness. Though I do remember there was a whiff of curiosity about it, because I had seen in the pastor's office, Watchman Nee's, 'The Spiritual Man,' and I think that's where Nee expounds somewhat on that spirit, soul and body. So I WAS interested, but it was not the soul/spirit issue that intrigued me as I remember, but rather "becoming the spiritual man." It was a moot point anyway, since I never got to read it, and haven't until this day, other than excerpts.

My first real "teaching" on the subject was from Norman Grubb. Anyone of the myriads who have read his books should be familiar with it. Norman had many influences, though he consistently said Jacob Boehme and William Law were his main lights after the Bible, but there was also Kierkegaard, many of the mystics, the classical Christian writers of the 19th and early 20th centuries, and a few odd ones which are surprising.

What I think Norman did with all that stuff, rather than focusing on any one of those influences particularly, and putting all his sharings in the strict interpretations of their particular "doctrine," was to filter a lot of that stuff down to a great simplicity. The simplicity of "what works." With that in mind, here is NPG's (Norman P. Grubb) model of spirit, soul and body.

Spirit is love (or heart or desire), will (spirit will), and knowing (inner consciousness, inner mind). Soul is emotion or feelings, and rational mind or intellect. (We explore these things in a deeper way further on down.)

We don't need to define "body," really, since it is obvious, but it is important to know that the "soul" (speaking in NPG's model) is "tied" to the body and its functions and needs especially.

There is another common model of spirit, soul and body in evangelical churches, and I call it the Nee model. Though I've never read it from Nee myself, others have explained it to me. It seems the main difference, and maybe it is not a difference, is that the Nee model puts some of those faculties NPG described as spirit, in soul.

The first time I encountered that (the Lord likes throwing some curve balls my way sometimes), was at a brother's house in Louisiana. We were holding a little session, and one of the people there started talking about his different "wills," a "spirit" will and a "soul" will, that one must work to align, etc. In a sense I was not really prepared for that encounter, because had I begun to answer him on that level, I had no ammunition really, except, "Norman said it." He was speaking out of Nee's model, and told us that he was. So it would have ended up with a little battle between, "what my 'teacher' says," vs. "what your 'teacher' says."

And before we might approach a solution to this dilemma, there are also the added scripture terms, "outer man" and "inner man," as well as, "natural man" and "spiritual man." It can be quite confusing! And there is simply no set of scriptures that clearly explains all these things. There is validity in the Nee model, and validity in the NPG model. How do we reconcile these things?

And that is really the beauty of it! One does NOT have to figure it out! It is completely "livable" even without a deep understanding of it. Don't get me wrong, knowledge and understanding are much to be desired! And wisdom even more!

Because of that, I am going to champion NPG's model because of its simplicity, and ultimately reject the Nee model, mainly because it ends up being dualistic, and the fact that nearly everyone I've ever met who has been "taken" by that model, maintains some sort of separate personhood. Some little "reserve" of personal responsibility, always on the guard to "do its part." (Dead people cannot do any of that.) That is the reason I say the Nee model ends up being dualistic, is because of the tendency to turn the "soul man" into another person, instead of what it is, the servant of spirit. In fact, I do not really believe in the "soul" man at all, only the "spirit" man.

But that flies in the face of my everyday life, doesn't it? All day long I am mostly taken up with things having to do with "soul life," e.g., eating, drinking, thinking, health, work, finances, marriage, kids, car repair, etc. Isn't that all in the "soul realm?"

Yes and no. Yes, it is all "soul" stuff. And yes, there is a mental process and a decision making faculty which acts on that level. It is not about deciding eternal things, but things like where we will park or what we will wear. It has been called a "world consciousness," not necessarily meaning it to be a bad thing, but simply the "consciousness" that we must have in and of this world if we are going to live in it. Norman called it a "self-consciousness," not meaning it as a negative term, but just simply what we are saddled with in this life. We will never get out of it, nor are we to expect to, because we could not relate to this world or the people within it, if we did not live in it ourselves. We're just not "of it" anymore.

The "no" part, is that it does not originate in soul. Nothing does. **It is vital to see this!** "Soul" is not its own master, nor is it a source of anything. Any "activity" in the soul is stimulated by spirit. The "I" that speaks when we are in our "self" or "world" consciousness, is the same "I" that speaks when we speak the things of God by the Spirit of God – Christ as "I."

