



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume 27
Issue 653

An Exposé of the “Two Natures” Teaching

Section 1

Sin in Act and in Fact

Part 2 of 2

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

For Sin shall not be mastering you (6:14).

his slave you are ... whether of Sin for death, or Obedience for righteousness (6:16).

you were Sin's slaves (6:17).

Now, being freed from Sin (6:18).

when you were slaves of Sin (6:20).

Yet now, being freed from Sin (6:22).

For the ration of Sin is death (6:23).

that the law is sin? (7:7).

apart from law, Sin is dead (7:8).

Sin, getting an incentive through the precept apart from law, Sin is dead (7:8, 11).

yet at the coming of the precept, Sin revives (8:9).

Sin, that it may appear Sin ... that Sin, through the precept ... an inordinate sinner (7:13).

I am carnal, having been disposed of by sin (7:14).



Yet now it is no longer I who am effecting it, but Sin, making its home in me (7:17).

Now if what I am not willing, this I am doing, it is no longer I who am effecting it, but Sin which is making its home in me (7:20).

leading me into captivity to the law of Sin which is in my members (7:23).

I myself, indeed, with the mind am slaving for God's law, yet with the flesh Sin's law (7:25).

the spirit's law of life in Christ Jesus frees you from the law of Sin and Death (8:2).

God sends His own Son in the likeness of sin's flesh and concerning sin (8:3).

Now if Christ is in you, the body, indeed, is dead because of sin (8:10).

Now everything which is not out or faith is sin (14:23).

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Now the sting of Death is sin, yet the power of sin is the law (I Corinthians 15:56).

For the One knowing no sin, He makes sin for our sakes that we should be becoming God's righteousness in Him (II Corinthians 5:21).

is Christ, consequently, a dispenser of sin? (Galatians 2:17).

But the Scripture locks up all together under sin (Galatians 3:22).

SIN FORCES MEN AGAINST THEIR INSTINCT, OR NATURE

These passages should be patiently pondered in order to perceive the true character of sin. It is never presented as an intrinsic part of man's nature. It parades as an imperious tyrant to whom man is enslaved against his nature. Note the expressions used. Both Jews and Greeks are *under sin* (Romans 3:9). Sin *reigns* (Romans 5:20; 6:12; 8:2). We were *slaves of Sin* (Romans 6:6; 7:16-17, 20, 23). Sin *mastered us* (Romans 6:14). With the aid of the law it makes a man go against his own will (7:17-18).

We have *died* to it (Romans 6:10-11), are freed from it (Romans 6:18-22; 8:2). *Not one of these things can possibly be true of our nature.*

Sin is essentially outside and alien to human nature.

Humanity is not essentially sinful but *subject* to sin.

Conscience is instinctive, but it is against sin. Man finds himself at the mercy of an overwhelming tide which he cannot stem, to which he yields, but which never alters the essential nature given him by God at his creation.

It is the spirit's law of life in Christ Jesus which frees us from the law of sin and death. The law of Sinai was impotent, because of human infirmity, not because of human nature. In the coming eon men of like nature as at present will be given power to fulfill it. We fulfill the righteous requirements of the law (not its literal enactments) because we have life. The vital force which God's spirit imparts to all who believe in Christ Jesus counteracts the weakness of sin.

The spirit which gave life to the dead Christ is making its home in us. The spirit that roused Christ from the dead vitalizes our mortal bodies. The members which would weakly fall into sin are given power to perform acts of righteousness.

GENERATION OR REGENERATION DOES NOT CHANGE THE NATURE

The importance of these disclosures will be apparent to everyone who has been exercised concerning the question of their own tendency to sin, or who has wandered in one of the many quagmires which this subject recalls. Our "sinful nature" has been the victim of all sorts of theological nostrums. Efforts have been made to suppress it or eradicate it entirely, though it never had any existence! There is no need to tamper with or eliminate our nature, for no change has taken place in it since it was given at creation. There is not a word in the divine record to show that it was radically altered by the entrance of sin. It may be devitalized, but it is not transformed.

