

The Sole Purpose of Creation

by Norman Grubb

God's sole purpose is to manifest His invisible Self in visible forms by His Son and sons, and we must experience opposites to become conscious of His nature and be established in it.

Scripture: Romans 7:17, Romans 8:9, Romans 8:18, 1 Corinthians 8:6, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 2:20, Colossians 1:26, James 1:14, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Divine Purpose", "Gods Nature"

Description

Norman Grubb preaches about the revelation that God is the foundation of all truth, emphasizing that the universe and all its inhabitants are dependent forms of God. He explains that suffering and evil in the world serve a love-purpose and are necessary for us to experience the glory that follows. Grubb delves into the purpose of manifesting God's invisible self through His sons, highlighting the divine-human brotherhood and the eternal destiny of believers to reveal God's nature in His universe.

Transcript

The basis of all I have written is the one and only foundation of all truth: that there is only one Person in the universe--God, "The All in all"--and that therefore the whole universe, things or people, is nothing but dependent, derivative forms of the "in all" of "God All in all."

When, therefore, we proceed on to find, by the Scriptures and personal revelation, that He is the Total Good, the Eternal Self-giver and Other-lover; then He is The All, whatever there is in the universe of the contrary (the suffering, evil, misused negative) has its perfect love-purpose, and we replace our first disturbed human reactions with the fixed, declared faith and praise that all such things are the shadow side of the sunlight, the sufferings which condition us to experience their opposite in glory.

The consummation of the revelation is that it always has been God's purpose to manifest His invisible Self in visible forms by His Son and sons. They would then be He in His divine nature expressed by His Son family; and by them He would fulfill all His eternal purposes of perfection. We are that family of foreordained sons in whom He fixedly reexpresses Himself in our human forms. This is the developing history of the human race, right up to its completion as the divine-human brotherhood, with His own Son as "the firstborn among many brethren." And by this completion, made actual in Him, we humans may now know who we really are, expressed in Paul's revelation of "the mystery" of Colossians 1:24-29 as "Christ in you, the hope of glory." We are all complete in Him, each fulfilling His love-purposes by and as us in our generation, and marvelously knowing our eternal destiny that, as we share with Him in the savior-hood

sufferings (Col. 1:24), we move on to share His glory as co-inheritors of His universe, and to His eternal purposes of Self-revelation by us in His universe.

With this understanding by the Scriptures and Spirit-revelation, we examine and re-examine all these "ways of God" by which we are "conformed to the image of His Son." We express their consummation in our Royal Priesthood, in union with our Eternal High Priest "passed into the heavens," and know how to live as "more than conquerors." As intercessors with Paul, we use with authority "the power of His resurrection" (Phil. 3:10-11) by calling into being, by faith, physical and material manifestations of that power. We take our share in the "fellowship of His sufferings" by being "always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." We participate in the reaping of the harvest ("so death works in us, but life in you"--2 Cor. 4:11-12), in the bringing of many sons unto glory (Heb. 2:10). This is being the completed self, of which Paul wrote as the final objective of his Colossians 1:24-29 ministry--"presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

The Law of Opposites: The Key to Consciousness

One fundamental law of the universe is that all things have their opposites. There can be no consciousness without opposites, and no means by which anything can be manifested except by the interaction of opposites--the one "swallowing" the other up in "rhythmic balanced interchange." Each positive has its negative as its necessary reverse. Light and dark, sweet and bitter, hard and soft, right through to the ultimate negative of the material realm in the positive and negative of electricity, and the electron and proton of the atom. This law of opposites takes its conscious form in us as persons.

A self can only know himself by his awareness of the two opposing forms of conscious self-expression--as a self-getter or a self-giver (self-for-self or self-for-others). We are confronted with this in the "One Person in the Universe": God Himself. It is said, "God cannot lie" (Tit. 1:2)--truth or lie being the two opposites a self must confront to be a conscious self.