Adam became self-aware, i.e., a "living soul," when God breathed His breath into him. And that is where we have the sure source of our understanding. "Soul" consciousness is an outworking of spirit reality, not the other way around. Soul did not begin to know itself and then entered into spirit. Spirit entered into the "man" God made, and he then became "a living soul."

Now right there is spiritual "proof" for the whole outworking of God and His processes. When spirit moves in, self-consciousness (which we can loosely call "soul"), begins. Spirit is the source of soul. And it is always that way!

When we were the kidnapped children of the false one, we did "his lusts." Where was it expressed? In soul, in tangibility, in feelings, thoughts, in physicality. Soul expressed spirit, in our former case, the "spirit of error."

Same soul. Same faculties. Which spiritual source? Who or what "controls" the soul?

## **The Definitions**

### **Spirit Is Love:**

God is love. What is love? Paul describes God's love, that it seeks not its own, does not envy, does not judge, etc., but those are attributes, not the love itself. What, exactly, is love?

***"For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God"*** (Deut. 4:24).

Passions burn the hottest, when they are the strong desires to have someone else fully as your own and be one with them, whether we are speaking sexually or more metaphorically – do they not?

There is something in the heart of God that is a FIRE!

Every time I think about it, I marvel and wonder that this earth, this "solid planet" we live on, is at its center a rolling mass of magma burning with the intensity of the sun inside the inner belly of this planet. Yes, there is the light of the Sun coming from 93 million miles away with the perfect sunlight effects to make our world come alive. Besides making our crops grow, the Sun also stirs up the winds and the sea, creating all our surface weather. But below us is also what is almost an "eternal" fire, that is daily issuing itself out into the surface world, that also daily affects our atmosphere, weather, and many other things. It is also creating new land everyday, as we can see with certain volcanic islands, which grow day by day before our eyes!

All of this, whether in the earth below, or from the Sun above, starts with FIRE! Even we ourselves, in the physical, have an inner "fire." Human beings are consistent within a degree or two of a constant inner fire, inner temperature, regardless of outer conditions. 98.6 F is "normal," and that is usually my operating temp. Whether it is 95 or 35 outside, inside I am 98.6, if I am functioning properly.

But the moment the body dies, the heat begins to drain out of it, until it reaches room temperature, like everything else. No more life, no more inner fire, and what had been a living organism while there was a Life inside it, begins to putrefy. No fire, no life. No life, no fire.

The fire must have something to fuel it to keep it going, and even to temper it so that it does not consume everything. Which way will it go?

God is love, God is fire, because fire comes from love and love generates fire. Our God is a "consuming fire" and it is said his angels, his ministers, are "**flames of fire**" (Hebr. 1:7), and man's spirit is fire – "**The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord ....**"

Love cannot be "love" except there be an object to love. Love does not simply exist in an uncaring mystical bliss recognizing nothing except itself. Love is moving; love is dynamic; love has to reach out; love has to reproduce itself; keep itself alive by re-begetting itself in an ever expanding effluence of desire. Love and desire cannot be taken from each other. That is the first attribute of love – it is a desire to go out and find the object of its affection. It is a drive – love must love, desire must desire.

Up until now I have been treating "love" and "desire" in a neutral fashion, ascribing to them neither good nor evil. Because this love-fire that has to reach out and find the object of its affection and possess it, can either be in a "for you" love-desire, or a "for me" love-desire.

This fire is the source of the glories and unbounded blessings of heaven, just like giant turbines turning generating electricity (by friction – heat, fire) are what make our world possible. But turned around into self-glorification, that same fire becomes in us the fires of wrath. It is like taking the energy of the fire into a nuclear meltdown consuming everything around it to feed its fire, rather than generating gentle light and precious sounds and indescribable colors, that come from the right use of fire. The fire-source is the power-source!

That is the origin of evil in the universe, when Lucifer sought the power source for himself and turned that love-fire in on himself in self-worship, and claimed equality with God – "**I will be like the Most High,**" and even in that fire to ascend higher than God, "**I will ascend higher than the stars of God**" (Isa. 14:12-14).

