

J. Excursus IX: Regeneration and Sanctification Are Connected with the Renewal of the Whole Person, Body, Soul, and Spirit—Not With the Spirit Alone

Some have taught that in regeneration, the old human spirit is replaced with a new sinless human spirit, the old physical human body is entirely unchanged by regeneration, and progressive sanctification affects only the human soul, which is between the perfectly sinless human spirit and the perfectly sinful human body. This view typically reduces the terms “old man” and “new man” to “old human spirit” and “new human spirit.”¹ The idea that the entire person is not changed by regeneration and sanctification, but the human spirit alone is affected, cannot at all be maintained by Scripture. First, there is no Biblical support whatever for the idea that the “man,” whether old or new, is only the “spirit.” The terms old and new “man,” just like other uses of the term “man,” refer to the entire person, body, soul, and spirit. Second, no verse whatever states that the Christian’s spirit is totally sinless, the Christian’s body is totally sinful, and the Christian’s soul is what changes. Third, Scripture teaches that progressive sanctification

¹ For instance, charismatic Word-Faith leader Kenneth Copeland wrote: “When the man is born again, his spirit became a new creature in Christ Jesus, but his mind and body were unchanged” (pg. 3, *Force of Faith*, Kenneth Copeland. Fort Worth, TX: Kenneth Copeland Publications, 1992). Jessie Penn-Lewis, following Andrew Murray, taught this position in her book *Soul & Spirit*. John A. MacMillan wrote: “The new birth brings the life of God into [the] human spirit . . . [i]t is in the renewed spirit that the Holy Spirit dwells . . . the blessed Spirit of God dwells in the . . . surrendered believer, not as another Person but as part of the very nature of the saint . . . 1 Cor. 6:17[.]” (pgs. 6-7, *The Adult Full Gospel Sunday School Quarterly*, January 8, 1950). Watchman Nee “frequently shared that . . . the outer man must be broken that the inner man (the human spirit with the Holy Spirit) might be released” (pg. 117, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age*, by Witness Lee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream, 1997). “In regeneration we get a new spirit,” Nee taught, rather than being made new in every part (pg. 43, *The Latent Power of the Soul*, Nee), and this new spirit is not able to sin (pg. 45, *ibid.*). Some advocates of this position may enlarge the “old man” to include more than just the spirit. Nee also taught that “the new man . . . is the church” (pg. 162, *ibid.*). The position that only the spirit is regenerated passed into the Keswick theology, and from Keswick into the Word-Faith movement, from the doctrine of Deification affirmed as a corollary of the Quaker Divine Seed concept by Lord Mount Temple, founder of the Broadlands Conferences, and Hannah W. Smith. Mr. Mount-Temple prayed: “My Lord Jesus, as Thou didst take my humanity, I pray Thee impart to me Thy Divinity,” and he stated that, as with the confession of Christ as one Person with a true Divine and a true human nature at Chalcedon: “I have to record my thanks . . . for deep Churchism at our Conferences . . . [and] for the knowledge that we are all two in one—two natures in one person . . . the Divine and the human” (pg. 183, *Memorials [of William Francis Cowper-Temple, Baron Mount-Temple]*, Georgina Cowper-Temple. London: Printed for private circulation, 1890). Hannah W. Smith in particular and Broadlands in general connected the sinless spirit, the idea that “[w]ithin us is an intense life which nothing can touch . . . [o]ur law of life within,” with “the germ of the Christ-life . . . the Divine seed in every one” (pgs. 178-181, *The Life that is Life Indeed: Reminiscences of the Broadlands Conferences*, Edna V. Jackson. London: James Nisbet & Co, 1910). At Broadlands, the idea that only “the human spirit,” not the entire human person, was the “templ[e]” of God in which He dwelt, was associated with “Druidic philosophy” (pgs. 88-89, *The Life that is Life Indeed: Reminiscences of the Broadlands Conferences*, Edna V. Jackson. London: James Nisbet & Co, 1910).

pertains to the believer's spirit, soul, and body.² Sanctification affects the spirit, for the Christian must be "renewed in the spirit" (Ephesians 4:22) and can properly sing David's psalm (cf. Ephesians 5:19), "renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). Sanctification affects the body (cf. Psalm 63:1), for the body of the believer is the temple of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), so were the body absolutely and unchangeably sinful in this life, the Holy Spirit would have chosen as His temple a house that is absolutely and unchangeably sinful. The believer's body is to be "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Romans 12:1)—such a command is impossible if the body is unchangeably sinful. Paul tells the Thessalonian Christians that the "will of God, even your sanctification," is "that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God" (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5), so sanctification is here defined as having a holy body, one that does not commit fornication but is holy and pure. Scripture refers to the believer seeking to be "holy both in body and in spirit" (1 Corinthians 7:34), which would be senseless if the Christian's spirit is already sinless and the Christian's body is entirely sinful and unchangeable. Similarly, Scripture commands believers to "cleanse [themselves] from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," (2 Corinthians 7:1), indicating that progressive sanctification, the perfecting of holiness and cleansing of the saint, pertains to both the body and spirit. The progressive renewal that begins with regeneration pertains

