

The Old Nature and the New Birth or the New Convert and his Difficulties

by George Cutting (1843-1934)



Part 1

Those who have much to do with the difficulties and exercises of the newly-converted, are constantly hearing some such expression as this: "I *thought* I was saved once, but I now begin to fear that after all I've only been deceiving myself. Not only do I *feel no better in myself*, but, if anything, even worse than before I professed to be converted."

Now, in such cases, one generally finds that it is not so much their sins that trouble them, as the heart-sickening disappointment they feel, as more and more the truth is forced upon them, that their new birth has not only effected no improvement in their *evil nature*, but that that nature seems much worse than before their conversion. Then comes many a fruitless effort to improve it; but, alas! only to end in deeper wretchedness than ever. In such a state of soul Satan finds but too fitting an opportunity of hurling his terrible darts. He suggests that they are only miserable hypocrites, professing to be *what they know they are not*; that they had far better give up the whole thing, come out in their true colours, and own that they have never been converted at all!

Oh, what intense soul-agony do such assaults cause, when, as yet, true liberty is unknown! and only those who have really passed through such exercises can have any conception of their untold bitterness. It is with a desire to encourage and help such that this little book is sent forth.

GOD'S FACTS AND OUR EXPERIENCES

Many believers pass through the sorest distress because they are continually searching their own hearts for evidence that they have been truly [saved]. "When I compare my daily experience with the plain truths in God's word," such a soul will say, "I begin to fear that I am not born again at all. For example, I see in the first Epistle of John three absolute facts stated about the one who is '*born of God*,' and I cannot answer to even one of them, do what I will.

1st. He *does not*... and *cannot* sin. (1 John 3:9).

2nd. He *overcometh the world*. (1 John 5:4).

3rd. The *wicked one toucheth him not*. (1 John 5:18).

Now, in the face of such a scripture, I am bound to confess --

1st. That I *can*, and, alas! *do sin*.

2nd. That instead of my overcoming the world, it constantly *overcomes me*.

3rd. That the enemy has defeated me times without number - thus he *does* touch me.

"Is there any wonder, therefore, in the perplexity or even the alarm that I often feel in contemplating such a scripture, in the face of such an experience as mine?"

Well, it must be confessed there is not; but let us say for your comfort that those who are "dead in their sins" never experience such conflict. It is only converted ones who really desire to answer to the thoughts and wishes of God. The unconverted "*desire not* the knowledge of His ways." They have "no fear of God before their eyes." (Rom. 3:18).

But let us return.

We have been noticing one impossibility; i.e., "Whosoever is born of God *cannot* sin." Let us also look at another (Rom. 8:7-8), "The carnal mind" (literally 'mind of the flesh') "is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God*." Mark well these important contrasts:

1. The one who is "*in the flesh* - as "*born of the flesh*" - "*cannot please God*."

2. The one who is "born of God cannot sin."

It may be well here to state what is meant by "the flesh" in the subject before us. It is the evil or fallen nature, in every child of Adam, poisoned by indwelling sin. It is the real source of every sinful action performed by him.

TWO DISTINCT NATURES IN ONE PERSON

We have seen, that at our natural birth we get an evil nature, so *evil* that God says it is impossible to make it subject to His holy law. It "*cannot* please Him." "Behold," says the Psalmist, "I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5).

Then, at our spiritual or second birth we receive, through the sovereign operation of the Spirit by means of the word of God (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23), another nature entirely, a "divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). The blessed Lord puts it to Nicodemus in a few words thus: "That which is *born of the flesh* is flesh; and that which is *born of the Spirit* is spirit" (John 3:6).

So that the believer actually possesses two natures; viz., "that which is born of the flesh," and which, because of its very nature, "*cannot please God*;" and "that which is born of the Spirit," which from its essential nature "*cannot sin, because it is born of God*." In the 7th chapter of Romans you will find these two natures distinctly mentioned side by side. See, for example, the last verse.

"So then, with the *mind* [i.e., the renewed mind, or, as we have been expressing it, the new nature] I myself serve the law of God, but with the *flesh* [i.e., the old nature] the law of sin." Then, again, verses 22 and 23, "I delight in the law of God after the *inward man*; but I see *another law* in my members, warring against the law of my mind".

A simple illustration here may be helpful.