That same fire that is the love-fuel to the manifold blessings coming through Father, Son and Holy Spirit, producing light and gentleness and color and warmth and nurture, turns into wrath in everyone who seeks to save himself (in a denial of God), for the purpose that they might be divested of that wrath while still in this life.

This is what "God's wrath" is. It is not God getting really mad at everybody up in heaven from His Throne. God does not live in wrath. He only lives in love. He does not see evil. William Law called God the "eternal will to all goodness." There is nothing "wrathful" about God!

Yet there is wrath, and it has its origin in God because it is taking the created "fire," which is meant to be a source of power, beneficence and drive as an expression of the "other love" of God, and turning it inward in self-deification and self-elevation, and that produces the fire's "negative" effects, defined by Boehme and Law as, "pride, covetousness, envy and wrath."

That kingdom eternally consists of the pride of self-sufficient self (the most horrible monster that ever lived on earth), covetousness (wanting what others have), envy (being mad that they have it and you don't), and finally hatred, rage, anger or wrath, which produces violence of spirit, soul and body. No one is locked there while still in the body, and may hear the Lord's Word at any time and turn the other way, toward the Light, and we see those the Lord gives us in this way.

We see the Father drawing them. This is an almost opposite aspect of this love in regards to what we wrote above. As I have said, love goes out. But there is also a drawing in, because one goes with the other. The Father's desire goes out to produce the eternal birth of the Eternal Son, Who does all the Father's will. Speaking through David, the Father has eternally said to the Son, **"This Day have I begotten Thee!"** (Psalm 2:7c).

The Father sends the Son out as Jesus of Nazareth, Who because of His overcoming, was given the eternal titles of the Lord Jesus Christ, Messiah, Wonderful, Counselor, Prince of Peace, and many more titles, Whose kingdom shall have no end. When the Lord on High became the Son of Man, the Father's longing for the Son in the full consummation of His Victory, the final triumph of Love over death, filtered through the Son, Who being lifted up caused all men to be drawn toward Him by the Father. Through the Son's Cross, the Father's drawing-in exploded throughout the whole world, permeating every valley and plain, coating every hillside and every other place on, in or above the earth, and revealed the tension that has been felt in the universe from an ancient past. Paul told us the whole creation groans and travails, awaiting the manifestation of the sons of God! Through the Son the Father draws all men to Himself, promising to all, **"Whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved."**

This drawing of the Father is still prevalent in the world today. As each of us who believe are the Son in expression, even so through us the Father's drawing-in touches the world around us. Of course the Father's "drawing-in" is not the same as I have described elsewhere as a "black hole." The only effect the Father's drawing has on us, is to get us into the Son, that we in Christ might also be Sons of the Father. To be drawn in by God is not in a sick possessive way, but in a love-bond in which each desires the other and neither seeks to be set free, but to remain in oneness.

Just as Jesus began gleaning from the fields already in harvest and exhorted us to do the same, the Father has planted new fields and draws new shoots and plants out of the ground into Himself. It is the Son Who is the object of His Desire, and through the Son we are also the objects of the Father's desire, and His desire toward us is nothing but grace upon grace, and love upon love! Everywhere we go those little plants of the Father will appear in our path, and the Light of the Son will bring them into full birth and maturity!

### **Spirit Is Knowing:**

I think I stand on solid ground when I put all the important stuff, as Norman did, in spirit. God is spirit. Never once that I am aware of, is it said, "God is soul." God says His name is, **"I AM THAT I AM."** So "I AM" is Spirit. God is "I AM," inclusive of all the other derived, little "i am's," (us) and that is spirit. **"He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit."** He is **"father of spirits,"** as it says in Hebrews, and my favorite, **"The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly"** (Prov. 20:27). Isn't that verse something? Great meaning there! This

"I AM" is also, the ultimate of "knowing." I can say (speaking as if God is speaking), "I AM THAT I AM" because I am aware and KNOW that I AM. I am here. I exist. I am all there is, there is none beside Me.

This same inner knowing that is the heart of God, is also in our deepest center as well. Norman used to always say, "*all of life is inner consciousness.*" It took me a long time to grow into understanding that. We are what we are on the outside, which is perceptible to us, because of who we are on the inside, which may or may not be perceptible to us. That's what he meant by inner consciousness.