² "Sanctification . . . [is] real . . . not merely . . . imputed, as is righteousness. Holiness is not merely "accounted to men," so that they are treated as though holy, but they are made holy. Holiness becomes the characteristic of their natures. It is habitually exercised in their lives. It will eventually be possessed in perfection. It is real and in no sense only virtual. . . . It is of the whole nature. The renewed nature, given in regeneration, shows that sanctification includes the whole spiritual part of man. It is not to be confined to mere outward actions. God's spiritual nature demands not only spiritual worship, but holy spiritual emotions and affections; and these belong to the heart. Hence the need of inward conformity to his will and commands is so especially set forth in the New Testament, as to mark its teachings as essentially spiritual. We are also plainly taught that between the outward fruit, and the inward condition, is such a connection that the latter is the actual producing power of the former, and is manifested by it. Matthew 12:33-35; Luke 6:43-45.

But sanctification is to be extended to the body likewise. Its appetites and passions are to be controlled, wicked actions are to cease, and unholy habits to be put away, the members of the body are to be mortified, all filthiness of the flesh to be cleansed, good works are to be exhibited to mankind, and such high moral duties to be performed as are imposed upon Christians as obligatory towards each other and the world.

The Scriptures exhort to sanctification of the whole nature, both body and soul. See 2 Corinthians 7: 1; Ephesians 4:17-24; Colossians 3:5-10; 1 Thessalonians 5:23. That of the body alone is urged. [Likewise the] apostle tells the Ephesians about his prayers for their spiritual sanctification. Ephesians 1:17-19." (pgs. 3-4, Chapter 37, "Sanctification," *Abstract of Systematic Theology*, James Petigru Boyce. Elec. acc. in *Christian Library Series, vol. 17: Systematic Theologies*, AGES Library, Rio, WI: 2006)

to both the body and the spirit.³ Fourth, Paul’s prayer that God would “sanctify” the Thessalonian church members “wholly,” that their “whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless” (1 Thessalonians 5:23), makes no sense unless progressive sanctification renews the whole person.⁴ Fifth, Scripture regularly relates sanctification to the entire human person, body, soul, and spirit. The entire “new man” is being progressively⁵ “renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Colossians 3:10). Sanctification does not pertain to one part of man only, but to the entire person (John 17:17; Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:23;

³ “Present sanctification affects the body, as it serves at the behest of one’s dominant motives. The body’s members decrease as servants of sin and increase as servants of righteousness as the *mind is continually renewed* by the Holy Spirit (Rom 12:2). This is the theological basis of the Pauline injunction, “Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the *flesh and spirit*” (2 Cor 7:1). The futility of the *mind* and its darkened *understanding* in its unsaved state led to “*sensuality* for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness” (Eph 4:17–19). A depraved *mind* led the wicked to *do* those things which are not proper (Rom 1:28). Sanctification addresses both mind and body,” although “the immaterial aspect of the Christian is the primary focus of present sanctification . . . because the immaterial aspect is the seat of the human personality.” Furthermore, “[t]he promise of a transformed body [in ultimate or future sanctification] has as its underpinning the fact that just as we have borne the image of Adam in our unsaved state, we most assuredly will ultimately bear the image of Christ, the second man and last Adam—the Lord from heaven, in the resurrection (1 Cor 15:45, 47)” (pgs. 144, 149, *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity, Vol. 3: The Doctrines of Salvation, the Church, and Last Things*, McCune).

⁴ “There was probably a threefold reference in the apostle’s request [in 1 Thessalonians 5:23]. First, he prayed that all the members of the Thessalonian church, the entire assembly, might be sanctified [which, one notes, presumes a regenerate church membership]. Second, he prayed that each individual member might be sanctified entirely in his whole man, spirit and soul and body. Third, he prayed that each and all of them might be sanctified more perfectly, moved to press forward unto complete holiness. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 is almost parallel with Hebrews 13:20, 21. The apostle prayed that all the parts and faculties of the Christian might be kept under the influence of efficacious grace, in true and real conformity to God; so influenced by the Truth as to be fitted and furnished, in all cases and circumstances, for the performance of every good work. Though this be our bounden duty, yet it lies not absolutely in our own power, but is the work of God in and through us; and thus is to form the subject of earnest and constant prayer.