In other words, that First Sole Self of the universe could have been a self for Himself, geared only to His own self-interest, which is what a liar is: and that is why from eternity He has been the opposite, the Trinity, in an other-love relationship to His only begotten Son; and thus, as it were (for we can only speak in human terms), there is a "death," a cross, in God, to what He can never be. He "dies" to being a lone self-for-self, and from eternity They are one, yet two, in the interchange of other-love; and the Third, the Spirit, is the Godhead reproducing Himself in the endless forms of love-creation, and at its summit, in created persons like Himself. That is why the Scriptures speak of God as a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29), and as light (1 John 1:5). A fire "dies to itself" in its consuming quality, and re-manifests itself as light, in its blessing quality. Fire: hell--Light: heaven.

Therefore, as persons in His image, we can only become conscious persons by being confronted with the opposites, and the swallowing up of the negative by the positive.

The History and Purpose of the Misused Negative

Thus, that top-most created being in the "heavenlies," Lucifer, had to be confronted with whether he would be fixed as "the Light-bearer," revealing not himself but God, or choose to be a light that solely lit itself for its own ends--that difference being a self-expressing self-for-self, or a self-expressing self-for-others.

And so here came into being in the heavenly realm a person with the opposite quality of nature to the Eternal One. So we read that there was "war in heaven," and the devil cast out to the earth in great wrath, knowing that his time is short. And with him, hosts of angels who have made that same choice.

Carry that down to our race of humans. We could not function as conscious humans until Adam and Eve had been confronted with the two trees in the garden, and had been stirred to conscious choice--first by the Creator's love-word that all was good and available for them except the one tree; and then Satan expressing the opposite form of self, and called "the god of this world" as exposer and, in that sense, originator of this opposite self.

God put Lucifer in the garden in the form of a serpent to confront our forefathers with the reality of the necessary opposites which would make them conscious of the use of appetite, sight and mind, for self-ends, in contradistinction to the Creator's other-self nature. The human race, destined as sons of God, had to experience the opposite son-ship of their "father the devil" and its opposite consequences on and in them.

By no other means (therefore it was planned and purposed by God), could His family of sons, destined to inherit and manage His universe, become established in His own fixed nature of self-giving love, except by experiencing to its depth the opposite death-hell nature of self-getting love. By no other way could they be fully conscious of the opposites which, as the basis of self-consciousness, first go to the bottom of the self-for-self and the "curses" of that way; and, when there is a way of exchange, become established in the opposite nature of the self-for-others, the self-giving way--and thus be "safe" to manage His universe without the self-destruction of our present world in its "nature of the wicked one." "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God: how unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out."

The Necessity and Value of Suffering Leads to Glory

In precisely the same way, our Last Adam, replacing the first as head of the eternal family of sons, could not be established as "the captain of our salvation" but by experiencing the primary "suffering" of a forty-day confrontation in the wilderness with the opposite "spirit of error," who had initially confronted Adam in the Garden. Only thus by Christ's rejection of the spirit of error could He be established in that "Spirit of Truth" Who had entered Him as a dove. So it is no light thing to become an established person--if it took Jesus forty days, without food and to the point of exhaustion, to settle the same three levels of temptation. He had to be within reach of the spirit of self-getting, and finally come to say, "Get thee behind Me," and thereby confirm Himself once and for all as expressor of that Love-Spirit of self-giving love. So it takes no less trials and temptations in order for us to become established as right persons, able to express that "divine nature" in our human persons, and to be "made the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21).

So we confront the eternal duality of the opposites, and their rightful interaction, and the swallowing up of the one by the other: "death is swallowed up by life" (2 Cor. 5:4). This is also the way we redeemed humans get settled in our right negative of the human self., In its proper relationship to the Divine Self, we have died in Christ to the misuses of the negative, which was Satan expressing his nature of self-for-self by us and producing all the chaos, diseases, and distresses of this misused world.

This gives us constant practice in recognizing all these misuses in our outer experiences (Which James 1:2-17 speaks of as "trials"), and turning them into their right use by the faith that sees Him in perfect purpose and production in all. This is the "perfect patience" of James 1:4 by which we are "perfect and

entire, wanting nothing" when all seems chaos! The day will come in its eternal new-dimensional reality, when there is no further misuse of the negative (because Satan is cast out). It will be replaced with an era in which the opposites are in their perfect eternal marriage--negative and positive, bride and bridegroom--the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. But we finally see there always must be the interaction of opposites, in that perfection; with the misuse of the negative gone forever, and we knowing eternally how to be "one yet two!"--the eternal paradox.

