



# Bible Student's Notebook™

*The Herald of His Grace*

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

Volume 27  
Issue 652

## An Expose of the "Two Natures" Teaching

Section 1

### Sin in Act and in Fact

Part 1 of 2

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

Theology has a theory in regard to the entrance of sin that may be stated thus: Adam sinned and acquired a sinful nature, which has been passed down to all of his posterity.

The question arises, is it really found in revelation? Or is it only another theory supported by authority and tradition? If it is true, let us have the facts! What is the scriptural basis for any change in man's "nature" as a result of the "fall"?

Some will shudder at the very thought of doubting so "sacred" and orthodox a doctrine. Let them transfer their reverence from such empty shells of human supposition to the living, imperishable Word of God, and their feelings will revolt at that which they now revere.

We have long enough covered up the truth with sanctimonious phrases. Let us clear them aside so that we may look upon the face of God's Holy Word.

Theologians' use of unsound,<sup>1</sup> unscriptural words

1. [Editor:] "The pattern of sound words is one of the most serious needs for the student of the Scriptures. If it was necessary for Timothy to cling to the particular Greek expressions used by the apostle, how much greater is the need for some definite pattern on which to model the words of a version? How can the English reader hope to fulfill this exhortation when the translations which he uses publicly proclaim their avoidance of any uniformity or pattern in their production? The constant and consistent use



interposes an insurmountable barrier to truth. While we may not be able to confine ourselves absolutely to the minutiae of Holy Writ, all of our key words should be scriptural. It is useless even to consider this subject further until we have disposed of some of the phrases that falsify the facts.

#### HUMAN NATURE IS NOT "SINFUL"

We are told that mankind has a "sinful nature." It is true that the word "sinful" occurs five times in the *King James Version* of the "New Testament," but it has no equivalent in the original.

Four times "sinful" is used for the Greek word meaning "sinner" (Mark 8:38; Luke 5:8; 24:7; Romans 7:13). Once it stands for the Greek word for "sin" (Romans 8:3). The *American Revisers* have corrected this mistranslation in their margin. It should read, "the flesh of sin," or "Sin's flesh," not "sinful flesh." So we never read of a "sinful nature."

Why not? Is it an oversight in the Word of God or an imposition on it? Away with the unscriptural ►

of correct terms is one of the greatest possible aids in assimilating and teaching truth. The greatest hindrance is the inconsistent use of inexact terms which have their force nullified by use in incorrect contexts." — A.E. Knoch, *The Concordant Commentary on the New Testament*, II Timothy 1:13 (see order form).

words!

“*Sinful*” is found three times in the *King James Version’s* so-called “Old Testament.” Once it stands for the participle, “*sinning*,” usually translated “*sinner*” (Isaiah 1:4). Once it is used for “*sinner*” (Numbers 32:14), and again for the feminine form of the same (Amos 9:8).

Surely the excessive use of “*sinful*” in human theology is in striking contrast to its total absence from the divine vocabulary. Even the fewness of the mis-translations is a rebuke to our treaties on the subject of sin.

Many of us have heard much about the “old nature” or the “new nature,” but who has ever succeeded in giving us a clear idea of what is meant by these phrases? Every true believer has an experience which hazily corresponds to something suggested by these words, but they are futile, human attempts to add to the divine vocabulary, and have become serious hindrances in the path of truth.

Man’s “nature” is spoken of in Scripture, but it is not the incurably corrupt and utterly depraved thing which we have been taught. Man’s corruption and depravity is not connected with his *nature*, but his condition. In that most terrible indictment of the human race, found in the first few chapters of Romans, the apostle never refers disparagingly to human *nature*.

On the contrary, he tells us that the nations do by instinct (or nature – the same word) what the law demands (Romans 2:14). How can the “fallen nature” do aught in harmony with the law of God?

## SIN HAS TO DO WITH THE LIFE, NOT THE NATURE, OF MANKIND


Man’s sin is not inherent in his nature or his flesh. Unless we discard such sanctimonious but unsound catch phrases as “fallen nature,” and “sinful flesh,” there will be little likelihood of our eyes being opened to perceive what God has so clearly revealed, because of the veil of human tradition.

Most of the difficulties connected with this subject arise from the use, or rather abuse, of the word *nature*. It has such a wide scope and is so indefinite that it conveys only a hazy suggestion.

