

Foundation of Union Life

by Norman Grubb

At each stage of the church's history, certain facets of eternal truth have to be re-emphasized, fresh pearls of great price dug out of the eternal Word and focused by the Spirit. And I think what God has made as a revelation to us is especially for our generation. We have passed through the era of the New Testament church, to the era of the authority of Scripture, and now into the era of the Spirit from the external to the internal, from the objective to the subjective.

In this book, we are seeking to combine several strong emphases, which if not new, are freshly underlined: inner knowing, the liberated life, the regained self, the value of temptation, "third-level" living, the one-power insight, "word of faith" praying, the right use of the affections, and the way of the intercessor. But behind all these is the one basic Bible revelation, which lies at the root of all the others, and which has not been taught and made plain in the teachings of the churches, theologians or Bible colleges; and it is this upon which our reality—our Total Truth—is built. That revelation is that man does not have a nature. A pastor recently said to me in quite a scandalized voice, "Do you mean you are saying something which was not taught by the Early Fathers, nor by Luther, nor right up to our present day? You can't expect me to accept that, can you?" "Well;" I said, "I don't know about that, but we can only give what we find in God's Word."

And what we find is that we humans have got altogether on to the wrong foot by our erroneous belief that, as humans, we have a "human nature" by which we function. I find the truth of God's Word to be that we humans have *no nature*.

By the word "nature," I do not mean our normal physical and mental faculties and appetites — not our biological nature, if you like. By "nature" I mean the kind of spirit which motivates man and is *expressed* by his soul-body faculties. We humans are something like personified computers. A computer can do a lot of marvellous things, but it can only operate under the instruction of its programmer. But who is our programmer?

In the Scriptures, all the words used about us, the human family, are metaphors, not of agent, but of agency. I find us called "vessels" (2 Cor. 4:7, etc.), and that was the Bible illustration the Holy Spirit first used to reveal to me that I did not "become something" (have an improved nature), but contained Someone (Col. 3:11). I was only the vessel to contain Him, the All — just as the cup is not the coffee, nor the coffee the cup, but a cup is necessary to make the coffee available. It is not the nature of the cup that matters, but of the coffee. I further saw (Rom. 9:22-23) that our human vessels (selves) could contain either one of two liquids: that which produces wrath, that which produces mercy — the one being Satan, the other Christ.

We are called branches of a vine (John 15); but the branch is not the nature. It is the vine which reproduces itself by the branches; branches have no nature. Jesus said He is the "true vine," which implies there is a false vine — Satan.

We are also called temples, which we believers know means our bodies. In Old Testament days the temple was a tabernacle or holy building. But the temple was not there to display itself as if its nature mattered. It was to contain the presence of the deity who manifested His glory, the Shekinah glory, through the temple. The Bible says we can be a temple containing an idol (1 Cor. 8:10), or the temple of the living God (2 Cor. 6:16). Once again, we contain either Satan or God.

Then in Romans 6:16-23, Paul calls all humans “slaves” (the correct translation of the King James’ “servants”) — either slaves to Owner Sin or to Owner Righteousness, to Satan or to Christ. And a slave has no individuality of his own, but lives to do his owner’s will

Even in marriage, Paul speaks metaphorically of the wife as reproducing the seed and children of the husband. In Romans 7 he says that we were married to Mr. Sin (Satan), reproducing “the motions of sin,” but now are married to Christ, bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit. So we either reproduce the nature of Satan or the nature of Christ as our offspring.

For me it all came into focus when I saw that we humans were created in God’s likeness, to receive into us, by analogy, the fruit of one of two trees — the tree of life, or the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The record says that if our first parents had eaten of the tree of life, they would have received eternal life (Gen. 3:22). But we know that eternal life is a Person, the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. So if eating the right fruit would have symbolized having Christ within us (as it does in John 6:56), then eating the wrong fruit symbolized Satan entering and living his life in us.

Gathering all of these truths together, we can see that we humans are on earth to contain and express, not ourselves, but solely the nature of the deity in us. We are the computer related to the Programmer, the body related to the Head. At the fall, we started with the false deity in us — “*the god of this world.*” Jesus specifically said that we humans express the nature of our father He said that to the opposing Pharisees, and minced no words (John. 8:38, 44). “*You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do.*” That really struck me. We humans always thought we followed our own lusts. Not so! We are reproducing all the self-centered desires of our father, living his own nature and quality of life by us. That was a big surprise and revelation! And the same is indicated in John’s statement about Cain murdering Abel: Satan was the murderer by Cain (1 John. 3:12).

This leads us to the great delusion (described in Romans 7) which causes all our vain strugglings with ourselves, as though we were independent and self-reliant. This is the lying deceit of Satan at the fall. He claimed independence from God (of course, he deceives himself, because he is forever God’s servant), and then infected us with that same deceit, as if we were independent! Finally, the light dawns that we never were independent, struggling selves under the law (which summoned us to do better), but were expressors of the nature of Satan. Now in Christ’s death-resurrection process we enter by faith into the fact that we are solely expressors of Christ, who has replaced Satan as the indwelling deity. Only when we recognize this do we find the key to true self-liberty and self-restoration. There never has been a true “human nature,” still less two natures, but only Satan’s nature expressed by us as in Ephesians 2:2-3, and now Christ’s as in 2 Peter 1:4.

Of course, in this book we develop this in full detail from its beginnings and on through God’s way of merciful exposure through the law, then on to the final exposure of our deluded self in Romans 7, and right into the liberation and replacement of Romans 8. All of the various liberated and all-sufficient developments in our lives, which I mentioned previously, flow from this established foundation of the replaced life. This, then, is the basis of our infinite supply.