A farmer's wife, having placed a hen upon a sitting of duck's eggs, found, at the end of a week, that the greater part of them had been destroyed by some enemy of the hen-roost; upon which she made up the sitting with hen's eggs. When the hatching-day came round, the hen, of course, found herself responsible for two distinct broods of little ones. This, however, caused her little or no trouble, till one day she discovered, to her dismay, that the little ducklings had taken themselves off to a pond close by, and so delighted were they with their first excursion on the water, that her loudest clucks and most urgent calls alike proved fruitless to bring them back to dry land. The chickens, on the contrary, shewed not the slightest inclination to venture into such an element, and would have been miserable enough had they been forced into it.

Here, then, were two distinct natures, with entirely different tastes and habits. That which came from the duck's egg had the nature of the duck, that from the hen's egg the nature of the hen; yet both were hatched in the same nest. Now, all the farmers' wives in the world, with all the men of science at their back, could never change the nature of a duck into that of a chicken. The duck would still keep the nature of a duck, and the chicken the nature of a chicken.

A thousand times more distinct are the two natures in a Christian, and this because of the different sources from whence they are derived. One is from man -- lost, guilty, fallen man; the other from God, in all the holiness of His sinless nature. One is human and polluted, the other divine, and therefore undefilable. So that every evil thought or deed of the believer springs from the old nature, while every good desire, or godly deed, finds its source in the new. For example, you may remember the day when you had a desire to retire to your quiet room alone for prayer. That desire came from the new nature. But while upon your knees, perhaps, some wicked, wandering thought came into your mind. That was the outcome of the old. But now comes another important enquiry, viz.,

IS THE OLD NATURE IMPROVED BY THE NEW?

There is but one answer: *Nothing can improve the flesh*. It was tried in every possible way, from the fall of Adam in Eden to the cross of Christ at Calvary. And what was the result? Why, just this: God's holy law was willfully broken, when He came righteously demanding obedience from man. His Son was cruelly murdered, when He visited this world in grace to man. Indeed, instead of the presence of a divine life improving the old nature, it only manifests its utter badness. Just as making a poor beggar the present of a new coat by no means improves the appearance of his old, thread-bare, dirty waistcoat, but the very opposite.

Then, it may be asked, if my old nature can neither be *forgiven, nor improved*, two difficulties at once present themselves.

1. "*How can I be delivered from it?*"

2. "*How do I get power over it?*"

In considering these difficulties, it will be well to notice the important difference made in Scripture between "SIN" *in the flesh* and "SINS"

Very frequently, the evil principle, born in us naturally, is simply called SIN, while the evil actions, words and thoughts which are the consequence of possessing this corrupt nature, are called SINS. You will see the distinction in 1 John 1:8-9: "If we say that we have no SIN, we deceive ourselves," &c. And again: "If we confess our SINS, He is faithful and just to forgive us our SINS." This distinction is of the greater importance when we find in Scripture, that while, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, God does forgive our sinful deeds, i.e. our SINS; yet He never forgives SIN *in the flesh*, but "condemns" or judges it. Let me seek to explain how this is.

Suppose you have a child who has naturally a violent temper. In a fit of passion, one day, he throws a book at his brother, and breaks a large pane of glass in the window. Well, upon penitent confession of the naughty deed, you

would be free to forgive him. But what about the bad temper that made him do it? Do you forgive that? Impossible! You detest it, and, if you could, would get rid of it - thoroughly rid of it. You utterly condemn it.

Now, the bad temper [though, in itself, only one feature of an evil nature] would answer more to indwelling SIN; while its evil activities, in hurting the brother and smashing the window, would answer more to the SINS. And so I repeat, though God does most freely forgive the believer's *sins*, He never forgives the indwelling SIN. *Condemnation* is the only thing He can righteously apply to it - *death* is our only way out of it (See Romans 8:3). "God, sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin [i.e., a sacrifice for *sin*], CONDEMNED SIN IN THE FLESH."

In the earlier chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, the apostle is occupied in showing our deliverance from SINS; but in the sixth chapter he shows how we are delivered from SIN. For example, in the last verse of the fourth chapter he speaks of Christ as having been "delivered for our *offences*, and raised again for our justification." And the blessed consequence of His having been thus delivered is, that those who believe on Him are righteously forgiven -- are "justified" -- have "peace with God." But, as it has just been said, in chapter 6 he is treating of deliverance from sin, another matter entirely. "He that IS DEAD," he says, is freed [*or* justified] from SIN" (Ver. 7, margin.).