If we are children of light and therefore walk in light coming out of light, we radiate that light outward, whether we know it or not, and usually we do not, because the light does not radiate for us, but out to others. We cannot even see our own form, but only images in mirrors or photographs. The fact that our faces look "out," and our eyes see "out," is clear proof that we are not to be about ourselves in this life. Everything is geared to this "going out."

But the kingdom of darkness is exactly the opposite. If the light in us is "darkness" (Matt. 6:23), then instead of radiating light outward to bless others, the "light" in us which is darkness seeks to draw everything into itself to magnify itself, like a spiritual "black hole," because it lets out no light, since there is no light.

This faculty of spirit, inner consciousness or "knowing," is the ultimate grace, because it is here that the consummation of all things occurs. **"To know thee, and Jesus Christ whom Thou sent"** (John 17:3). Everything originates here, in this knowing; everything reunites here, in this one revelation in its total completion.

**"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure"** (1 John 3:2,3).

What an incredible statement of our salvation! It has struck me with its totality from my earliest days of reading scripture. To see Him as He is, causes us to be the exact same image of God! To repeat – To see Him as He is, causes us to be the exact same image of God!

In my "right-now" existence, seeing Him as He is, is that which the Spirit works outward out of our inner lives, in the continued love-drive of the Father. To know Him, to see Him, in truth and grace, is essentially to "BE" Him, in our human expression, without any separation whatsoever. That's an unpopular stand. Always gets you crucified!

It is this knowing, this consciousness, that is the "mixed-with" knowing as stated in Genesis, **"Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived, and brought forth Cain"** (Gen 4:1).

From the beginning, sexual union pointed to spiritual union. The word "know" in scripture often means one or the other or both.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:30, **"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh."** Body and soul to body and soul, knit together as one. What one is, the other is united to and visa versa, because of the sexual union. That is why sex is never "casual." We become "one" with our partner, taking into ourselves spiritually everything the partner is. He's not kidding!

Of the spirit it is spirit to spirit, just as in the flesh it is flesh to flesh. 1 Corinthians 6:16-17 – **"What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he,**

***shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit."***

Is it not interesting, that he chose to state the truth of our inner oneness with Christ, using an illicit sexual union to illustrate the true spirit union? Whether he was aware of it or not, by the Spirit Paul is making a solid point here, underlining how sexual oneness in the flesh perfectly illustrates spirit oneness. In Christ we are one spirit with Him, which is an inner union of the Spirit of God with our human spirit. The outcome of the union of God's spirit with our spirit, is the birth of a new person, the "new man" of the Spirit. Two have been made one, and the "new man" is the child born of the union.

But it also illustrates our other point we raise so often, that when we were slaves to sin in our former lives, we were, in effect, lying with a harlot, and one with the harlot and sharing all that she ever was in harlotry. In our case, our lifelong harlot before we met Christ, was the devil. That's not popular to say, either.

People resist the notion that Sin is a person and that we have lived by that person obeying his self-for-self directives our whole life before Christ. It is actually very good news that this is the case, though most people see it as threatening to them when they first hear it. The reason why it is good news, is that we have a solution! Before, when we believed we had a "sinful nature" that we have to fight every day, we were stuck. You can't do anything about a "nature." According to the doctrine of most Christian churches in our time, we're stuck with this nature til death, and we will never master it, giving rise to that oft-heard phrase, "I sin every day," like it is something to be proud of.

But that is why it is SO liberating to see that we have operated like that in our past, because WE CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT! Or to put it better, something has already been done about it! The death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ has done it. We can't do anything about a nature, but through the Cross we can know that the real culprit, instead of some imaginary "sin nature" that has a hopeless grip on us, was the devil in us running our show, and in the Cross of Jesus Christ He is cast out of us forever! He was the irritant; he was the mocker; he was the source of our self-for-self consciousness – and now he is gone from us forever! **THAT** is GOOD NEWS!

### **Spirit Is Will:**

Finally, God being Spirit, God is "will," or (speaking from the crudity of human understanding), God is "Spirit choice."

It is this faculty that in every spirit being, turns it this way or that. It is the faculty that decides between "me for you," or "you for me."

While the "will of God" may be mentioned many many times in scripture, there is one overall total-truth scripture that is raised above all other words or phrases, by which we may measure everything else in scripture and in daily life.