We propose to confine it to the Greek word *phusis*, which it usually represents in our versions. We must protest against its use for *genesis* (James 3:6), and the use of *natural* for the same word (James 1:23), as well as for *psuchikos* (i.e., soulish; I Corinthians 2:14; 15:44 (twice), 46). Indeed if “*the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God*,” and this *natural* man is the antithesis of the spiritual, as our version plainly asserts, then the only hope is in an unnatural, artificial man. However, it is the *soulish* man who is in view here. It is not a question of nature.

When we assert that Scripture does not use or suggest such phrases as “sinful nature,” many will suppose that we do not believe that men sin or are sinners. Let us assure them that we hold to this with all of the tenacity of which we are capable. We are not questioning these facts at all.

We are however investigating the Word of God to



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find out what “sin” and “sinner” means. We have found out that a “sin” is essentially a *miss*, and now we are discovering, in the Word of God, that a sinner is one who is “*wanting*” of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

The opening argument of the epistle to the Romans gives us the most detailed indictment of the human race we have in the Scriptures. It brings the whole world, Jews and Gentiles, before the bar of God.

Human *nature* is spoken of three times in this portion of the epistle. In the midst of such fearful charges against human conduct, it is most instructive to inquire what attitude the spirit of God takes toward human *nature*. Is it “sinful,” “depraved,” “fallen?” Or has it retained its integrity in the midst of sin and depravity?

When mankind did not glorify or thank God, He gave them over to dishonorable passions to do that which is *beside nature* (Romans 1:26). It is evident that such acts are *NOT* beside “*sinful nature*.”

The nature here spoken of protested against the unlawful acts. It remained true even after men had corrupted themselves. Here, in the midst of the most degrading vices, we find human nature uncontaminated. If such sinners still possess a nature which is out of line with their acts, surely they have not a “sinful nature.” This is the negative side. On the positive there is a still stronger witness.

We find a most remarkable attestation to the integrity of human nature when the apostle discusses the relation of the nations to the law.

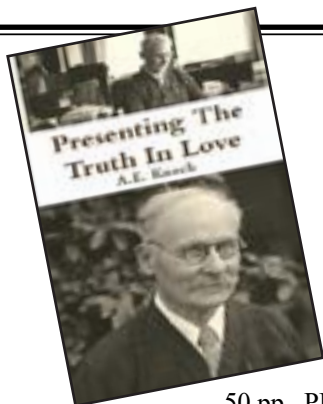
*For whenever they of the nations, having no law, may be doing by instinct [or nature] what the law demands, these, having no law, are a law to themselves, who are displaying the action of the law written in their hearts, their conscience joining its witness, and their reasonings between one another accusing or defending them, in the day when God will be judging the hidden things of humanity, according to my evangel, through Jesus Christ (Romans 2:14-16).*

### NATURE STANDS WITH CONSCIENCE AND GOD’S LAW AGAINST SIN

It is generally supposed that our “fallen nature” influences us to commit sin, and urges us to go contrary to our conscience and to the demands of God’s law. Here we are assured that the opposite is true. The nations have no law to tell them what is right, but they have a nature which, in measure, takes the place of that holy and just law which God gave to Israel. They do what His law demands *by nature*. It is written, not on tablets of stone, but on their hearts. The dictates of nature are confirmed by conscience. In the judgment men will not be excused because they have a “sinful nature,” but will be condemned because they disregarded the leadings of their nature and violated their conscience.

The Jew will be condemned on the basis of revealed law, which none of them were able to keep. The Gentile will be judged by the law of their nature, which none have fully observed. Perhaps it should be called *instinct*, as in the *Concordant Version*.

The mere fact that nature is coupled with God’s ►



50 pp., PB

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## *Presenting the Truth in Love* *In Memoriam of A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)*

This book consists of seven short chapters: (1) *Presenting the Truth in Love* – A.E. Knoch; (2) *My Father – As I Remember Him* – Ernest O. Knoch; (3) *Knoch and His Work: A Biographical Sketch by a Close Friend and Long Time Associate* – Edward H. Clayton; (4) *My Brethren Background* – A.E. Knoch; (5) *Musings On Mount Olivet* – A.E. Knoch; (6) *Be Confirmed in the Faith* – A.E. Knoch; (7) *The Funeral Message* – Herman H. Rocke.

law and with conscience should be sufficient to show us that it is not the disturbing, offending factor in human conduct. It is on the side of the right. It is not sinful in its tendencies. If sufficiently followed it may lead to a high standard.

