

Man in Christ

by F.B. Meyer

Christ is the ideal man, and through faith in Him, we can become the new man, conformed to His image and likeness.

Scripture: Romans 6:4, 1 Corinthians 15:45, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 2:15, Ephesians 3:16, Ephesians 4:13, Ephesians 4:22, Ephesians 4:24, Colossians 3:10

Topics: "Identity in Christ", "Transformation"

Description

F.B. Meyer emphasizes that Christ is the ideal man, embodying purity and beauty untouched by sin, and that through Him, humanity can be restored to its original glory. He explains that while Adam fell and brought sin into the world, Jesus, as the second man, offers a new life and identity to all who believe, creating a new humanity that transcends divisions. Meyer highlights the importance of the inner man, where the Holy Spirit dwells, and the need for believers to recognize and utilize their spiritual gifts for the growth of the Church. He contrasts the old man, characterized by sinful habits, with the new man, which reflects the character of Christ and is to be assumed by faith. Ultimately, Meyer calls for believers to put on the new man, allowing Christ's likeness to shine through them.

Transcript

CHRIST is the ideal man. Once, in the course of the ages, the plant of human nature seemed to bear a perfect flower of stainless purity and ineffable loveliness. The black touch of the world's sin could not befoul it. The storms that swept over it might strike it for a moment down to the black soil out of which it sprang, but could not bemire it. It reared itself in peerless beauty, and grows to-day fair and strong in the universe of God.

The man Christ Jesus was before the first man Adam, so far as the thought and purpose of God are concerned. When the great Potter took in hand the red clay to make a man, He made it in his own image, and after his likeness. And what could these be but the nature and lineaments of that blessed Son of his love who was his fellow--Himself? The Incarnation and Ascension were only possible on these conditions. How could the Son of God have become incarnate unless the nature He was to assume had already been made after the model of Himself? And how could our human nature be taken into the ineffable glory of the Throne, unless, in a sense, it had belonged there before the worlds were made?

But Adam fell from his original type. He shared morally in that aptness to deteriorate which runs through nature. And in his fall we all fell. All who are one with him by the bonds of natural relationship shared in

that sad act of disobedience and its results. How great that fall was may be judged when we consider the wizened babes, the wretched women, the blear-eyed, soddened victims of drink and sin which abound amid the most civilized and refined cities of the world, and compare them with the Man of Nazareth, that holy thing which was born of the virgin-mother.

But Jesus is more than type. He is the second Man, the life-giving spirit; and therefore capable of repeating Himself in myriads of souls--not in his Divine essence, but in his human beauty. This is the singular power of life, possessed in common by plant and animal--the marvellous gift of reproduction. Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image. And the second Man possesses the same glorious power, by which He is able to fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself.

"ONE NEW MAN." (Ephesians 2:15)

When this Epistle was written, the hatred of centuries had reached its climax. The Jew, able to trace his unbroken line of descent from Abraham, proud of the religious prerogatives of his race, magnifying his unique relationship to Jehovah, looked with scorn on the uncircumcised Gentiles around. They were Gentile dogs. He spat on the ground if they crossed his path.

As long as the Mosaic ritual was the prescribed method of approaching Jehovah, there was no way of removing this hostility. The Jew entrenched himself within its barriers, justifying his hatred by religious sanctions. The Gentile chafed and rebelled against its exactions. But our Saviour, in his flesh, and by his cross, broke down the middle wall of partition, and abolished the enmity even the law of commandments contained in ordinances. He fulfilled the law so perfectly, not for Himself, but for all, that it had no more to ask. Its claims were met and satisfied; and therefore the Jews could not insist on them, on the one hand, nor the Gentiles chafe beneath them on the other.

Moreover, by his death the Saviour has made an atonement and propitiation for men as men. Not for the Jew in one way, or the Gentile in another; but for all on the same terms. By one death, in one body on the cross, which is common to the whole world of men, and by his intercession, through which both have access to the one Father, He has brought to an end the divisions of ages.

But He has done more. In his resurrection, He is constituted the origin and head of a new race. The race of regenerate men! The race of his resurrection-life and power! The race of the new heavens and the new earth. All who believe in Him are born into that new humanity. It is the one new man, which is composed of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues.

THE INNER MAN. (Ephesians 3:16)

Beneath the play of our outward life, and beneath the workings of our busy brains, there lies a deeper self, which the apostle calls "the inner man." There is an objective and there is a subjective self. The former occupies itself with collecting impressions and thoughts from the world around, and in action or speech; but the latter, veiled from observation, muses, arranges its stores, carries on long trains of thought, holds fellowship with itself, and God, and the unseen. It is this part of our nature which perceives truth--not by trains of argument, but by the flash of intuitive perception--and which receives those throbbing pulsation's of Divine power that wait around us seeking for admission.