Perhaps many who read these lines will be shocked by their rank "heresy" and will charge me with denying a variety of theological formulas which have taken the place of God's Word in the minds and hearts of His saints in these degenerate days. Some may say that this denies the doctrine of "total depravity." As no one knows precisely what that doctrine is, it would be difficult to determine our guilt. As it is not mentioned in the Scriptures, it is not worth considering. It is a sample of that bane of modern theology, a form of unsound words. I believe that all men are utterly unable to save themselves from the slavery of Sin, but that Christ is able. I refuse to make the word "depravity" a key word in this connection, because it is merely a cloak to cover the lack of clear and Scriptural thinking.

It may be helpful to tell how we came to clear up this question. Quite a few years ago I read some articles in a magazine called *Things to Come* on "the new nature," and "the old nature." They perplexed me, so I studied the word "nature" in my concordance. As a result I came to the conclusion that it was being used in an unscriptural way. I took the matter up later with my fellow editor, Vladimir Gelesnoff, and we agreed not to allow the word to be used in this way in the magazine. Since then it has been before me in





my studies and has led me to see that it has been the cause of much confusion. We commend this course to our readers, if they desire to enjoy a clear conception of the mind of God. Do away with all unscriptural expressions. Have a pattern of sound words. God honors it by giving sound thoughts.

Such phrases as “sinful nature,” “natural depravity,” etc., have had a distorting effect on the doctrine of human destiny. If it is human nature to sin, then mankind will need to be changed to something else if it is to be saved. This has led to the silly superstition that we will become “angels” in a mythical heaven. However, God is going to subject the earth and the whole universe to human beings, with “human natures,” headed by the great Man, Christ Jesus.

One of the greatest difficulties connected with the incarnation vanishes once we see that the mother of our Lord did not have a sinful “nature.” If she had, no amount of sophistry could convince the honest heart that she did not impart this “nature” to her Son. To be sure, a special miracle could have kept Him free from any taint, but we have no intimation that such a miracle was necessary. We have no reason to believe that Mary was free from sin, but the *power* of God is the effectual corrective of sin, so that her Offspring was holy, harmless and undefiled. All have sinned and are *wanting*, or lacking (Romans 3:23).

This simple statement shatters whole systems of theology, especially those held by the most earnest evangelicals. The figure of the new birth has been used to prop up the idea that man needs a new nature. Yet generation has never made any such change in fact. Why should it represent it in figure? Even resurrection does not change our human *nature*. Our bodies will be raised in *power*. They will be *vivified*. They will be *spiritual*, that is, dominated by the spirit rather than the soul, as at present. To be sure, we, who have a celestial destiny, will be changed. But the change is not in our nature.

SIN DOES NOT AFFECT NATURE

To sum up: it is utterly unscriptural and misleading to associate sin with a change in human nature. Sin came in through a single act, and no series of acts, or even a lifetime or a number of generations, can

change the nature of God’s creations. Sin destroys life and ends in death. A change in nature does not lead to dissolution. Hence it is that the same theology which gives man a sinful nature also endows him with eternal life in misery and sin. It denies the death-dealing effect of sin and substitutes for it life and a nature, not only miraculously given at the first, but miraculously sustained in order to suffer the infinitudes of torment. We do not care to give our opinion of a god who is so free with his miracles of damnation, when he could, with infinitely less effort, work one miracle of blessing. We do not care to inquire his object in such a course, because this is the way that madness lies – and this god is a mere myth of man’s perverted imagination.

How gloriously blessed it is to know our God, Who has given us an understanding, not only of His ways and His words, but of His heart! His nature is love. Love may thrust away its object for a time, but only that it may draw it back more closely. He suffers men to be estranged from Him in order that they may be reconciled.

Sin is not His tyrant but His slave. It crushes that He may cure. It kills that He may make alive. Its function is to show God’s creatures their utter dependence on His power. It gives them a wholesome horror of existence without Him. It will change them from His creatures to His friends. It will drive them into His bosom.¹

— A.E. Knoch.

Unsearchable Riches, Volume 17

The Problem of Evil

(also found on pages 73-86 of *The Problem of Evil*, see order form.)

(edited)

TOPICS:

Major: Human Nature; Sin; Tradition

Minor: Conscience; Religion

1. [Editor:] For more information about the creation of evil, Satan and the purpose of sin, see:

- *The Problem of Evil*, A.E. Knoch (1874-1965), see order form.
- *The “Fall” of Satan*, A.E. Knoch, [Bible Student’s Notebook #547](#);
- *The King of Tyre*, E.H. Clayton, [Bible Student’s Notebook #569](#);
- *Divine Lockup, Part 2: Sin*, Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., [Bible Student’s Notebook #588](#);
- *Did We Inherit Sin From Adam?*, Phillip R. Garrison, [Bible Student’s Notebook #431](#).