The apostle Paul, speaking to the Jew who is resting in the rite of circumcision, insists that the circumcision of the flesh alone is of no benefit unless it is combined with the fulfilling of the law. Indeed, if one should fulfill the law, his uncircumcision would be counted for circumcision.

*And the Uncircumcision who, by instinct [or nature], are discharging the law's demands shall be judging you, who through letter and circumcision, are a transgressor of law (Romans 2:27).*

The law can be discharged by following instinct, or nature. It is evident that God's law is not unnatural, or against nature, but in harmony with it. Human nature has the elements of the law in it. If this nature were fallen, sinful and depraved, the very opposite would be true. No one could obey his instincts without going against God's law. No one could fulfill one iota of it by heeding his instinctive tendencies.

In these passages the word "nature" is used in its wide sense, which must be preserved in this discus-

sion if we hope to attain to the truth. Other passages bring this before us.

James speaks of the nature of wild beasts and flying creatures, reptilian and marine, in contrast with human nature (James 3:7).

### THE PRINCIPLE OF SIN IS DUE TO A WANT, OR DEFICIENCY

While human nature is not sinful, sin is propagated by natural means. We all inherit a nature that is violated by sin, yet we are sinners "by nature," that is, through generation, a natural process. Even thus the nature itself is not sinful. It is merely the method, the means, the avenue used by sin. What is conveyed through or by nature must not be confused with nature.

This should enable us to understand the one passage which, more than all others, has misled us. The expression "*by nature children of wrath*" has been freely applied to the human race, with small regard to its setting in the Scriptures or the teaching of the context. It is the *Jew by nature* who is a child of Indignation, even as the rest (Ephesians 2:3). The reference is not to human nature, but to the fact that sin comes to the Jew by the natural channels just the same as to the Gentile.

All sinned, or missed. Why did they sin? The answer is given forthwith: because "*they are wanting of the glory of God.*" For this we have substituted in ourologies, "*because their nature has fallen and become sinful.*" However, the more we search the Scriptures, the more we shall wonder at the marvelous accuracy and truthfulness of this indictment of the human race. Their sin arises from a *want*, not a nature. It is so necessary that we grasp the full importance of the word "*wanting*" that we will give below a full concordance of all its occurrences.

Aside from its use as "*subsequent*" (I Timothy 4:1) and "*subsequently*" (Matthew 4:2, etc.), this element occurs in a verb, WANT, and two nouns, WANT-effect and WANTING, both of which signify a *deficiency*.

The exact force of this expression easily can be seen if we note the company it keeps. It is the opposite of



**Christ Triumphant**  
by — Thomas Allin (1838–1909)

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Originally published in 1890, this book answers the question of questions: Can evil triumph finally over good? If we answer affirmatively with the popular creed, we are practically falling into Dualism. Men strive to save the popular creed by various modifications: by diminishing the number of the lost, by softening their torments, or by asserting their annihilation. What are all of these but so many unstated confessions that men everywhere feel it impossible to maintain the creed still generally professed?

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“superabundance” (II Corinthians 8:14; Philippians 4:12). It makes one an “encumbrance” (II Corinthians 11:9). It is like an “affliction” (Hebrews 11:37).

It is corrected by “filling” (I Corinthians 16:17; II Corinthians 9:12; Philippians 2:30), and “readjustment” (I Thessalonians 3:10).

**Hustereesis**

**WANTing**

*she, out of her want, casts in all* (Mark 12:44).

*not that I am hinting at a want* (Philippians 4:11).

**Hustereema**

**WANT-effect, deficiency**

*this woman, out of her want, cast in all* (Luke 21:4).

*they fill up these deficiencies of yours* (I Corinthians 16:17).

*your superabundance for their want* (II Corin-

thians 8:14).

*should be coming for your want* (II Corinthians 8:14).

*tending to fill up the wants of the saints* (II Corinthians 9:12).

*in want, I am an encumbrance to no one* (II Corinthians 11:9).

*he should fill up your want* (Philippians 2:30).