It is this statement in Ephesians 1:11 – **"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."**

.....  
 We say God is an "other-lover." Did God "will Himself" to always be an other-lover? We are not able to determine a "moment" when God made a "choice" about Himself, though there are multitudes of Biblical moments when God expresses "will" regarding this world and the people in it. So we have to speak of God in some sense as if He is human, because it is only in this sense are we able to have any understanding.

It is too much to go into a full explanation at this moment, but let me just interject here, that "choice," or even "will," implies alternatives and limitations. The alternatives are obvious, either we

choose this or we choose that. But what is not so clear, is that in making a choice between alternatives, this or that, I place myself in a limitation because I chose "this," and not "that." Again marriage is a perfect example. Before I was married, I was not "limited" to only my wife. In that sense, I was "free." But in taking someone in particular to be my spouse, I have willingly limited my freedom in order to keep my marriage vow, to "keep only unto her." I have unlimited freedom within the "borders" of my marriage, but there are borders.

So in a way we cannot possibly understand or grasp even a little bit, God has forever "chosen" to be "other love." The greatest example of this we see in Revelation, where we see in the center of God, in the Throne, there is eternally a **"lamb as it had been slain"** (Rev 5:6).

What kind of God is this? A slain lamb in the midst of the Throne? What it is telling us, is the "attitude" of God, the attitude that simply says, "I will die for you." I think it quite a telling thing that this little helpless lamb sits in the throne, instead of a throng of great warriors, who have won the day by slaughtering thousands, or a great conqueror, who is able to subjugate whole races of people to him. No, none of that, just a weak little helpless lamb bleating in Heaven, and that is the **Mighty Power of God!**

Scripture says God "cannot lie," even though we know God can do all things. Why can He not lie? If God is truly God, and there is no one who preceded Him, then it follows (again in the crudity of human understanding), that He is "self-determined" to be Who He is. In other words, somehow, some way, God eternally "decided" that He would not be a self-lover, a liar, but an other-lover, a truth-speaker! And also that the ultimate expression of Himself would be an embodiment of that other-love, through the One Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the whole family of eternal sons is raised up. That is the reason it says that, "*God cannot lie.*" It is part of His own self-limitation to be for eternity the "*will to all goodness.*"

Now, in the same way these things operate in God in the Spirit, they operate exactly the same in us in the Spirit.

In our innermost being, these same properties I have crudely described "about" God, are working the same way in us. We live and operate in our inner "knowing," whether we are aware of it or not.

We are driven by the love-fire of God, whether we know it or not. It is our fire, too! (Because we are His!).

And finally we live in a union of wills, Spirit-to-spirit will. Union, more than anything else, implies only one will, one determination, one heart and mind. To say we are in union with Christ and then to turn around and say for whatever reason, "I do not will what God wills," is a total contradiction. Union of persons means union of wills. There is no union nor oneness where there is a separate will.

**"Not my will, but thine be done."** That's the verse everybody uses to "prove" we have a separate will from God and have to work to align it or to be on guard against it. But that is not what the verse says. Jesus makes no effort to "align" His will with God's. He simply rejected a "my" will as any sort of viable alternative. There is only One Will, the will of the Father in heaven. When we are in His Kingdom, just like we would in any kingdom, we live according to the will of the king. In a system like that, there is only one will, the king's will.

And that is a little parable about our living now in the kingdom of heaven (though we do not yet see it fully, even though it is already in our midst). Jesus was not struggling against what "He" wanted to do, as opposed to what God wanted Him to do. When did Jesus – ever – say He did any other will except His Father's? That was the only true inner will He recognized. This separate appearing 'human will,' the "will" that wanted to get out of what was coming, was not really Him. He recognized only the Father's will as valid, and the struggle in the garden against great temptation, was in getting that straight there just before just before the Temple guards came to arrest Him. He had

rejected forever a "My will."

### **What then of the soul?**

As I said above, soul is not its own boss. It is where Spirit-expression is brought into temporal visibility. It has no life of its own, and is completely and totally driven and moved by spirit, either spirit expressing from inside ourselves, or spirit expressed through others that first touches us on our soul level.