An Exposé of the “Two Natures” Teaching

Section 2 **The Human Heart**

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

The human heart has been so often confounded with the nature of mankind that there should be much profit in meditating on its meaning in the Word of God. Indeed, one who objected to the thought that human nature, or instinct, is not depraved, sent a long list of passages dealing with the human heart and its dire condition, none of which even touched the subject of human nature.

In the early chapters of Romans, where man's nature is out of line with sin (1:26) and in harmony with conscience and God's law (2:14), the heart is given an entirely different reputation. It is unintelligent, darkened (1:21), lustful (:24), hard and unrepentant (2:5). How can there be any greater contrast than this?

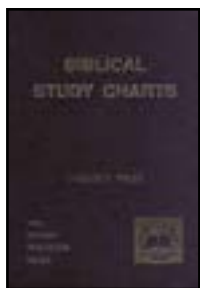
It is evident that the term “heart” is usually found in a figurative sense. It will help us to consider its literal usage first. It is the organ which propels the blood stream in living souls. Only those forms of life which have blood have a heart. Now the *soul* of the flesh (not the *life*) is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11).

So, as the soul is the seat of consciousness and sensation, only such forms of life as are consciously alive and able to sense their surroundings and move about have a heart. Even a very trifling interference with the flow of blood brings on vertigo and unconsciousness. The heart is the center and power of soul life. It is located deep within the framework of the body, invisible. Its ceaseless rhythm is not noticed by the casual eye. Though every act is dependent on it, it lies hidden, out of sight. The physical organ is seldom referred to in Scripture (II Samuel 18:14; II Kings 9:24), but it is the basis of its figurative usage.

In seeking its figurative force we are confronted with an unfortunate fact, if we may so speak. The scriptural import is largely at variance with popular usage in English. In the Scriptures the heart is *never* the seat of the affections or the feelings, though there may be some passages which, taken by themselves, might be so construed. Emotion, in Scripture, is connected with the viscera of the abdomen (Philippians 1:8). There is a secondary usage, however, which comes very close to the Scriptures. We speak of the entire personality as capable of being influenced or moved under this figure, as “He has a good heart,” or as it comes out in the adjective “hearty.”

JEHOVAH LOOKS AT THE HEART

Perhaps the most graphic illustration of this word is found in the choice of David, who was a man after God's own heart (I Samuel 13:14). Samuel the prophet was sent to Jesse to anoint one of his sons to be the king of Israel. When the eldest was considered, he seemed to Samuel to be just the one for such an exalted office, for he had a comely countenance and was of fitting stature for so high an honor. So Samuel said, “*Surely Jehovah's anointed is before Him!*” How-



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Look not on his countenance or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for it is not as man sees; for man looks at the aspect but Jehovah looks at the heart (16:7).

So seven sons of Jesse were seen by Samuel, but none of them had the heart to be the shepherd of Israel.

Not until all had been rejected did they call David. The character of his heart is hinted by his place and occupation. He was tending the sheep. That was the very work which Israel so sorely needed. Saul was their choice of a king. He was tall and stately, like Jesse's seven sons, but he did not shepherd his people. His heart was not right. It was set on himself. David's was on the sheep. David was fair to look upon, with beautiful eyes, but these were not his qualifications. His heart was devoted to doing the will of God. Beneath the external appearance, here was a man who relied on Jehovah and delighted to please Him. This was expressed in later life in such deeds as the slaying of Goliath, the sparing of Saul, the kindness to Mephibosheth, and especially in his desire to build the temple. God and His glory filled his heart and made it great.

The difference which now exists between superficial appearances and the heart is a product of sin. In the ideal state a man appears to be what he is. His looks do not belie his character. Such is the perverting

power of sin that the spiritual man pays scant attention to outward signs, for they seldom accord with inward realities. This explains why the heart is so often connected with evil and sin, or with its absence. The distinction between appearance and heart could not exist in ideal conditions.