*those which are wanting of the afflictions of Christ* (Colossians 1:24).

*to readjust the deficiencies of your faith* (I Thessalonians 3:10).

**Hustereoo**

**WANT, deficient**

*In what am I wanting still?* (Mark 19:20).

*In one thing you are still wanting* (Mark 10:21).

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and he begins to be in **want** (Luke 15:14).

do you **want** anything? (Luke 22:35).

at their being in **want** of wine (John 2:3).

and are **wanting** of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

you are not **wanting** in a single grace (I Corinthians 1:7).

are we in **want** (I Corinthians 8:8).

giving that which is **wanting** (I Corinthians 12:24).

I was present with you and in **want** (II Corinthians 11:5).

I am not **wanting** in anything (II Corinthians 12:11).

to be superabounding and to be in **want** (Philippians 4:12).

some one of you may be seeming to have been **wanting** (Hebrews 4:1).

in **want**, afflicted, maltreated (Hebrews 11:37).

that no one be **wanting** of the grace of God (Hebrews 12:15).

In the later Scriptures, especially in Paul's epistles, we have the principle of sin dealt with as well as the act.

*Through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death* (Romans 5:12).

That Adam sinned, or missed the mark, we have already learned, but through this something has come which effectually makes sinners of all of Adam's descendants. If it did not enter his nature or inhere in his flesh, what did it do, and how does it accomplish its fatal work?

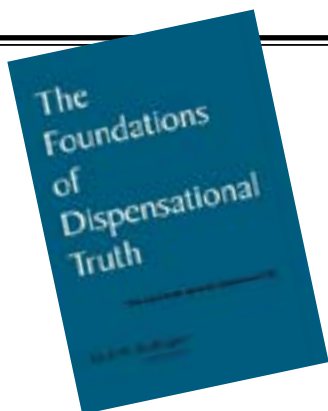
Much may be learned from a close study of sin's effects at the first, and of the divine judgment pronounced upon it in Eden. The fact that it leads to death, and the decree that thorns and thistles are to accompany its stay, shed much light on its character.

*Sin, fully consummated, is teeming forth death* (James 1:15).

Sin, therefore, attacks the *vitality* of mankind. The change was not in its constitution, but in its life. Adam began to die the moment he sinned. This is the force of "dying, thou shalt die."

### THE GOSPEL IS GOD'S POWER AND LIFE, NOT A NEW NATURE

Since then death has been operating in all of his posterity, so that the only life we know is a process of dying. Sin so lowered the vital functions in Adam's



247 pp., PB

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## *The Foundations of Dispensational Truth*

by – E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913)

Originally published in 1913, this was Bullinger's last book. It serves to help cut the tether of tradition with which Christians have been bound for so long. It does so by showing the absolute necessity of observing the great duty of "rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (II Timothy 2:15).

This definitive work recognizes the clear distinctions between the Body of Christ and Israel. Controversial in the eyes of traditional Christianity, this extraordinary work will prove invaluable to the serious student of Scripture.

body that the aura which emanated from its intense vitality and clothed it with a glorious garment of light, faded so as to become imperceptible to human eyes and disclosed his frame, no longer effulgent with life, but dull and deathlike, naked and humiliated.

It degraded the vital functions so that they became the source of distress and disease and dissolution in death. In brief, sin made no essential change in man's nature or flesh, but greatly lowered the power of the life that animated his body.

Now life is the effect of spirit. A lowering of vital force does not indicate a change in nature or flesh, but in plenitude of spirit. When God takes His spirit to Himself, all flesh perishes (Job 34:14-15).

*Sin, therefore, is a matter of spirit. The act of sin is a matter of spiritual relationship. The fact of sin is a matter of spiritual power.*

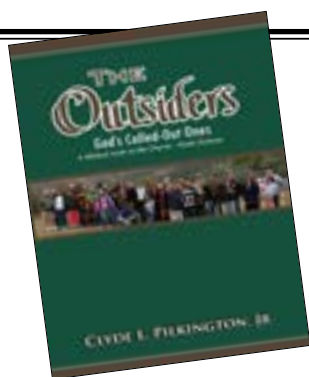
Like fruit plucked from a tree, Adam was severed from vital spiritual connection with God. Such fruit begins to die the moment it is picked. Such is mankind since Adam sinned. The fruit is the same. Its nature is not changed. Its flesh is not transformed, but its vitality is ebbing away.