Now I think you will, in figure, get a glimpse of the difference between these two things by comparing the cleansing of the leper in Leviticus 14:1-7 with that of Naaman in 2 Kings 5:10-14.

In the first Scripture I ask you to notice that; the poor leper, totally unfit to do anything for his own cleansing, has simply to stand by and see all done for him. The bird "alive and clean," is dipped into the blood of the slain bird, and then let loose into the open field; that is, the poor leper beholds a "living," "clean" one going down into death for him, an "unclean" one. The bloodstained substitute then soars on high, and the lips of the priest pronounce the leper clean.

Thus hath "Christ once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). And, therefore, not a spot can be found upon, nor a charge brought against, those who believe on Him. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from *all* sin" (1 John 1:7); and "BY HIM *all* that believe *are* justified from *all* things." (Acts 13:38-39).

But, in the case of Naaman, it is not another going down into death *for him*; he must *himself* go there (looking at Jordan as a figure of death). The happy result need not occupy us now. Suffice it to say that, speaking figuratively, all that he had been *as a leper* was left behind in Jordan's flood.

And thus Scripture teaches, that not only did Christ go down into death *for* the believer, but that, like Naaman, he *himself* has been into death. "You are dead," or, more correctly, "You have died." (Col. 3:3).

There is, however, one great difference between our deliverance and Naaman's. He was delivered from the *presence* of the plague; whereas we shall never, while here below, be delivered from the actual *presence* of "indwelling sin."

Thus all that we *are* by nature, as well as all that we have *done*, has already been dealt with on the cross; and He who there bore our condemnation said, "IT IS FINISHED."

Who then shall condemn us? Nay, is THERE ANYTHING LEFT TO CONDEMN? Nothing. Does Satan bring our sins before us? We have neither to deny nor excuse them; faith can simply answer, "*Christ died* for them." Is it the sinfulness of our *nature* that he would harass us with? Faith can but add, "And I died too."

But now comes a practical difficulty with many. The writer once heard a believer pray most earnestly that "he might *feel* that he was *dead with* Christ." But does God ever speak about our *feeling* dead? Never. He says, "Likewise *reckon* yourselves to be dead indeed *unto sin*, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:11). We are expected to *believe* that in Christ's death we died, simply because God says so, and not because we *feel* dead, or ever will. God Himself clearly states the fact for us, and says, "You are dead" (Col. 3:3), and He expects us as simply to believe it, as we do that Christ died for our sins. *God reckons our Substitute's death as our death*, and the reckonings of faith will always agree with His.

Thus our old standing, as children of fallen Adam, came to an end before God at the cross; or, as Scripture puts it, "*Our old man has been crucified with Christ*" (Rom. 6:6), and we are now connected in life with the last Adam -- the risen Christ; or, as it is expressed in Romans 7:4, "Married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead."

As believers, we have been brought into a new position altogether. He who took our condemnation, by being made sin for us upon the cross, is now risen out of death; and since God sees us "IN HIM," we are necessarily

beyond the reach of condemnation.

"Death and judgment are *behind* us,
Grace and glory are before;
All the billows rolled o'er Jesus,
There they spent their utmost power.

Firstfruits of the resurrection,
He is risen from the tomb;
Now we stand in new creation,
'Free' because *beyond* our doom."

Part 2

MUST THE PRESENCE OF INDWELLING SIN NECESSARILY INTERRUPT COMMUNION?

"How is it," some one may enquire, "that the very *presence* of such an evil thing as the flesh in a believer is not a hindrance to his communion with God?" Let me seek to explain this by using another illustration.

A father and son sit at home one day in happy communion with each other. What is meant by "communion" is, that they share the same thoughts and feelings about every matter that comes before them. Presently, however, another child comes in from taking a ramble in the woods, and lays upon the table some wild berries. The father at once *condemns* them as poisonous, and totally unfit for food, and desires that they should be immediately thrown away. Now, if the son shares his father's thought about them, and condemns them too, you can see at once that the mere *presence* of the bad fruit has not occasioned the slightest breach of communion between them. But if, on the other hand, the son, deceived by the enticing appearance of the berries, refuses to accept his father's judgment and seeks to retain them, he is now *out of communion*; and, if he ventures to taste them, will be sure to suffer in consequence. When, however, in humble confession of his self-will, he is brought to see his folly, and to take sides with his father in condemning the fruit, communion is again restored.

