



Reflections by the Pond

THE WRITINGS OF DAVID S LAMPEL

**THE
OLD
MAN**

progenitor *n.* 1. a forefather;
ancestor in direct line 2. a
source from which something
develops; originator or
precursor.



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praise of Christ
our Lord.



ASIDE FROM THE DAD WHO WAS ONE HALF RESPONSIBLE for his temporal birth, every Christian has two progenitors.

One is in residence in heaven, the other is in residence on earth. One establishes His Spirit in a “holy of holies,” a sanctuary, within the person of every Christian; the other’s spirit resides within the fallen flesh of every Christian. Pursuing our sanctification in Christ, over time the latter will be drained of some of his potency, but we will never be rid utterly of the one the King James Versions call “the old man” until the day we meet our Savior face-to-face.

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:17-24 NKJV

We do not know what he looks like, this “old man,” but we know well his occupation: pulling us away from righteousness. He works at it night and day. He never gives up, even when he fails. The old man has no shame, no pride, no conscience—he just keeps at it, no matter what. He is never convinced to change his ways, his underhanded and devious tactics. He does not see the error of his ways.

No, he revels in them.

“However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.”

1 Corinthians 15:46

IT IS A TRAIT OF MOST HUMANS, MALE OR FEMALE. It is a universal part of this temporal life to, on sundry occasions, suddenly realize that we have just done or said something we remember our dad or mom doing or saying:

a turn of a phrase often employed by our dad, a movement or gesture we remember seeing in our mom, an echo of a character flaw in either of them of which we were critical when a teenager. In that oft-regrettable moment we are reminded that some of their DNA resides within us; something which made our mom or dad individuals, distinguishing them from others, lives on in us.

It happened, for example, in Abraham’s family. According to the biblical record, Abraham twice lied to a foreign ruler about Sarah being his wife. For purely self-protective reasons he passed his wife off as his sister, thus placing her in jeopardy of committing adultery by being taken as a wife of someone else. This cowardice was an unseemly character flaw in someone who would be the father of Israel.

It came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, “See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman; and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife’; and

they will kill me, but they will let you live. “Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you.” It came about when Abram came into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. Pharaoh’s officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh’s house.

Genesis 12:11-15

Later Abraham went through the same act with the Philistine king of Gerar, Abimelech. It seemed to be in his blood, and a reflex action whenever he feared for his life in a strange land. And whatever caused this behavior in Abraham was passed down to his son Isaac, who not only did the same thing—he did it with the same King Abimelech!

So Isaac lived in Gerar. When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, “She is my sister,” for he was afraid to say, “my wife,” thinking, “the men of the place might kill me on account of Rebekah, for she is beautiful.” It came about, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out through a window, and saw, and behold, Isaac was caressing his

wife Rebekah. Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, “Behold, certainly she is your wife! How then did you say, ‘She is my sister?’” And Isaac said to him, “Because I said, ‘I might die on account of her.’” Abimelech said, “What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us.”

Genesis 26:6-10



From our parents we inherit more than some of their physical and personality traits. We inherit what they inherited from Adam. Every person born after Adam inherits his nature. It is what we are born with; it is what defines us first, before anything else.

Some traits handed down from father to son seem to fade with each subsequent generation until they at last fade into memory. Our children get less of our father than do we. But the DNA we inherited from the first father, Adam, has not diminished in the least over the millennia since it was first handed down to Cain and Abel. This is who we are first; it is the oldest part of every human being. And this is why it is called “the old man.”

What does this “old man” look like? If we were to meet him on the street, would we recognize him? Of course we would, since he is our most ingrained, familiar feature. He is not just the oldest, most entrenched part of each individual, but he is the oldest, most common, most familiar part of every society dwelling on this globe. To use computer software terminology, the old man is humanity’s *default*: save for some other external influence, his personality, his behavior is what humanity automatically falls back to.

But what does he *look* like? How do we recognize him? God’s word supplies us with a number of descriptions:

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5:19-21

And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

Romans 1:28-32

We not only can identify such behavior and motives in others—we readily, if we are honest, identify them in ourselves. The old man is not a portion of who we are when born; he is not even most of who we are. The old man is *everything* we are when born.

This is what it means to be, as David put it, born “in sin.”

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me.

Psalms 51:5

The natural life in each of us is something self-centred, something that wants to be petted and admired, to take advantage of other lives, to exploit the whole universe. And especially it wants to be left to itself: to keep well away from anything better or stronger or higher than it, anything that might make it feel small. It is afraid of the light and air of the spiritual world, just as people who have been brought up to be dirty are afraid of a bath. And in a sense it is quite right. It knows that if the spiritual life gets hold of it, all its self-centredness and self-will are going to be killed and it is ready to fight tooth and nail to avoid that.

C. S. Lewis

“We have met the enemy and he is us.”

Pogo

HERE ARE TIMES WHEN THE LINGERING, CLOYING PRESENCE OF THE OLD MAN—our old and obsolete nature—can feel like we are encased in a heavy, wet, woolen coat on a hot and humid August day. He presses down on us from all sides, his influence is oppressive and unwanted. He persists with ideas and thoughts we thought we had jettisoned long before. But he persists in resurrecting them, in pushing them back into our conscious mind, whispering and cajoling us into thinking or even doing that which we have vowed to abandon.