This inner man is in us all; but many of us live in the outer courts of our nature, occupied with the mere externals of our life and the world. We give these inner chambers over to neglect and dust; seldom entering them, and hardly cognizant of their existence, save when in hours of unusual solemnity they assert themselves and compel attention.

It is in this inner man that the Spirit finds his home and seat. This is the Holy See. Here He elaborates his purposes, formulates and issues his decrees, and stirs to heroic action. And when all its avenues are open to Him, He so infills with his power, and indwells with Divine energy, that the inner man is strengthened with might, according to the riches of his glory.

THE FULL-GROWN MAN. (Ephesians 4:13)

From the hands of the Ascended Saviour, gifts are distributed to his Church. He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers. But to every member of the Church, the weakest and obscurest, some special grace was given, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Every joint in the body has some function to perform to all the rest, and to the growth and perfectness of the whole.

But alas! too many of the saints are unaware of the possession of gift or gifts, or they leave them buried in a napkin in the earth, or they are out of joint, and so unable to do their specific work. The special function of the officers of the Church--the apostles, the prophets, the pastors--is to stir the saints to discover their gifts; and, if needs be, to put them into articulated union with the Lord, so that they may take up the work of ministering to the rest of the body.

This thought, which is somewhat obscured in the older version, is made abundantly clear in the Revised. "For the perfecting (the setting in joint) of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ"

As the piccolo may be missed out of a great orchestra; as each single joint is indispensable to the body's health and vigour; so each believer has a part to do, by thought or speech, by suffering or action, in building up the great mystical body of the Lord. Some vision of his beauty received and passed on--some deep sweet word, some trait caught from fellowship with Him and reflected from the pallid brow of sickness, some unselfish act of which the world knows nothing--such are the contributions that we make to the upbuilding of the body. We may seem to do nothing else than minister to the particles just against us, but this re-acts on the whole.

And presently--it may be nearer than we suppose--the body will have reached its full growth, will have attained to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, and be worthy of its Head. All the saints with Jesus shall make together a full-grown perfect man, which shall realize in completeness the Divine ideal.

THE OLD MAN. (Ephesians 4:22)

The old man is the aggregate of habits and methods of life, which marked us before conversion. The phrase describes the impression which we produced as men and women upon our fellows. What we were wont to be, and say, and do. That form of character and life which was ours before the great change operated through faith in Jesus.

It is called the old man, as if there were but one, because the habits and tastes, the thoughts and acts of men, before conversion, have much in common. There is not much to choose between them. It is one evil nature; one likeness to fallen Adam; one type of evil, though its forms are slightly modified in different temperaments and by special circumstances.

It is under the control of deceitful lusts. In other words, it is shaped by the passionate desires which have their origin in the strong natural tendencies of our being. These were given us by God to be the motive-forces of our nature, but not to rule. For when once they are permitted to usurp this position, corruption ensues, and the nature rots piecemeal before their insidious action --as the body of the leper beneath the living death that eats away his flesh. Ah, deceitful lusts! promising liberty, and happiness, and joy, but resembling the Syren sisters, whose upper form was fair, but whose lower extremities were foul; whilst whose sweet songs allured the unwary mariner only to ruin.

We must not defer this "putting off." The tense indicates the sudden resolve of the will, inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be no longer under the dominion of these terrible passions. Once and for ever let us divest ourselves of them; as the beggar his rags, or as Lazarus the cerements of death.

THE NEW MAN. (Ephesians 4:24)

This is the aggregate of blessed habits that mark the life of the converted the white robe of purity, the girdle of self-restraint, the silver of humility, the jewels of holy character. All through the Epistles we are bidden to don it. "Put on the armour of light." "Put on, as God's elect, a heart of compassion." "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ."

It is the new man, because the habits and character of the children of God are very similar. There is a family likeness common to all. It is after God, because it is created in his likeness. It is the fashion of God in human nature, perfectly exemplified once in Jesus Christ, and now waiting to be imparted by the Holy Ghost. It is righteous toward man. It is holy toward God. It is true, perfectly transparent and sincere. Put on this holy thing! Created in Jesus, and therefore not to be woven by human effort or spun by outward obedience to rites, but to be simply assumed.

Put it on by faith. Do not try to build up Christ-likeness by your repeated endeavours. Just assume it by faith. Believe it is yours. Reckon that it is so. Go out believing that Christ's likeness is on you, and his beauty clothing you as a beautiful robe; and men shall increasingly realize that it is not you but Christ. The beauty of the Lord will be upon you; and the life of Jesus will be manifest in your mortal body, both in life and death.

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