When the believer, who has learned from God these blessed truths, discovers, as he surely will, that *sin* still "*dwelleth in him*," and that the old nature is as bad as ever, or worse, he can, instead of fruitlessly attempting to make it better, take sides with God against it. He never regards it as anything but the deadliest enemy, *ever* to be distrusted, and *never* to be indulged. He knows that God has utterly condemned it at the cross, and, therefore, *he* utterly condemns it too. He reckons himself to be *dead to it*, but "*alive unto God in Christ Jesus*."

Oh, what a comfort it is, that *God is expecting no good thing from the flesh!* that He has given it up forever as a totally worthless thing, and that He would have us do the same! Neither has it any rightful claim upon us. We are no longer debtors to the flesh to live after the flesh (Rom. 8:12). And, though still responsible to exercise the greatest watchfulness in not allowing it to act, yet God gives us, through the death and resurrection of Christ, to regard it as no longer having *any place* in our new state as "in the Spirit" before Him. The cross of Christ forever snapped the link that we once had with the first Adam, fallen; and the Holy Ghost has brought into our souls the life of the last Adam, risen. We are not "*in the flesh*" at all, according to God's reckoning, but "*in the Spirit*"; and the only life that we now have before Him is the life of Christ. So that the apostle could say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; *yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). But let us now consider the next question, which is,

WHAT IS THE SECRET OF OUR POWER?

If you will call to mind what we were saying about the hen and her brood of ducklings, I think you will see, in her distress, a picture of the state of numbers of precious souls today. For what is really the cause of her sore trouble? She cannot make the ducklings to be what she knows by natural instinct a brood of chickens *ought* to be, and the older they get, the more self-willed they become. They seem determined to get into the water whenever the least opportunity is afforded. Sometimes, it is true, they are all at rest together under her wing, and then, perhaps, she thinks she is at last gaining the victory, and making them *better*. But, alas! again and again she is doomed to disappointment, for they only get worse and worse. The farmer's wife, however, hearing her cry of distress one day, sends her little girl to keep the ducklings out of the pond; for she plainly sees that the hen's trouble about this part of the brood is seriously interfering with her care for the little chickens.

Oh, what a comfort is this new helper to the hen! For though she found no way to *improve* the manners of the tiresome truants, she has now, at all events, got a power to *control* them.

Now, every one that is born of the Spirit of God, possesses instincts peculiar to the new nature which has been imparted to him - instincts which cause him to say, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." But he finds

also that he has got to do with instincts and desires of an entirely opposite character, i.e., those peculiar to the old nature. Thus we read of "*the things of the flesh*" and "*the things of the Spirit*," and the tastes and desires of both stand in the most direct contrast.

But what troubles the new convert is, that he cannot make *the flesh* to be what the word of God teaches him a *newborn soul ought to be*, and the law, though he delights in it after the inward man, gives him no POWER. In other words, he is trying to accomplish what God has declared to be an utter impossibility; i.e., *making the flesh subject* to His holy law (See Rom. 8:7-8). He finds that the flesh *will* mind the things of the flesh, and is very enmity itself to the law of God, and even to God Himself. And since this is so, the greater his earnestness to accomplish this impossibility, the more intense his misery. Indeed, to apply law to the flesh, in seeking to make it subject, is only to manifest still more its desperate willfulness. If you pour water upon unslaked lime, instead of cooling it, you will only bring out the fire that lies hidden within. Thus it is with the flesh. The law, applied to it, only *brings out its* "enmity," though the enmity was there before. "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). Though the newborn soul has a nature that "would do good," yet he finds, alas! that "evil is present with him," and it is not until he *gives up his struggle as utterly hopeless*, and looks outside himself, crying, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" that deliverance really comes; and then he *thanks God*, through Jesus Christ.

Thus he has learned, what every one must learn, before deliverance can be realized in an experimental way; first, that the "flesh" is an utterly worthless thing, that there is neither good in it nor remedy for it (Rom. 7:18; 8:7); second, that even in the new nature, with all its right desires, there is no real power either *for good or against* evil.

But the Spirit of God does more than merely quicken a dead sinner into life. He afterwards becomes the *power* of that life. When the newborn soul believes the "gospel of his salvation," the Holy Ghost, as a *distinct* Person, comes into him as an abiding *Dweller* there (Eph. 1:13). He is "*sealed* unto the day of redemption;" i.e., the redemption of the body (Eph. 4:30. See also Rom. 8:9,14,16, and the Lord's own words, John 14:17). According to 1 Cor. 6:19, his body becomes "the temple of the Holy Ghost" which is in him. He is no longer his own, but "bought with a price."