Is it Satan? Not necessarily, not directly. The old man is *of* him, but it is not him. It is part of him linked into our DNA the moment Adam and Eve rebelled against God. From that moment onward man has had to contend with the serpent coiled within our flesh: our “Adamic nature.”

That pillar of the church, that author of so much of the New Testament and hence so much of Christian doctrine, the apostle Paul, a.k.a. Saul of Tarsus, that one we study and cite so often and consider a paragon of virtue, was intimately familiar with the old man.

For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.

But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?

Romans 7:14-24

Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Paul’s circuitous lament echoes down throughout all of Christendom in the heart and mind of every believer who earnestly desires to be remade in the likeness of his or her Savior. It is the persistent source of so much of our frustration. We want to live a righteous life, walking in the Light of Christ, but the old man keeps gumming up our good intentions.

On the best of days we feel oddly subdivided, like two strangers sharing a home, with one on the day shift and one on the night. We are aware of the other’s presence—the dirty

clothes he leaves lying about, the scraps of his food caught in the sink drain—but over the years we have established a fragile truce in which we rarely see each other’s face.

On the worst of days, however, we seem to run into him in every room of the house—as if he has quit his job so he can devote his every waking hour to making our life miserable. Everything we do invites his meddling, his insertion of himself into our life. He replaces our friends with his own; he is inordinately fascinated by the books we read, the movies we watch, the channel we select; he monitors our conversations and does what he can to slip his vocabulary into ours; and, worst of all, he wraps a thick blanket between our spirit and God’s, muffling even the voice of the only One equipped to relieve our torment.



The most painful aspect of this interminable battle is that this discomfiting intervention is not by some foreign entity, easily blamed, easily excused. No, as Pogo once said, “We have met the enemy and he is us.” It is that part of us the apostle Paul refers to as “the flesh” with which we are engaged in battle.

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

Galatians 5:16-17

This does not absolve Satan, of course. After all, he it was who set this in place in the early hours of Creation. It is from him, it

is of him, it is his clever, insidious plot to birth his evil throughout man’s lifespan on earth. He made this part of every human born; it is ingrained in us, much like a portion of our earthly father’s DNA lives on in each of us. Satan opened the door in Eve and then Adam, then through this dual portal he—as sanctioned by God—inserted his ways, his passions and desires, his dark imaginings into every human being. On that fateful day so very long ago everyone in Eden received a curse because of their treachery and rebellion. Satan was cursed first of all—yet he also had a victory.

The LORD God said to the serpent,
“Because you have done this,
Cursed are you more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field;
On your belly you will go,
And dust you will eat
All the days of your life;
And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel.”
To the woman He said,
“I will greatly multiply
Your pain in childbirth,
In pain you will bring forth children;
Yet your desire will be for your husband,
And he will rule over you.”
Then to Adam He said,
“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’;
Cursed is the ground because of you;
In toil you will eat of it
All the days of your life.

Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;
And you will eat the plants of the field;
By the sweat of your face
You will eat bread,
Till you return to the ground,
Because from it you were taken;
For you are dust,
And to dust you shall return.”

Genesis 3:14-19

Satan’s victory was the lingering detritus he left behind in humanity’s strain.



When we come to Christ the old man is not destroyed. Oh, would that it were so. We become a new creation, a new creature in Christ Jesus, but the old man remains. There are those who claim this is not so, but there is not one Christian who has not experienced this struggle in their life. The old man is alive and well, and will be until the day Christ Jesus Himself consigns him to an eternity of his own device: the lake of fire.

And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Revelation 20:10

“Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?”

THE AFTERSHOCKS EMANATING FROM EDEN will always be there in the Christian life. This side of glory every believer will fall short of holiness.

At least once in a while every believer will listen to the sweet and coaxing voice of the old man and follow his lead. But that is not to say we are to accept and give ourselves over to a life of disobedience; to that the apostle Paul vehemently declared, “May it never be!” And take heart: Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit have not left us to engage this battle on our own. God’s word reveals the weapons and tactics available to every Christian—and, not least, the fundamental change in us that renders them effective.

Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

2 Corinthians 5:16-17

This fallen world rejects the cold truth that just as every person ever born is immortal, bound for an eternity either in heaven or hell, so too they reject the truth that every person ever born is the slave of a master: not the old man, but Satan himself. Since

the unsaved world sees even the cross of Christ as utter foolishness, however, we will not take counsel with it.

We are born slaves of unrighteousness, slaves of and to sin.

Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Romans 6:16-18

Slavery to sin brings only pain. Oh, we may have found a bit of fleshly pleasure here and there, but it always, like the morning after a drunken binge, ended badly. Before we came to Christ, we had no say in our servitude: we were slaves to our Adamic birthright, and the only means at hand to break free of that damnable servitude was to claim a *new* Master. Jesus said that any “house divided against itself will not stand,” so flesh cannot successfully do battle against flesh. We, in our flesh, cannot successfully conquer the fleshly old man. While we were slaves to

sin—and you *were*; don't believe the world's lie that you were "free"—we had no weapon against temptation, and no avenue of escape save a new Master.