Soul is part of the house where Christ lives and manifests Himself. Hebrews says we are His house (Hebr. 3:6), and that means He owns the whole of this house He has come to live in, and the running of this house we can leave to Him and to the servants appointed to help Him. Soul has all kinds of expressions, emotions, reasonings, hurts, depressions, joyfulness – a whole host of stuff! And sometimes it all seems to be running amok!

We are not fully free until we realize this soulish part of us is not wayward, does not stick out of Christ in us, as if it is outside the house we are that He lives in, nor is it left on its own to flail about and destroy itself. No, now that He has moved in, it is Christ's soul now! It had been the devil's soul, with all the same attributes and faculties, but used wrongly to express self-for-self. Now it is Christ's soul, used rightly to express self-for-others. It cannot be otherwise, because **"our conversation is in heaven"** (Phil. 3:20). James asks can sweet and bitter water come from the same fountain, and of course the answer is no. We are the sweet water, and once His, we cannot help but be it, the "savor of Life," in them that believe! (2 Cor. 2:15,16).

He makes us WHOLE — new creations! In the new creation the "soul and body" are just as much "living and moving and having their being in God" as all the rest of the universe, and just as much serve Him in newness and resurrection as we do in Spirit. As it says in Romans 6, our human selves are now "instruments" of righteousness — in other words, "tools" to use for the Spirit's purposes.

They are twofold — our window on the world which goes both ways. Soul and body are where we are touched with the infirmities, tensions and weakness of this world, as well as portals of its pleasures and joys. And they are also the expression of the Spirit TO the world. In other words, soul and body are the world coming TO us, to get our attention, to get us into inner faith, and then also soul and body are US going OUT to the world. In each case they are the servants of the Spirit of who I AM. I speak of them as if they are separate "parts" of me, but they are really just "me." I AM my soul and body as much as I AM my spirit. This is where the Spirit makes the parts into a whole for us.

Which brings me back finally to my freeway parable.

Bottom line, I know a lot about "soul," and a lot about "spirit," and that is all well and good. But I have to know how it "works," so I can work it! In Norman's model mentioned above, soul being mostly involved in temporal things and reacting temporally, the point of it was not so much to make solid ironclad definitions of these things, but to know the difference first of all between eternal and temporal, and to give us a little bit of knowledge about what these things are and how they work, and finally to bring us into a simplicity of **"the Father that dwells within Me, He does the works"** (John 14:10).

Earlier I mentioned the chaos of the freeways around big cities, in my case, Atlanta. And then I said that even though it looked like there was enough danger for 1000+ accidents or fatalities a day, still most people make it through every day, month by month and year by year, despite the chaos and the danger.

That's what "soul" life is like. It is scattered, chaotic (in emotional or intellectual highs and lows), sometimes seemingly self-opposing, and very often looks "wrong" by its reactions or consternations.

This is where EVERYBODY cracks up, where soul (reactions, feelings, psychology, intellectual confusion, etc.) is often seen as the enemy within my very own being, since it seems such a wayward part of us, and we do not seem to have much of a tight control over it.

If we think that, and we are in Christ, we are incorrect. God came into the whole of us. It is His house, to do with as He pleases, including the soul. Don't touch it! It no longer belongs to us (actually never did), but to Him, and He determines its times and expressions, not the world, not the devil, not the circumstances of our lives. None of those things instigate us whatsoever, because we are not reactors to life, but instigators of life. Soul filters the world back into us by the Spirit, and soul filters Spirit-expression back out into the world.

Just like the unseen higher power at work on the Atlanta freeways that keeps it all going miraculously with little loss of life and property, we have that same unseen "higher power" within us, and the chaotic freeway that is soul life, becomes His perfect expression! Believing that, takes some cojones, because believe me, they will fight this tooth and nail. The separate "soul-man" in practice is nothing else but that ol' slewfoot's final hiding place, and he does not go down without a fight! But faith toward God and believing the Promises, sends him running! He can never defeat us, only make us think that he can, or has. Don't listen to him!

So, to conclude, we are Christ in our form, and because of that, that is what our "soul" expresses – the "divine nature" that is within us! The seeming chaos of soul, stressful though it may be, is the crazy highway leading to all our destinations in the Lord.

As regarding "control," let the reader answer!

Once again it is the Lord's doing, and marvelous in our eyes!

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