Sin is not a superficial fault. It is not the outward veneer which has been scratched, but the very center and core of life's activities which has been affected. To carry out the figure already employed, it is not a skin disease merely, occasioned by contact with some poisonous shrub, but a vital degeneration of the heart, which vitiates the functions of every organ of man's internal economy.

One of the distressing features of civilization and polite society, to the spiritual man, is the great stress laid upon artificial deportment and manners. The heart must be hid behind a cloak of forms and phrases. It is a sin of good breeding never to expose one's real self but to sustain a superficial fiction which is supposed to cover and conceal the austerities of life. It is difficult to discover the heart, and it may be best to leave it covered as much as possible, in most cases; but, in the intercourse between saints, it is of the utmost necessity to drag aside the conventional coverings and deal with deep realities. While our fellowship is to be with all saints it is impossible to commune with those whose hearts are not right. We are to call upon the Lord with all who have a clean heart (II Timothy 2:22). ►

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TRUE FAITH IS OF THE HEART

Many a fruitless discussion of the varieties of faith, such as “saving faith” and “historical faith,” would have been profitable if considered in connection with the heart. There may be an apparent assent and conformity to a creed, or even membership in a religious organization, corresponding to the belief engendered by the signs done by our Lord. He did not trust such “faith” because He knew *what was in* humanity (John 2:23-25). It was not *heart* faith. Just so today there is a great dearth of that hearty faith which alone is “saving” and “effectual.” With the heart it is believed for righteousness (Romans 10:10). The frothy, showy, sentimental, sensational “evangelism” of our day stirs up a stormy emotionalism on the surface but seldom reaches the depths of positive conviction or grips the heart. Hence mountainous “results” disappear when the evangelistic tornado subsides.

Probably the most quoted passage on the subject of the human heart and its depravity is Jeremiah 17:9.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: Who can know it?

The last clause is usually omitted, for it does not fit in with the idea generally adduced from the words before it. Much has been said about the word “*deceitful*.” It has been defined as “*crooked*.” It is the verb of the name “Jacob.” The heart is a Jacob. Perhaps the word *tricky* would be as near as we can come to it.

It describes one who trips up another by the heel. The *Septuagint* renders it “*The heart is **deep**, beyond all.*”

JEHOVAH, HEART EXPLORER

As there is a close similarity between the Hebrew word “*deep*” and the one now in the text, it is possible that “*deep*” was the right reading when the *Septuagint* was translated. It leads very naturally to the question which follows: “*Who can know it?*”

The following phrase is a “*desperately wicked*” translation, for there is not the slightest suggestion of wickedness in the word itself or any of its contexts. I confess that I think that the human heart is desperately wicked. This translation proves it. Can there be a sin more

heinous than a deliberate change of the meaning of the Word of God, *even if the substitution is true*? God is not speaking of man’s wickedness here, but of his mortality and frailty. Job said that his wound was “*incurable*” – the same word, but it was not wicked, and it was cured. David’s infant child was very ill (II Samuel 12:15), but it certainly was not desperately wicked.

There are two things which make the human heart a problem no one can solve. It is liable to trip and it is too ill to be depended on. Who can know it? Only the Lord, as the very next verse affirm,

I, Jehovah, heart explorer.

We look upon the outside, but “the hidden human of the heart” is invisible, inscrutable, except to the eye of God. It is like overripe fruit. It may appear luscious without, but is rotten to the core within.

Perhaps the most impressive token of Christ’s divine character and mission was His ability to read the hearts of His hearers. His vision was like the modern X-ray. It could pierce all barriers. He looked right through all affectations and hypocrisy. He could see the very thoughts. Before His hearers had uttered their sentiments, He revealed them and gave His answer (Mark 2:8; Luke 24:38).

This, also, is the great prerogative of the written Word. It is,

living and active, and keener than any two-edged sword, and penetrating up to the parting of soul and spirit, as well as the articulations and marrow, and is a judge of the sentiments and thoughts of the heart. And there is not a creature which is not apparent before it. Now all is naked and bare to the eyes of Him to Whom we are accountable (Hebrews 4:12-13).