Independence: The Lie of Lies

What follows from this is another facet of "truth" which is fundamentally important, indeed central to our own understanding of ourselves in our relationship to God. What can be more central than our relationship to God, because in the end we only have ourselves and how we live and operate! It is the relationship of God, the Positive, to us the negatives. We are back where we have just been, when we say there is only One Person in the universe, and no such thing as independence. We simply trace it back and acknowledge the life of God in all nature as "full of His glory," and He "filling heaven and earth."

But it is a different matter when we come to persons who have their own consciousness and are able to make choices. And here entered the lie of lies and the root meaning and origin of sin (1 John 3:10). The first and only person who sought to exalt and declare himself as an independent self, self-relying self, was Lucifer, Satan, saying: "I will be like the Most High. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit upon the mount of the congregation " (Isa. 14:13-14). And therefore he was the first self-deceived person, because there is no such thing as an independent person in the universe. Satan is a "creature" like the rest of us. Therefore, he operates by false imagination when he acts as though he is independent. Finally we catch on to the fundamental truth that Satan is always God's convenient negative agent, no matter how much he appears to be in command.

Our Involvement in that Lie

It is here that we see sin in its fundamental form in the fantasy of independent self: "I will do my own thing." Then we see the importance of and the reason that Satan's first effect on us humans (when he entered Adam and Eve) was to deceive us with the same deceit of being an independent self with which he himself is deceived (for we always transmit who and what we are). It was God's purpose to put us humans within the influence of that deceiving serpent, for if we are to function through eternity as reliable sons of God (just as Paul wrote that God counted him as reliable--1 Tim. 1:12) in the management of His universe, then we must have gone to the roots in our own experience of this false meaning of being a person. That is the reason why the experience described in Romans Seven (with its final insight into that final lie of independent self) is where the Spirit has to take us before we can fully know Christ as us, in place of Satan as us, and be safe as well as saved sons. And so Revelation 12:9 puts in one phrase Satan's still-present worldwide effect on us, "The serpent of old who deceives the whole world."

Also, this is why the final effect of the law upon us is to expose as a lying deceit our so-called ability to operate as independent self-relying selves (see Romans 7:11). It is really Satan in his form expressing his deceived, self-relying self-nature as though it is we, and making us think that it is we, till we cry out, with Paul, "What I would, that I do not. But what I hate, that I do," and "to will is present with me, but how to perform I find not." Hence, we are brought to Paul's great word of revelation on the self--that it is not I trying by self-effort and failing to get the victory, but it is "sin that dwelleth in me" (7:17,20). Sin laughs at my helpless self-effort (7:11), because that very self-effort is Satan expressing his lying independent

self-nature as though it is I, and has all the time made me think it is I. The lie exposed at last! "It is not I that do it." It is Satan in his sin-form, the invader, the intruder since the Fall, the false former owner and operator of my human self (for we have no nature of our own), expressing his self-relying and self-gratifying self in me as me, and deceiving me by having tricked me into thinking that those sinful flesh responses in me were really me, when in fact they were "sin dwelling in me." And this apparent fact of indwelling sin is only a bluff and deceit, for Satan as sin was cast out of me in Christ's body-death (in which He as me was made sin and died to sin--2 Cor. 5:21 and Rom. 6:10), so that our bodies are no longer sin's dwelling place (Rom. 6:6), and it is "Christ dwelling in me" (Rom. 8:9-10). "But while I did not know that, and still believed in my own self-efforts (which was really Satan), that believing gave him his deceiving appearance of living in me as me; for we live on the level of our believing, and I was living on that false condemnation of this indwelling sin as though it is me." This was both Paul's Romans Seven revelation and the final value and operation of the law: not to expose "sins," but to expose the illusion that we still have a Satan-sin nature. The final deceit and exposure! Paul uses the present tense in that Romans Seven passage because it is the deceived experience of all believers until that "present tense" of Romans Seven is replaced by Paul's present tense of Romans 8:2; and that is when, like Paul, we have moved by our personal affirmation of faith from the one to the other.