A few months since I saw the following announcement fixed outside a large house (it looked like some hotel), "*This house will be reopened*," at such a date, "*under entirely new management*." I presume that it had changed hands, and that there was, therefore, new proprietorship too. Now this announcement at once brought the scripture just quoted to my mind. (1 Cor. 6:19-20). The house was the same; its windows, doors, chimneys, outhouses, all the same, but there was a new proprietor, and, in consequence, "*entirely new management*".

So it is with the believer. He is same individual, with the same faculties as before his conversion; is in the same business, perhaps, with precisely similar social circumstances surrounding him, but he is now the *personal property of another*. He is "Christ's," and, as such, is now put under entirely "*new management*," i.e., the Holy Ghost enters his body; takes up his residence there, hence-forward to "*manage the house*" upon heavenly principles. How solemn! Yet how intensely blessed!

Now, herein is the believer's power for every activity that is according to God. Here is his power to control the flesh, to "mortify the deeds of the body" (See Rom. 8:13). Just as the little girl resisted the natural will of the ducklings, so that, by her means, the hen was able to keep them under due control, so we are told in Gal. 5:17, that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, in order that ye *should not* do the things that ye would." What we need to be careful about is, *not to "grieve"* the One Who has thus come to "manage" us, even "the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30).

There are two important things to remember in connection with power.

1st. That we must be brought to the experimental discovery that *we have none of our own*.

2nd. That it is only in *absolute dependence upon Christ* that the Spirit's power is made effectual in us. Our power is in the weakness that clings to Another.

But, it may be asked, if the evil nature still remains in every converted person, and *that* evil nature is ever ready to assert itself, how can it be possible that --

"WHOSOEVER IS BORN OF GOD CANNOT SIN?"

Well, carefully mark in the first place, that it is not some peculiar advanced attainment of just a few who may be said to have "faith for it," as it is sometimes called. It takes in the whole of the newborn race - WHOSOEVER is born of God."

But, remarks another, this statement seems to be a thorough contradiction to all that I either experience in myself or see in others! Well, it *may* seem so, but let us look at it a little more closely, and prayerfully, bearing in mind that

the first step toward understanding the word of God is to *believe it*. "By *faith we understand...*" (Heb. 11:3). And here I would give you an illustration, much used by a Spirit-taught servant of God, now at rest in the presence of his Lord; i.e., the well-known practice of grafting an apple tree upon a crab tree stock. As you are aware, no doubt, the head of the crab tree is first cut off; then a small portion of an apple tree is carefully inserted, or "grafted in," as it is called; then it is securely guarded by a covering of clay round the joint, and left to grow and develop in the coming spring and summer.

Now let us, in thought, go to the orchard where the tree in question is planted, and enquire more about it of the gardener.

"What kind of tree do you call this?" we ask.

"An apple tree," he replies.

"But why don't you say that it is *partly* a crab tree and partly an apple tree?"

"Because we gardeners never think of talking like that. It was once a *crab tree in the wood*, now it is an apple tree in the orchard. It is *really the same individual tree*; but when we cut off its head, its *history as a crab tree came to an end*; and when the new graft first showed signs of life, its new history as an apple tree from that day commenced."

"But doesn't this apple tree still bear crabs?"

"No! and what is more, it *cannot*. It is just as impossible for the apple tree to bear crabs, as it was impossible for the crab tree to bring forth apples."

But do you mean to say then, that there is nothing whatever of the "crab" nature about this tree?"

No! But I do say that there is nothing of the "crab" that has not been *condemned* as such, and if it should show signs of life by sending up shoots from the old stock, I at once take the knife and never think of sparing even the smallest sprout."

Let us now apply this figure. The wild crab tree represents a man in *his natural state*, before he is born of God. At his *second birth* a new nature, like the apple tree graft, is produced in him by the Spirit and the word.

Now the apostle John, in his epistles, generally speaks of things in a very abstract way. Just as the gardener who insisted that the tree was *only* an "apple tree," so John in the passage referred to looks at the believer only in connection with the new nature - the *divine nature* he possesses as born of God. And therefore, just as it impossible for an apple tree (looked at simply *as such*) to bear crabs, and that because it is an apple tree, so it is equally impossible for the one who is *born of God* (looked at simply *as such*) to commit sin. "His seed remaineth in him: and *he cannot sin*, because he is born of God." How *could* a divine nature sin?