At the moment of conversion we gained that new Master. Claiming Christ as Lord means claiming His cross, and it was at His cross that we were purchased by and for Him.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Unlike slavery to sin, slavery to righteousness—that is, slavery to Father God and His Son, Jesus—brings not fleeting pleasure, but lasting, enduring *joy*. And whenever we forget that we now have a new Master, a new allegiance, and give in to the influence of the old man, some of that joy slips away.



In his letter to the Romans the apostle Paul expounds at length about the misery and frustration for the Christian of living with his two natures—the fleshly and the spiritual, the old man and the new, the evil and the good. Near the end he cries out, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" And then he immediately answers his own question. As if at the victorious sound of a trumpet he cries out,

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

Romans 7:25

Christ is the answer to this conflict! Christ Jesus, who He is, what He did, what He brings with Him into the life of every believer—there is the solution to this frustrating battle. And then, following one of the more unfortunate chapter breaks in our Bible, Paul explains how the follower of Christ need no longer permit the old man to exert his influence in his life.

The Christian no longer owes any allegiance to the old man. To the one with Christ living within, the old man is dead.

But the human mind is a funny thing; it has a hard time forgetting some things. We cannot simply turn off the old man as we would a light switch. And even if we could it is not something we learn in the early hours of our life in Christ. It requires training and practice to silence the incessant voice of the old man—our flesh—and to listen solely to the Spirit. We are painfully aware that, even in Christ Jesus, we still sin from time to time, so the old man must still be in there somewhere. Echoing Paul, we cry out, "What am I to do?"

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

God has invented this wonderful mechanism for dealing with sin in a believer's life. It is called "confession." It is really quite simple: before God we agree that what He calls sin, *we* call sin, and that our recent behavior *is* sin. No excuses, no rationalizing, no whining about how unfair it all is.

For I know my transgressions,
And my sin is ever before me.
Against You, You only, I have sinned
And done what is evil in Your sight,
So that You are justified when You speak
And blameless when You judge.

Psalms 51:3-4

Sin is spiritual cancer in a believer's life. Left unattended it grows, it expands, it insinuates itself into every nook and cranny, corrupting everything it touches. More devious than the physical disease, spiritual cancer actively tricks us into believing it is *not* disease, but actually rather a good thing. It claims to be health and vitality and freedom, even as it eats away at our very spirit and soul.

The old man and his father, Satan, are liars, because the one deploying the temptations that invite sin is the inventor and father of lies. Jesus, replying to some of the Jewish leaders, said,

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

John 8:44

Confession strips the old man of his power in our life. Instead of listening to the lies and permitting the cancer to have free rein throughout our system, we are to quickly confess the sin—even the contemplation to give in to the temptation—to stop it cold in its tracks. Relinquish the burden of sin, and with King David, pray,

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity
And cleanse me from my sin...
Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Make me to hear joy and gladness,
Let the bones which You have broken rejoice.
Hide Your face from my sins
And blot out all my iniquities.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation
And sustain me with a willing spirit.

Psalms 51:2, 7-12



By choosing to live with and listen to Christ Jesus rather than the old man, by practicing this way of life, we gradually but steadily diminish the voice and influence of that annoying, destructive busybody.

Best of all, there will come a day for every believer when this cursed flesh will be discarded and replaced, giving each of us a brand new, glorified body fit for heaven.

Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

1 Corinthians 15:50-53

Faith supplies more than just a promise for the future, however, for the believer's eternal life with God begins not at physical death, but at the moment he or she answers the call of the Holy Spirit and becomes a follower of Christ. When we answer that

call in the affirmative, the Spirit takes up residence. Supernaturally, immediately, astonishingly we now carry around with us very God!

That Presence *wants* us to live a holy life, a life of righteousness in which sin no longer reigns. And He does not stop at lending us active assistance and encouragement in our battle with sin, but also interprets for us the deep mysteries in God's word regarding this ironic duality of sinful flesh cohabiting with holy God. It is there, in God's word and with the Spirit's help, we learn how to live, once and for all, without the oppressive wet, woolen coat that is the old man.

O Jesus, I have promised
To serve Thee to the end;
Be Thou forever near me,
My Master and my Friend;
I shall not fear the battle
If Thou art by my side,
Nor wander from the pathway
If Thou wilt be my Guide.

O, let me feel Thee near me;
The world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle,

The tempting sounds I hear;
My foes are ever near me,
Around me and within;
But, Jesus, draw Thou nearer,
And shield my soul from sin.

O, let me hear Thee speaking,
In accents clear and still,
Above the storms of passion,
The murmurs of self-will;
O, speak to reassure me,
To hasten, or control;

O, speak, and make me listen,
Thou Guardian of my soul.

O, let me see Thy footmarks,
And in them plant mine own;
My hope to follow duly
Is in Thy strength alone.
O, guide me, call me, draw me,
Uphold me to the end;
And then to rest receive me,
My Savior and my Friend.

John Ernest Bode