We Humans Never Had a Nature of Our Own

Here lies the whole basis of our trouble and slowness in coming to find our full "new creature" liberation by which we are ourselves in and as Christ. We have been brought up on , and our church and Bible teaching has mainly emphasized to us, the false concept of our being independent selves and our operating by a nature of our own. And this is the basic lie.

I have spent a good deal of time in Yes I Am in giving proofs of why we humans never had a nature of our own (Chapter 8). We have our own wonderful "being" in God (Acts 17), which "being" includes all our human faculties, capacities, and normal reactions to life, but we were created to be fully operating selves as Himself. Here I seek to point out that the quantity of our being is not the same as the quality of what is expressed by our selfhood: the quality is the nature. A simple example in Blake's poem is that a lion and lamb have the same "quantity" in the forms of their limbs, etc., but a different quality in their nature.

Having given so much rightful stress and biblical evidences of that in Yes I Am, I don't need to repeat it; but the point I am making is that the root of this Satanic deceit is in giving us a false concept of being independent, and this has led us into the delusion of having a nature of our own, whether good or evil, and therefore expecting that some change must take place in us. It is a shock when the revelation finally dawns on us that we always were like a doughnut with a hole in the middle. We always were owned, indwelt, managed by the Deity Spirit in us--created and purposed only to be expressors of God's "Divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4). But in order to get our opposites into final fixed focus, we started by being occupied by and expressing the nature of the "spirit of error" (Eph. 2: 1-3 and John 8:44). We always are either a "walking Satan" or a "walking Christ." See the contrast in Romans Six of our branch relationship as fruit-bearers (but never fruit-producers) to Satan (v. 4) and to Christ (v. 22).

So We Get Ourselves Back--What a Relief!

And this, as we have just said, is the "struggle" and final solution of Romans Seven, as much described in my book--the false concept that we are both evil and good. I try to shock folks into the illogicality of that by asking, "If you are born again, are those good things now expressed by you--love, joy, peace, etc.--your

products?"

And when they answer, "No, they are the fruit of the Spirit in us," I then say, "Why do you say the good you produce is not you but the fruit of the good Spirit, but that the evil is you producing it?"

No, cut yourself out of the picture--it is the fruit of the bad spirit in you (as stated in Romans 6:21, 22 and 7:4,5). And then learn that your new Owner-Occupier, who expresses His nature by you, is Christ in you (Rom. 8:9,10); but that you have been deceived into thinking you had an old sin nature which was you (Rom. 7:11); and therefore you lived self-condemned. The truth at last is revealed to you by the Spirit, as to Paul in that Romans Seven chapter, that those apparent old self-responses were really sin (Satan) pretending still to be dwelling in you as you, but there was never anything wrong with your human self! God made it and all He makes is "very good." Satan merely stole your human self to misuse it, and to use it for expressing his lusts as if yours. Now you see through this deception and accept yourself back, not as wretched, but as His beautiful creation for Himself, and you are freed to be yourself with Him now expressing His nature by you. (I go into this at great length in Chapters 20 and 21 of the Yes I Am book, as to how we are brought by our expressed word of faith and Spirit-witness into a true union relationship, and, as a result, into our full use of ourselves as spontaneously expressing Him.)

A "revelation" which cannot be too much stressed is that we humans have never had any self-acting, self-relying self to "surrender," "to commit" to God. Because we have all lived under that major delusion of Satan's own self-deceit, accentuated by the churches' teachings, we have all believed that we have we have a very self-sufficient self to surrender. And there lies the battle. But now we know that this is not so.