The judgment of God on Adam is strikingly sugges-

tive of the true character of sin. Thorns and thistles are concomitants of man's sin and a graphic illustration of its real essence. What are thorns? They are stunted, undeveloped, rudimentary growths, undoubtedly due to the lack of sufficient vitality to develop them into proper form. There were no thorns in Eden. Nor will there be any such thing when once more the plants exult in the ideal conditions and fruitful fertility of the coming eon.

What will be done to change them? How can the rose lose its thorns and the cactus its spines? Will the Creator change their nature? Will He *remove* the sharp and painful lancelets that disfigure and disgrace them now? He will not alter the plant but change its environment. He will fill it with the wine of life and thorns will develop into branches and spines into leaves. The principle that produces thorns and death in plants is identical with sin, which produces degeneration and death in mankind.

What does the gospel bring? It is God's *power* for the salvation of everyone who believes (Romans 1:16). Sin is spiritual deficiency or lack of the divine glory (Romans 3:23). The evangel supplies the missing energy. Note carefully the contrast in the fifth of Romans (:6-8). While we are still *infirm*, Christ died for the sake of the irreverent. Man does not sin because that is his nature, but because he has lost the vi- ►



128 pp., PB.

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## ***The Outsiders: God's Called-Out Ones*** ***A Biblical Look at the Church – God's Ecclesia***

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

In 1995, after sixteen years of being in the “pastorate” the author walked away. He left the “religious system” by resigning from the very “church” and “ministry” he had formed. In many ways this work is a testament to these actions. This testimony was thirty years in the making – the results of a spiritual journey that the author found to be common to other saints scattered throughout the world and across history. This is an opportunity to explain why some who love the Lord no longer “go to church.” It does not seek to persuade others to do something different, but rather to be simply who and what they already are “in Him.” This is an uncovering of the truth of the church, and an encouragement for the members of His Body to enjoy the position and standing “in Christ” that they already possess, realizing that they are truly “complete in Him” (Colossians 2:10), that He alone is their Life (Colossians 3:4), and that His Life is full of freedom (Galatians 5:1).

*The Outsiders* was very encouraging. Thanks for your thoughts and study on the true Body of Christ and the lonely road we travel at times. – **MO**

I thank God for *The Outsiders*. I couldn't put it down. Read it all in one sitting. – **PA**

*The Outsiders* has something different about it. Upon finishing it an awareness has taken hold of my mind and spirit – a “knowing” that I have been afforded a special measure of His grace in just being allowed to be exposed to the truth contained within. – **KS**

tal force which should sustain him. His nature might be changed ever so much or ever so often, but that would not doom him to death. Other creatures, who have a different nature, share his penalty with him, for they also share man's infirmity and humiliation.

We will now give a list of some of the principal passages in which sin is brought before us, not as an act, but as a fact or principle of action. These are necessarily limited to the later letters of inspiration, for the Law and the Prophets hardly recognized sin otherwise than as an actual deed. Paul alone can supply us with the solution of our present problem.

*We previously charge Jews as well as Greeks to be all under sin (Romans 3:9).*

*Through the law is the recognition of sin (3:20).*

*Happy the man to whom the Lord by no means should be reckoning sin! (4:8).*

*through one man sin entered into the world and death by sin (5:12).*

*Until law sin was in the world, yet sin is not being taken into account where there is no law (5:13).*

*Yet where sin increases, grace superexceeds, that, even as Sin reigns in death, Grace, too, should be reigning (5:20).*

*That we may be persisting in sin that grace should be increasing? (6:1).*

*We who died to sin (6:2).*

*that sin's body may become inert, for us to be by no means still slaving for Sin (6:6).*

*for he who dies has been justified from sin (6:7).*

*He Who died, died to Sin once (6:10).*

*be reckoning yourselves to be dead indeed to Sin (6:11).*

*Let not Sin, then, be reigning in your mortal body (6:12).*

*Neither be presenting your members to Sin (6:13).*

*(to be continued)*

### **Bible Student's Notebook™**

*Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal*

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*Scripture education in a semi-weekly format!*

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 1:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:

- total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
- union in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6);
- adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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