Two things are clearly implied in the above passage. First, that the whole nature of the Christian is the subject of the work of sanctification, and not merely part of it: every disposition and power of the spirit, every faculty of the soul, the body with all its members. The body too is “sanctified.” It has been made a member of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:15), it is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). As it is an integral part of the believer’s person, and as its inclinations and appetites affect the soul and influence conduct, it must be brought under the control of the spirit and soul, so that “every one of us should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor” (1 Thessalonians 4:4), and “as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity, even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness” (Romans 6:19). Second, that this work of Divine grace will be carried on to completion and perfection, for the apostle immediately adds, ‘Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it’ (1 Thessalonians 5:24). Thus the two verses are parallel with ‘Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will finish it until the day of Jesus Christ’ (Philippians 1:6). Nothing short of every faculty and member of the Christian being devoted to God is what he is to ever aim at. But the attainment of this is only completely realized at his glorification: ‘We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him’ (1 John 3:2)—not only inwardly but outwardly: ‘Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body’ (Philippians 3:21).” Pgs. 70-71, *Doctrine of Sanctification*, chap. 9, Arthur Pink.

⁵ Note that the present participle *renewed*, ἀνακαινούμενος, specifies a continuing action.

Hebrews 2:11). Finally, while Scripture alone, not history, is authoritative, advocates of a sinless spirit are in the company of “the Gnostics . . . [who] held . . . that the $\pi\nu\epsilon\nu\mu\alpha$ in man was part of the divine essence, and incapable of sin,”⁶ and according to the “Manichaean[s] . . . the spirit . . . is that essential core of man which is already redeemed, which no longer needs redemption.”⁷

The affirmation in 1 Corinthians 6:17 that “he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” would only prove that the believer literally has the sinless spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ if in the previous verse “he which is joined to an harlot is one body” means that, when one commits fornication with a prostitute, one’s body disappears and is replaced with the harlot’s body. Furthermore, if the phraseology of 1 Corinthians 6:17 proves that the believer literally has Christ’s sinless spirit instead of his own personal human spirit, then it would seem that all the members of the church at Philippi would have had only one human spirit to share among them all, and only one human soul, since Paul stated that they “stand fast in one spirit, with one mind [*pseuche*, soul] striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Philippians 1:27). The believers at Jerusalem would likewise have had only one soul among them all, and only one heart, for “the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul” (Acts 4:32). For that matter, everyone in the tribe of Judah would have had only one physical heart, since “in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart” (2 Chronicles 30:12). Similarly, the believers at Rome were to have among them all only “one mind and one mouth” (Romans 15:6). How they all were able to eat if they only had one mouth to share among them is hard to understand.

The fact is that the *old man* refers to the entirety of the unregenerate individual, and the *new man* refers to the entirety of the regenerate individual. The believer is changed in his entire being, body, soul, and spirit. Furthermore, while he unquestionably

⁶ pg. 51, *Systematic Theology: Anthropology*, Charles Hodge. Vol. 2; sec. 2:2. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003 (repr. ed.). It is also interesting that through the “Gnostics . . . the word $\psi\chi\kappa\omega\zeta$, originally the opposite of $\pi\nu\epsilon\nu\mu\alpha\kappa\omega\zeta$, came to denote a new category midway between the $\pi\nu\epsilon\nu\mu\alpha\kappa\omega\zeta$ and the $\sigma\alpha\rho\kappa\omega\zeta$ ” ($\gamma\iota\nu\omega\sigma\kappa\omega$, $\gamma\iota\nu\omega\sigma\iota\zeta$, etc. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. & ed. F. Bromiley).

The Word of Faith heresy also advocates an extreme trichotomy in which “man’s ‘true inner self’ [is] fundamentally divine, residing exclusively in his spirit, in radical contradistinction to his body and soul, transmuted by demonic powers . . . [which is] characteristic of gnostic mythology. . . . Man is *not* a spirit being who possesses a soul and just happens to live in a body, as the [Word of] Faith teachers claim; rather, man is an integrated being of spirit, soul, and body” (Pg. 121, *A Different Gospel*, McConnell). And certainly it is horrible blasphemy to say: “God is spirit, soul, and body. You are spirit, soul, and body” (pg. 136, *God’s Laws of Success*, Robert Tilton).

⁷ Pg. 176, *Christ in Christian Tradition, Reception and Contradiction: The development of the discussion about Chalcedon from 451 to the beginning of the reign of Justinian*, vol. 2:1, Aloys Grillmeier, trans. Pauline Allen and John Cawte. Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1987.

has a glorious spiritual union with Jesus Christ, his body, soul, and spirit are all still his own, and he does not have a sinlessly perfect portion of his being until glorification.