The Bible term is "yield" (Rom. 5:12, etc.)--merely hand over what is us. But what is true, and which has been so hidden from us, is that we never were a self-acting self, or self-relying self, or self-producing self--all these are Satan's lies! We always were and are only the vessel, branch, temple, slave, wife, and body-member level, with no self-acting nature or capacity of our own. As I said, something like a doughnut with a hole in the middle. We have always been nothing but a marvelous self, made in His image, with marvelous potential and capacity for development--but always a managed, directed self by a deity manager (Satan or Christ) and not an independent self. In this way we are like a computer with all its capacities and potential, but only able to operate under the orders of its programmer. Only when it's told to play chess, for instance, can it play chess (and probably beat us).

So the summons of Romans Six--to reckon, yield, etc.--is not to give up some self-abilities we falsely thought we had, but merely to recognize that by the one "Activity" of the "obedience of faith" we are owned and managed, and that therefore we are merely reproducing the activities ("the lusts of your father the devil" or "the fruit of the Spirit") of the deity spirit indwelling us. And this has been the whole point of the revolutionary discovery of the meaning of Romans Seven for the born-again believer: that the believer's only "work" is "to believe on Him" (John 6:29), that his only sin is not to have believed (John 16:9), and that the only obedience (definitely named by Paul at the beginning and end of his Romans presentation of the total gospel truth--1:5 and 16:26) is "the obedience," not of self-effort but "of faith."

Finally, then it dawns on us, and I repeat this because of its central importance, that, rising out of the battles and confusion and apparent difficulty of understanding of Romans Seven, we had falsely thought our failure was in self-effort, instead of the fact being, as Paul said, "to will is present with me, but how to perform I find not" (7:18). The "performer" is always and only the deity spirit indwelling us. That false indweller has been "sin dwelling in me," and his presence has been a bluff and a lie, a deceit, for sin has

been cast out by our Redeemer's body-death. Christ was "made sin" as us and "died to sin" (2 Cor. 5:21 and Rom. 6:10), but Satan continues to try to trick us into the false believing that he is still in us.

The sole truth of all us born-again ones is that the replacement--the Indweller, the Operator of the Human self, and the Reproducer of His Deity Self in our forms--is the Indwelling Christ by the Spirit (Rom. 8: 9,10). Our only "works" activity is to see this in Scriptures, believe it in the heart, and confess it with the mouth. Then the Spirit bears His witness and the effortless replacement is known as fact and lived by. Not self-committing, but self-realizing under our true Deity Management!

Is It He--Or We?

Of course, to the eye of flesh-reasoning, or even the unenlightened reasoning of the born-again, the common objection or criticism is that this makes us like robots--which we are not. But that is because human reasoning cannot grasp the paradox: all reality has two sides. Far from meaning the cessation of self-activity, it turns out to be the replacement of vigorous false self-activity ("the lust of your father ye do") by total, endless, right self-activity--losing our lives to find them precisely as Jesus had said. So we just have to accept such distorted criticism!

The simplest illustration I know is that normal human living is on precisely the same principle. As we come to our young manhood or womanhood, we have an inner blank spot. We have faculties and capacities, but we as yet have no area of distinct know-how which we can put into practice and call our profession--medicine, building, carpentry, cooking, engineering, or what not. We are like that doughnut with its empty center. So what do we do? We choose which "Profession" we will acquire. We then have our capacity to acquire, but a total emptiness of what we seek to acquire. So we concentrate on filling the empty center over three, five, or seven years.

Then what happens? A body of knowledge which was previously outside of us gradually takes such an inner hold on us, in that empty doughnut center, that we come spontaneously to "know" it and be at home in practicing it. Something has taken our central emptiness over, and manages and expresses itself by us, as us. And now what? Our human selves come into full, effective and satisfying action. We like our profession. We are at ease in it. We are consciously competent in it. So much so that we call ourselves by the name of the body of knowledge which has taken us over--doctor, builder, carpenter, cook--though in actual fact we are only practicing and reproducing something that we gave ourselves to be taken over by! So the human being comes into total, competent, satisfying action, but he is really only reproducing something which has taken him over.