Now this divine nature was really the nature that Christ manifested in His blessed pathway through this world. Thus, *He did not sin. How could He? He overcame the world. The wicked one could not touch Him.* "The *prince of this world* cometh, and hath nothing in Me" (John 14:30). And, as we have already seen, these are the very things that are said to be true of those who are born of God. So that the apostle can say: " *Which thing is true in Him [i.e., in Christ] and in you*" (1 John 2:8). How wondrous it is! Well may we exclaim with holy adoration, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world *knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.*"(1 John 3:1).

But while John speaks of the divine nature in this absolute, abstract way, he does not, on the other hand, ignore the *existence* of the sinful nature in the believer. So in chapter 1 verse 8 of the 1st Epistle, he says: "*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*" Then, in chapter 2 verse 1, we are exhorted not to sin, and the provision pointed out if we *do* fall into sin, namely, an Advocate with the *Father*, Jesus Christ the righteous, who restores us again to *communion with the Father*, by bringing us, as His erring *children*, to see our folly and confess our sins. We have, moreover, the comforting assurance in chapter 1 verse 9, that "if we confess our sins, He is *faithful and just* to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But why *faithful and just*? Because Jesus Christ the *righteous* made *full satisfaction* for sins, once and forever, by His precious blood upon the cross.

Now, in Paul's writings, we have brought before us the Spirit's teaching as to the believer's entire deliverance from his old standing in Adam, and his place of complete justification and perfect acceptance in Christ. He shows us that though there are actually two distinct natures in the believer, yet that because God has condemned sin in the flesh in the person of His own Son upon the cross, we are as believers privileged to reckon that our old "crab tree" standing has, once for all, come to an end there, as *before Him*, judicially; that our old man has been crucified with Christ; that we have been "cut off" as men in the flesh (Col. 2:11), and that we are no longer reckoned as "in

the flesh." Thus He can speak of the time when we were in the flesh (Rom. 7:5); and in Rom. 8:9, can plainly state, "Ye are *not in the flesh*, but in the Spirit." Just as the tree, if it could speak, would be able to say, "I haven't lost my individuality as a tree, but though I was *once a crab tree* in the wood, I am *now an apple tree* in the garden."

How unspeakably blessed it is then, to know that God would have us see ourselves no longer in connection with the *condemned life* of the first Adam, but in the *risen life* of Christ, the last Adam. "For ye are dead," He says, "and your *life is hid* with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). "There is therefore now NO CONDEMNATION to them which are IN CHRIST JESUS" (Rom. 8:1). Let me add a practical word in conclusion.

WHICH NATURE SHALL I GRATIFY?

We have seen that there are not only two natures, but that, with their different origins, they have widely different tastes; thus, there are "the *things* of the flesh" and "the *things* of the Spirit." Let us not forget that both these natures will be daily calling our attention to their distinctive cravings. See those two young birds in that hedge-sparrow's nest; both are clamorous for food. The young cuckoo, that was hatched there, cries, "Feed me;" and the little hedge-sparrow, in the same nest cries, "Feed me." So with the two natures; only that while both those nestlings thrive on the same kind of food, the two natures in a Christian cannot, for what feeds the old only starves the new; while that which is food for the new is thoroughly distasteful to the old.

We are told, therefore, in Romans 8:14, to *make no provision for the flesh*, to fulfil the lusts thereof; and in 1 Peter 2:11, to abstain from "*fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*." On the other hand we are exhorted, "As newborn babes, to desire the *sincere milk of the word*, that we may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). Let us, then, be like vigilant sentries on the watch, challenging all that we read, or think, or do, or say, with this test: *Will this be food for the renewed nature, or will it minister to the flesh?* Let us allow nothing to pass muster that would do the latter. Peter warns us that it is our fleshly lusts which "*war against the soul*." How many a difficulty would this simple question settle for us! And let us never forget that, apart altogether from the question of the salvation of the soul, there are practical consequences in this world, both to our "*sowing to the flesh*" and "*sowing to the Spirit*." "*Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*" (Gal. 6:7). So that if we "*sow to the flesh*" we may surely expect to "*reap corruption*." But let us never allow the government of our Father's hand to diminish our confidence in the love of our Father's heart.

May increased tenderness of conscience and distrust of self be ours, dear fellow-believer. May Christ Himself be more and more our daily food - His precious Word our constant delight.

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