The truth intended to be conveyed by the unscriptural phrase “total depravity of human nature” is far better expressed by associating sin with the heart. This shows that it is not a superficial phenomenon, affecting only a part of life’s activities, but lies at the very source from which every vital action springs, and vitiates every act and thought. Corrupt the heart and the whole man is affected. Sin in the heart



permeates the entire being, so that there is no spot sound, no motion or imagination which is wholly right. There is a sense in which it is “total.” There is a sense in which it is “depraved.” However both of these thoughts are more concisely and correctly expressed when we associate sin with the heart, out of which are all the issues of life.

THE NEW HEART

If, instead of speaking of a “new nature,” we should speak of a “new heart” or a “new spirit,” we might not be dispensationally correct; but we would at least be within the realm of revelation.

The New Covenant that Jehovah has made with Israel consists in giving them a new heart and a new spirit. It is this which will keep them from sinning. What an utter contrast is this New Covenant with the Old! In that they had a part, but they are absolutely passive in the New. It is altogether of God.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers: and ye shall be My people, and I will be

your God (Ezekiel 36:26-28).

THE CLEAN HEART

Paul’s epistles begin with the dark, unintelligent (Romans 1:20), lustful (:24), hard and unrepentant (2:5) human heart but end with a clean heart (I Timothy 1:5; II Timothy 2:22). This is in full accord with Peter’s declaration at the counsel in Jerusalem, when he told the Circumcision that God had cleansed the hearts of the aliens by faith (Acts 15:9). God has given us the earnest of the spirit in our heart (II Corinthians 1:22). This it is which makes us sons of God (Galatians 4:6). Our nature has not been changed. Our heart is not new. It has been cleansed by the homing¹ of the holy spirit.

Indeed, the realities of heart faith, in the present economy of God’s grace, are in contrast to the superficial religious ritual of Israel. Were they circumcised? We have the real circumcision, which is of the heart (Romans 2:29; Colossians 2:11). Had they the dwelling place of God? Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:17). Had they a choir to praise Him in song? We give thanks to the accompaniment of the music of our hearts (Ephesians 5:19).

1. [Editor:] KJV: “dwell.” Greek: οἰκέω (oikeō):

– “to occupy a house that is, reside” (Strong’s G3611);
– “HOME: use as a constant residence” (Concordant Keyword Concordance, A.E. Knoch, page 148 – a part of the Concordant New Testament – hardcover (see order form)).



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by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

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The impartation of a new heart to Israel will make them a regenerate nation, fit channels for the earth's restoration in the day of Jehovah. All of this is in closest concord with the character of the blessings of that day. These will be soulish as well as spiritual. Just as their physical bodies will be blessed with perfect hearts to propel a perfect blood stream, so the figurative heart will impel them into experiences which will be a joy and satisfaction to their souls. Comfortable and delightful physical sensations are indicated by the "salvation of the soul" and the "new heart." With it they will be given a new spirit.

With us the emphasis is so strong on spirit that, in the resurrection, our bodies will no longer be soilish or soulish but spiritual. This does not mean that they will not be made of soil or that we will not have a Soul. Otherwise, the fact that our present bodies are soilish and soulish would prove that we had no spirit. The soul dominates these bodies; the spirit will rule our resurrection bodies. The glorious celestial habitation for which we wait will be material and will possess sensation, but it will be so suffused with the presence and power of the spirit that matter and sense will take a strictly subordinate place.

It is both superfluous and incongruous to speak of a celestial spiritual body as having a new heart. In that

supernal splendor, that which is within will shine forth in every perfection of form, of feature or of expression. There will be no "*hidden man of the heart*," as in these soulish bodies. The possibility of duplicity will not exist, and the phrase which implies the possibility of a discrepancy between the apparent and the real is unhappy and intrusive.

Mankind, since Adam, is corrupt to the very core. Sin has reached the very heart. In this life the believer should cleanse his heart by means of the Word of God. He is not given a new heart. That is for Israel in the coming millennium. If we wish to conform to the pattern of sound words (II Timothy 1:13), when we desire to describe the enormity of human sin or the "total depravity of man's nature," we will do so in terms of the heart, and will not refer it to his nature.

— *Unsearchable Riches*, Volume 17

The Problem of Evil

(also found on pages 87-94 of *The Problem of Evil*, see order form).

TOPICS:

Major: Human Nature; Sin; Tradition

Minor: Faith; Israel; New Covenant

Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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Scripture education in a semi-weekly format!

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
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- union in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6);
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