I had to learn an unknown language in the Congo. I applied myself to it until one day I found myself spontaneously speaking it. So now I speak it. But which is it, I or the language?! It is as the Bible said of John the Baptist: "The voice of one crying"--John's human voice. Who was the cryer? We all say the Holy Spirit. As the Psalmist said, "Thou art the pen of a ready writer." I am the pen at this moment. Who is the ready writer? I hope the Holy Spirit!

So now, when we say we are "Christians," in actual fact we are human selves practicing what (no, "Who") has taken inner possession of us--Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith! Yet we call ourselves "Christians," for we are the human expressors of the Deity Spirit possessing us. That is our union, which in the eternal paradox is a hidden duality. We are Christ in our human forms. We are (not "have") the light of the world. Paradox! Unity, yet duality!! We are He, yet we are not He, we are we!! The fire in a red-hot iron. Which is it? Iron or fire?

Are We Heretics?

Do we see, then, how easily we are called "heretics" for saying we are Christ in our human forms? But Paul came mighty near it. Didn't he say in Galatians 2:20 that "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me"? He just slips in "in me" at the end, but came as close as could be to saying he was Christ, not himself! So we, in the first dawning of our inner witness of the truth that we are not ourselves, but He in us, tend to say, as I did, "It is Christ thinking, Christ acting, not I"--but we mean that we are Christ in our human form. A suspicious hearer, who glimpses vistas of truth that had not dawned on him before, is first disturbed and inclined to jump and say "Heresy!" He is saying he is Christ!" And I often notice this with casual readers of Union Life magazine. When they have not yet been caught up by the glory of who we really are, they jump in with a criticism of some phrase such as that, and throw the magazine in the trash because they see it as being dangerous!

As to who we are as liberated selves, I'll not say much here, because I go thoroughly into this in Yes I Am. In my book I go into the wonder of finding our true selves--servants, agents, vessels, branches, certainly, but that we live in the paradox of acting as ourselves from a basic inner consciousness of it really being He as me. This caused Bill Volkman, our Union Life editor, to give the title *The Wink of Faith*, to his account of his experiences with God in him as him, meaning, of course, that he functions as a wholly liberated Bill Volkman, yet with the wink that he really is Christ in his Bill form.

How true it remains that human reason can only take us so far--to the edge of the gulf--with the limitation of only seeing from afar something of what is on the other side. Only when we have taken the "leap of faith" as Kierkegaard called it, over that gulf, and by heart-choice have believed, affirmed as fact, and confessed with the mouth what the Scripture offers as facts; then and then only does the Spirit fulfill the word of 1 John 5:10, giving the inner witness from the Spirit-dimension that these things are so. Thus, faith becomes the substance that reason can never bring.

Do We Make Choices?

Now let's look at the matter of choice. Through the years, there have always been arguments among believers on the question of choice and free will. Of course there is choice, for that is the meaning of being a person. But the point is that our only real choice is for us to recognize our total God-possession and to "yield ourselves unto God." We are slaves as well as sons; so proceeding from that one initial "choice," life is not so much choosing anymore, as agreeing and doing. That is what Paul meant when he said, "God works in us to will and to do," and then we work it out.

Our outworking then is under the pleasurable "compulsion" of our Owner-Manager, and "against such there is no law" (for we flow with the tide, not against it). The rightness of the law is being normally fulfilled in us (Gal. 5:23 and Rom. 8:4), as we are walking, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, for we are "not in the flesh but in the Spirit" (Rom. 8:9). So once we have come to know and live in the divine compulsion of Philippians 2:13, it is, to my mind and experience, a waste of time to argue about free will.

Yes, we choose to be managed, and then enjoy our managed life, but this can hardly be called choosing, so much as agreeing with what our Manager is always inwardly leading us into doing. This is the meaning of "being led [not driven] by the Spirit" (Romans 8:14-15), not under fearful compulsion, but with happy consent. The Shepherd leads, and His flock spontaneously follows to what turns out to be "green pastures," even when at first sight it appears to be stony patches. If by my first reaction I "feel" unwilling to do something, I tell Him I won't do it until He makes me--and He always does.

Can We Still Sin?

One further aspect may concern us--which I touched on considerably in the book--that of temptation and sin. We often get criticized as being too little concerned about a Christian sinning. The real reason is that we have gone way beyond (not come short) on the "sins" question, because we have delved right into, not sins but sin.

We have seen the whole sin-principle (Satan expressing his sin-self nature) cast right out of us for keeps (we are dead to sin), and replaced by the holiness (wholeness) nature of Christ (1 John 3:9). Therefore, we are no longer sin-minded, but Christ-minded. We relegate "sins" (the occasional product of sin) to a brief mention, just as John in his "union" First Letter gives it only a sentence in the first chapter (v.9) where he makes provision for sins committed, with the added statement: "These things I write unto you that ye sin not" (2:1). Then all his other chapters are on union living.

Our attitude toward "sins" is further clarified by an understanding of the difference between temptation and sin (Jas. 1:14,15). Those just beginning this "union" life--knowing Christ as them--will sometimes ask, "Then if I sin, is that Christ sinning?" Of course not. Paul answered that in Galatians 2:17 ("Is Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.") The answer, again, is in the paradox. Within our fixed union, there remains a duality; just as Jesus said, "I and my Father are one," and then, "Not My will, but Thine be done"--two.

Don't Muddle Up Temptation with Sin

So temptation is the drawing out of our human spirit-selves--through the enticements of soul (emotion and reason) and body-appetites, which thus pull on us--but is not sin. Jesus had all of them, but He never sinned (Heb. 4:15). It's in this area that we have to learn to take no condemnation for such pulls and drawings, but rather recognize and accept them as originating from that external spirit of error! And then, after first accepting Satan's right to thus pull at me and draw my responses, I recognize his freedom to tempt me, and then I can exercise my own freedom to respond: "But that's not my real I, which is my spirit, joined to His Spirit." I then respond to these soul-body pulls by seeing myself as dead in Christ to them and as replaced by my expressing Christ's nature (which is now my nature).

As is true of Christ, I love in place of hate, I have courage in place of fear, I experience release in place of tension, I choose the right use of affections in place of lusts, and so on. And I take no condemnation for such temptations (Rom. 8:1), for I have turned the negative pull of a temptation into an asset by using it as a channel to express my positive Christ-response. I am "more than a conqueror" through Christ! A sin committed means that the temptation pull on my human spirit has reached the point that I have temporarily chosen to respond to the temptation and do it. That is my human spirit-self acting momentarily as if independent self--the ultimate Satan sin. So committing a sin means that by deliberate choice I carry the temptation through to a chosen act (we "marry" the lust and it brings forth sin--Jas. 1:15)--but this is not common in our newness of life. While temptation is continuous, sins are only occasional, and when committed, we move into confession, and conscious cleansing (1 John 1:9), turning the very sin into a further occasion to magnify the grace of God.

So, no, we are not sin-minded, but Christ-minded, even though we are sometimes accused of being "light" on sin. In actual fact, we are heavy on sin, for we claim it to be out of sight for those in Christ, and see sins as occasional false choices (with their 1 John 1:9 remedy turned to praise). Followed by the return of our human spirit to its fixed place in our union, which we momentarily forgot (II Pet. 1:9).

All of us, in our replacement relationship (Christ expressing Himself as us in place of Satan), know and will always know the incessant impact of temptation and trials on us. But the vital difference is that in our former self-condemning reaction we believed that our humanity had evil tendencies in it, so we lived condemning ourselves for our apparent wrong propensities and responses of fear, hate, resentment, lust, etc., and sought ways of gradual improvement--ever living in an inner bondage and negative watchfulness against "assaults of the flesh," and feelings of constant need of cleansing.

But when this full light has shone in us, we see that there is nothing wrong with our humanity, which was created perfect by God, every faculty for its right use by its right Owner. Far beyond our first understanding of grace as imputed righteousness, Scripture says that we are actually "made the righteousness of God" (II Cor. 5:21): our "flesh" (our humanity) is perfect, God-made flesh, only misused by its former owner. Our "new creation" (whereby "all things " are made new--II Cor. 5:17) is fully accepted by us as His means of expression, "each faculty tasked to its highest," as Browning said; and we live confidently, not suspiciously, as "kept" persons (I Pet. 1:5), and thus spontaneously able to "keep ourselves" (I John 5:18).

Temptation Becomes an Asset, Not a Liability

Then as these incessant assaults pour in on us, we are not fearful or condemning. We recognize that we live in a "world that lieth in the wicked one," a Satan-self-for-self-infected world, in order that we may share the way of escape with other Satan-captives, as we were once captives. We thus live within shooting range of Satan's artillery of enticement. We have our normal human responses to such drawings--it's as Spence the philosopher said, "Life is response to environment."

So on our soul-body level, we feel the drawing to respond, as James said we would, but we do not mistake those drawings for something sinful or unclean in us. (Jesus felt those drawings but had no sin). We are free, and in the new understanding by which we know all the drawings are from without by the different approaches of the spirit of error (also called "the spirit of the world"), we recognize his right to assault us. We do not deny the pulls, nor resist them in our former Romans Seven way of "trying to resist" : that would be going back to self-effort which we now know is itself a form of Satan's independent self, and thus a "kingdom fighting against itself" which cannot stand.

No, we recognize and accept the reality of the assaults: but then we say, like Jesus, "Get thee behind me, Satan;" or in the words, "We don't see you, Satan. You were dethroned on the cross of Christ. We are dead to you." And then, because we have freed Satan to have his tempting right, we are free to exercise our own permanent new-nature rights, as the expressions of Christ as us, and so exchange those negative pulls on our humanity for its positive right use. We reverse our negative use of our affections in expressing hates and dislikes for the positive expression of the Spirit of love for all the human family: our fears, which are our negative believings in evil, are reversed into positive believing in God in all situations; our pride and jealousy are reversed into magnifying God and appreciating our brothers; and so all the list of emotional or physical responses which I am drawn to use for my own gratification are reversed and channeled into the means for loving, blessing and ministering to God and others. So liabilities become assets, when evil is overcome by good.

A Royal Priesthood: The Summit Reached

One subject I have not touched on, and yet it is the final one without which the rest falls to the ground, is called by many names--third level, the fatherhood level, the royal priesthood, the soldier, laborer, athlete (II Tim. 2:3-7). It is the into-action into-battler life in which the Spirit immerses us as our permanent inner

drive, and into whatever outer application He apportions to each of us.

I like to label our Union Life commission to the worldwide church as the Twentieth Century Reformation. Just as God called Luther to re-establish the gospel basis of justification by faith (Christ for us), so He is calling us (and others with the same calling, under whatever title--and we are expecting Him to call many) to re-establish and recall God's people to what Paul called his second ministry of "fulfilling the world of God" (Christ in us). It is the complete Christ operating in and by and through His complete human agents (Col 1:23-28), by the same Spirit who possessed and commissioned Jesus to be His Father's saving agent of the world (Luke 4:16-21 and John 20:21-22). We, as the complete human agents are the Royal Priesthood, with its "corn of wheat" implication ("Death worketh in us, but life in you"--II Cor. 4:12 and John 12:24) by which the harvest is reaped and the intercession gained.

While I have said a good deal on this in Yes I Am (Chap 45-49), I also wrote a book on the life of one whom the Spirit had in a special way revealed these truths of intercession, and whose whole life and teaching and example had a great influence on me --Rees Howells, Intercessor. This life-story has had a widespread effect on many readers and has brought many requests for further understanding of the Bible principle of intercession. Additional insights have been also made available in a new book called The Intercession of Rees Howells, by Doris Ruscoe. So rather than say more here, either on the "Royalty" (the authority of faith), or on the "Priesthood" of the calling, cost and gaining of an intercession, I suggest to you readers, that you order these books from Union Life, and let the Spirit speak to you as He has to many of us. You will find yourself among those called in any of a hundred different ways, just where you are, to take your share, pay the price, enter the battle of achieving faith, participate in the deaths, and be moved into whatever it involves for you personally to gain some intercession--Commission, Cost, Completion--some "pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

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